

SEND Update

Report To (Meeting):	ONE Stockport Health and Care Board		
Report From (Board Lead)	Chris McLoughlin - Executive Director People and Integration, Director of Children’s Services, SMBC Tim Bowman, Director of Education, Work and Skills, Stockport MBC		
Report From (Author):	Bev Milway, Strategic Lead for SEND and Inclusion, Stockport MBC		
Date:	18 October 2023	Agenda Item No:	11
Previously Considered by:	Not applicable		

Purpose of the report:

This report is an update provided to the ONE Stockport Health and Care Board on the current position and context of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Stockport. The report is to provide an overall oversight of the current strategic position and to highlight the current risk issues within the system overall. The Locality Board are asked to consider the information.

Key points (Executive Summary):

- The SEND offer nationally and within Stockport is under intense pressure. The level of demand for Education, Health and Care plans (the statutory multi agency plan for children with additional needs) has risen sharply post Covid. In Stockport in 2023 we saw a 37% rise in referral rates and an 8% rise in maintained plans in year. Although a national issue, Stockport has an already high baseline for statutory plans. This is having a significant impact on performance for the timeliness of issuing a final plan.
- Nationally there is a predicted funding gap of at least £1.6 billion (LGA 21/22) for SEND. This is resulting in high levels of deficit budget in most local areas on the educational elements of the provision. In Stockport this is currently predicted to be £15 million cumulative overspend at the end of this financial year.
- Stockport has been on a transformation journey since we were inspected in 2019 and continue to work with partners across education, health and care in improve the lived experience while managing the rising costs. Stockport was successful in its bid for monies from the Delivering Better Value initiative. This is a two-year change programme to enhance early help support and to reduce the need for lengthy statutory assessments. System leaders from education, health and care continue to be key partners in this change programme.
- A key element of the way we work in the field of SEND is coproduction and working with our community to listen, hear and respond. We clearly hear that there

needs to be improvement in the lived experiences of children and families with additional needs in Stockport. Families state that communication from all agencies is not good enough and they feel there is not enough early help without lengthy bureaucracy. The wait times for both statutory plans and individual elements of assessment and provision are impacting negatively. The impact of long waiting lists for diagnosis of neurodiversity has a significant impact on children's and their families lives and have been raised as a specific concern by parent/carer groups for a significant amount of time.

Recommendation:

The Board are asked to

- Consider the information presented in the paper.
- Consider what your respective organisations can do as key partners to improve the lived experience of children with SEND and their families.
- Cascade this report to services within your respective organisations who work with Children with SEND and their families with the expectation that better communications becomes a key improvement focus for all services that support our local families.

Decision		Discuss/Direction		Information/Assurance	X
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Aims (please indicate x)

Which integrated care aim(s) is / are supported by this report:	People are happier and healthier and inequalities are reduced	X
	There are safe, high-quality services which make best use of the Stockport pound	X
	Everyone takes responsibility for their health with the right support	X
	We support local social and economic development together	X

Conflicts of Interests

Potential Conflicts of Interest:	None
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Risk and Assurance:

List all strategic and high-level risks relevant to this paper	<p>Financial- There is a need to bring the spend on educational provision in line with the High Needs Block Allocations. The deficit this financial year will be c£15 million. This can no longer be offset by Council reserves in the medium or longer term. Funding is a high-level risk impacted by predictive modelling which indicates a rise in numbers and acuity of children with SEND unless we change current practice.</p> <p>Inspection- There is a new inspection regime underway. Stockport are now in the inspection window for SEND. The learning from other areas who have been inspected is that if we have significant wait times without a robust, effective and monitored recovery plan then this will have a negative impact on The Ofsted rating.</p>
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Consultation and Engagement:	
Local People / Patient Engagement:	Stockport has a strong coproduction focus and prides itself in collecting evidence of you said, we did. Please see section 4 for additional information.
Workforce Engagement:	Stockport engages education, health and care staff thorough sub-groups, newsletters, briefing and regular all staff focus on SEND through 'Practice Week'

Potential Implications:				
Financial Impact: Please note - All reports with a financial implication require detail of the level of funding, funding stream and comments from Finance.	Non-Recurrent Expenditure	£		
	Recurrent Expenditure (please state annual cost)	£ 90M across Council Services. We are working towards identifying SEND Spend across health services.		
	Funding stream	Yes	No	
	Included in the s75 Pooled Budget		x	
	GM ICB (Stockport) delegated budget		x	
	Other, please specify: Council cash limit reserves and Dedicated Schools Grant.			
Finance Comments:	N/a			
Performance Impact:	SEND Board have a SEND Scorecard that identifies performance by proxy-indicator against our 7 outcomes statements.			
Workforce Impact:				
Compliance and/or Legal Impact:	The SEND Board works to the SEND Code of Practice. The SEND Code of Practice is a document that provides guidance on the special educational needs and disability (SEND) system for children and young people aged 0 to 25 in England. It explains the legal requirements and statutory guidance that schools, colleges, local authorities, health and social services must follow to support children and young people with SEND. The SEND Code of Practice was last updated in 2015 and is currently under review by the government.			
Equality and Diversity: Has an equality impact assessment been completed?	General Statement: undertaken for the SEND Strategy and underpinning plans			
	If Not Applicable please explain why	Yes	No	N/A
Environmental Impact: Has an environmental impact assessment been completed?	General Statement: undertaken for the SEND Strategy and underpinning plans			
	If Not Applicable please explain why	Yes	No	N/A

1. Introduction and national context

The current educational and multi-agency responsibilities to support children/young adults from birth to 25 who have an additional educational need, and or disabilities are set out in the Children and Family Act 2014 and the SEND code of Practice. This has put statutory processes in place to bring together provision and planning for children with additional needs and disabilities into “Education, Health and Care” EHCP planning processes for individual children and across the local area. The whole system across Stockport has a clear statutory obligation to plan, identify and work together to meet the needs of Stockport Children with SEND. All statutory inspections are of the local area and how we work together as a system and not solely an inspection of council services.

In England in 2022 there were over 1.5 million children identified as having special educational needs. The majority of which are supported with lower-level support (SEN support) in schools; 1.2 million or 13% of the overall school’s population. These children gain lower-level support funded through school’s budgets but are likely known to health and children’s services in relation to early help provision.

The Education, Health and Care plan cohort is smaller at 4.3% or 389,171 in England. In 2022 this saw a national rise overall of 9.5% on plans maintained. The demand has increased nationally for statutory plans as has other demand in our systems overall. The children/young adults who have EHCP are likely to be known to specialist health services, children’s services more widely and classed as children in need from a Social Care perspective (s17). We have 83 children in our care who have an EHCP. An EHCP sets out provision required from education, including nurseries, mainstream schools, special schools, Pupil Referral Units, and colleges. This is funded through the school’s High Needs block. The plan also sets out support and provision provided through health services, including therapy, mental health, and social care needs that are funded through individual agency budgets.

It is important to note that there is national recognition that the current legislation and guidance for SEND is not fit for purpose and nationally a Green paper has been launched, “Right Support, Right Place, Right Time”. The outcome of consultation was a national improvement plan and no legislative change any time soon. There are new additional national standards currently being drawn up which it is estimated will be ready within two years, 2025. This means currently there will be no significant change.

A new inspection regime has however been launched in 2023. This is a joint inspection programme between OFSTED and CQC of local areas. It is based on the new proposed Green Paper and provides an independent, external evaluation of the effectiveness of the local area partnership’s arrangements for children and young people with SEND.

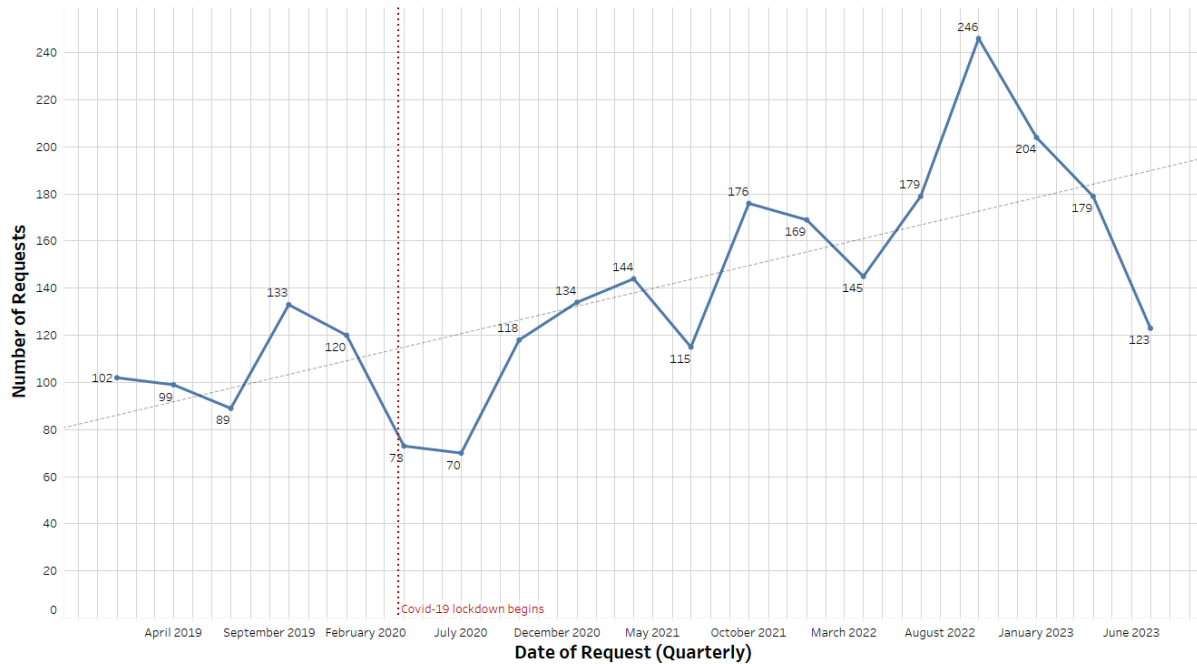
This is now a graded inspection and where appropriate, the inspectors recommend what the local area partnership should do to improve the arrangements. Stockport locality is now in the inspection window. There is significant learning from other local areas on how their strategic context has impacted on the grading outcome. Areas

have seen lack of joint planning and system ownership impact negatively on inspections. Localities with wait times with no clear strategic oversight and plans, for example therapy provision and neurodiversity diagnostic pathways have been assessed as poor and given low grades.

2. Current Stockport context

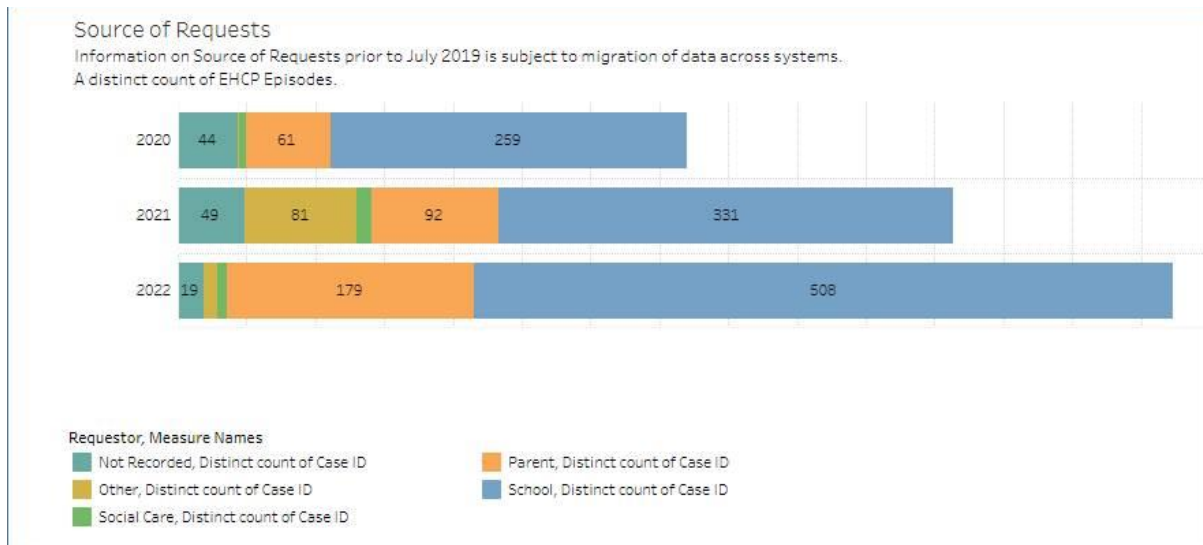
These are currently 4.6% of our overall pupil population with a EHCP compared to 3.9% for statistical neighbours. This continues to rise and in September 2023 stands at 3,036 maintained plans. This continues to correlate to historic very low numbers of pupils on early help called SEN support. Although this recently has risen, we are still behind other areas. The historical situation in relation to EHCP demand has continued since 2014. Post covid, this has risen further in 2022 the level of demand rose by 37% for assessments in year and continues to remain high in 2023. This has meant in 2022 we had an 8% rise in EHCP's maintained at the end of the year.

EHCP Request over Time (Quarterly 2019-2023): A significant sustained increase.



The trend of distinct count of Case ID for Date of Request Quarter. The data is filtered on Age Today and Date of Request Quarter. The Age Today filter keeps 31 of 31 members. The Date of Request Quarter filter keeps 20 of 43 members.

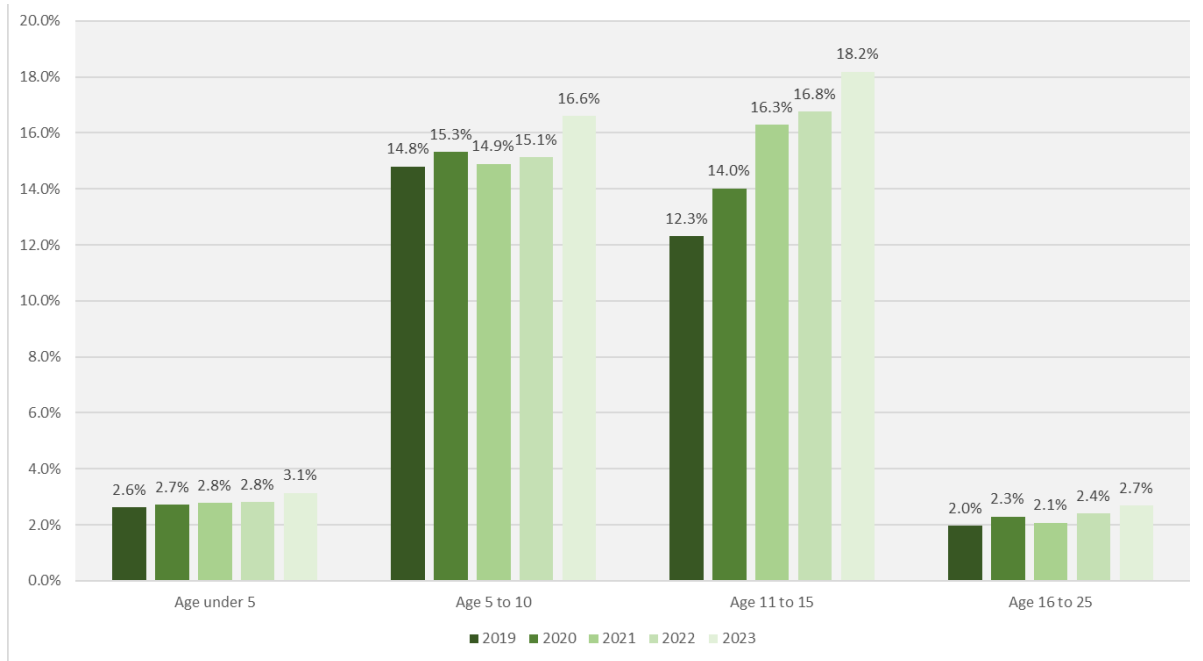
Most referrals come from schools. Although in recent years there has been a rise in parental referral for assessment:



In terms of specific needs of the children/young people this can be seen in the table below:

EHCP SEND Primary Need Type	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Change: 2019 to 2023
Autistic Spectrum Disorder	568	633	712	738	773 (36.5%)	+205 (36%)
Social, Emotional and Mental Health	269	279	304	341	375 (17.7%)	+106 (39%)
Speech, Language and Communications needs	197	192	203	246	291 (13.7%)	+94 (48%)
Moderate Learning Difficulty	154	172	177	174	187 (8.8%)	+33 (21%)
Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulty	103	118	119	122	120 (5.7%)	+17 (17%)
Severe Learning Difficulty	113	105	113	111	103 (4.9%)	-10 (-9%)
Specific Learning Difficulty	86	91	79	89	95 (4.5%)	+9 (10%)
Physical Disability	38	47	46	62	62 (2.9%)	+24 (63%)
Other Difficulty/Disability	60	53	58	60	57 (2.7%)	-3 (-5%)
Visual Impairment	17	17	18	18	21 (1.0%)	+4 (24%)
Multi- Sensory Impairment	17	16	19	18	21 (1.0%)	+4 (24%)
Hearing Impairment	16	17	14	15	13 (0.6%)	-3 (-19%)
Total	1638	1740	1862	1994	2118	480 (29%)

Post covid there has been a significant rise in some identified needs, for example speech and language and social, emotional and mental health. This is interesting when cross referenced to changes in ages of those who now have an EHCP. The biggest rise is at school age although we have seen a rise also in early years:



The level of demand has led to a dip in performance for timeliness of completion of assessments within the 20-week statutory timescales. Nationally this has fallen from over 60% within 20 weeks to 49.1% in 2022 with Stockport being 41% at end of year 2022. Our culminative total for 2023 in Aug is 14% and may further decline as we clear backlogs. This is below the 40% expected threshold which requires formal monitoring, and we now must submit monthly data to the Department of Education for oversight. The delay is due to capacity within the system to complete advice for the assessments, from health and social care colleagues who are under pressure themselves but particularly Educational Psychologists who must input into every plan as laid out in legislation. There are plans in place to improve this situation, but recruitment of education psychologists continues been an issue nationally. This has an impact on the lived experience of families who are waiting for plans to be finalised. There is a need to look further at providing support early wherever possible at SEN support level.

The impact of high numbers of plans within the system impacts the system financially. The culminative deficit on the education high needs block at the end of 22/23 is estimated to be £15 million. This is due to:

- Increase in overall numbers of EHCP that we are maintaining.
- Increased need and the creation of additional places within our system for special school places
- Top-up funding to mainstream schools / academies (primary/secondary), and Independent special school fees.

The table below illustrates the rise in expenditure in financial support to our mainstream schools and also spend on external placement provision:

Year	Mainstream top-up (£m)	Independent/External Placement (£m)
2019/20	2.528	5.050
2020/21	3.102	6.169
2021/22	4.001	6.607
2022/23	5.586	9.414
2023/24 Q1 forecast	6.363	10.738

In recent years Stockport have worked hard to build in sufficiency of placements within the local maintained specialist provisions to reduce costly expenditure on external provisions. The external placement market has seen costs rises significantly in the last few years with some external providers putting fees up by 25%. This is difficult to manage with spaces at a premium and demand outstripping supply in the local area. This means we need to look robustly at creating maintained rather than external sufficiency.

In addition to cost pressures from the external placement market, we need to consider the travel costs associated with providing transport to specialist provision that is at distance from a child or young persons home. Travel costs have significantly increased year on year and are at an unprecedented and unsustainable level of cost. The work to increase the ability of mainstream schools to manage more complexity of needs, increase the resourced places in mainstream schools and provide increased special as well as alternative provision locally will support the aim of children and young people going to local provision and being able to travel independently either walking or using school/public transport when they are ready. This is not only good for our young people as this is a life skill but will support the management of the transport budget.

Stockport have tried to negate the use of external providers by increasing our provision. This has included commissioning:

- 109 additional primary special schools' places. (Lisburne including significant spend due to fire to ensure increase this year)
- 62 additional secondary special school places (44 Castle Hill/12 Heaton's)
- 16 additional secondary resource placements (Marple Hall/Priestnall)
- 10 new full-time placements at Moat House for vulnerable children in care or edge of care
- Extension of Pendlebury - 4 additional full-time placements and introduction of Pendlebury paths which has provided 29 part time support placements to aid reattendance at school with positive results.
- Extension of Highfields day 6 provision to provide 35 additional places in year.
- Block purchase of 15 placements at Progress school to provide specialist secondary age placements.

In addition to the above we have also commissioned 40 places across Laurus Trust for resource provision and the new Laurus Grace opening in 2024. We are also in discussion with six primary schools to open resource provision places in September 2024/5 which will provide c36 additional resource places across Stockport. We are

also expanding Oakgrove to have an additional classroom for an additional 6 students in the new year.

Unfortunately, in 2023 we have experienced unforeseen delays in opening the new Lisburne school due to a fire. The opening has now been delayed until 2024. We have worked with the leadership at Lisburne and Dial Park to ensure all the reception places and in year places will be available this academic year. This has meant significant SEND capital expenditure on mobile classrooms. This has a possible knock-on consequence to other capital SEND projects in the future and sufficiency planning.

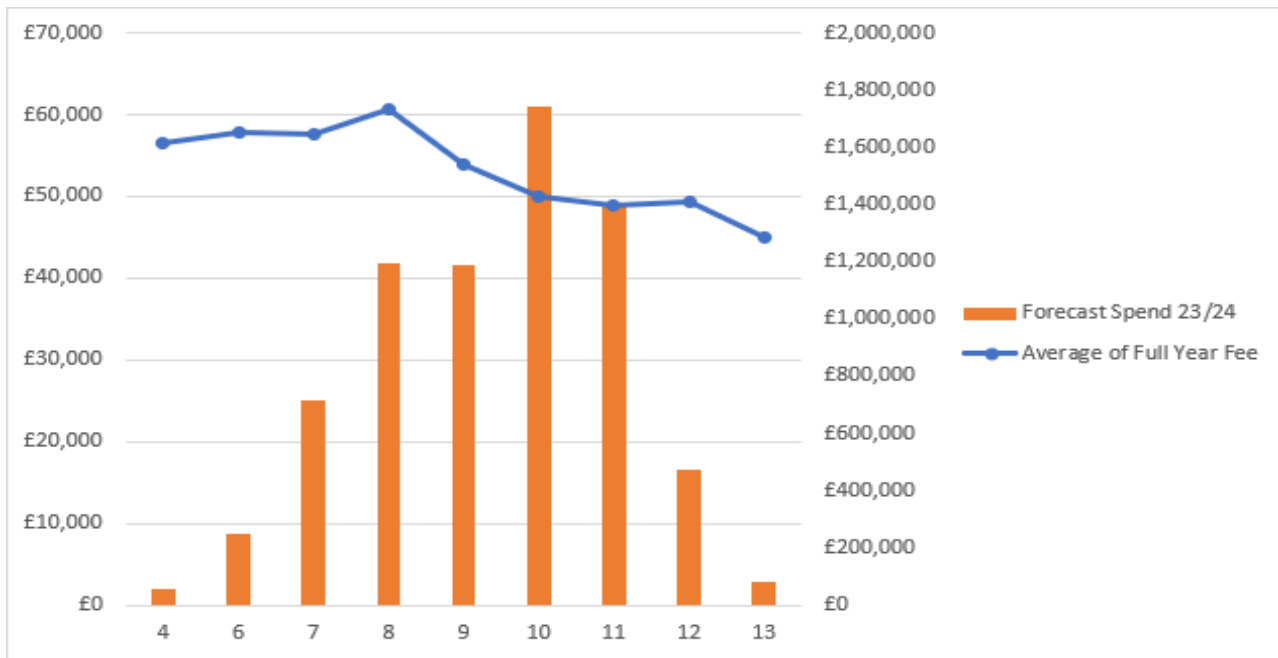
We have also seen a delay in opening the new Prospere, a Department for Education led secondary free school called Pear Tree. This has now been delayed until September 2024. The school is 133 places for secondary age children with autism and learning difficulties. As with all newly opened schools this is a staged intake, with 34 new places in the first year. If not open in September 2024 this will have a further significant impact on our expenditure as we will need to commission externally high-cost provision which will last for the phase of that child's education.

3. Current specific system pressures in more detail

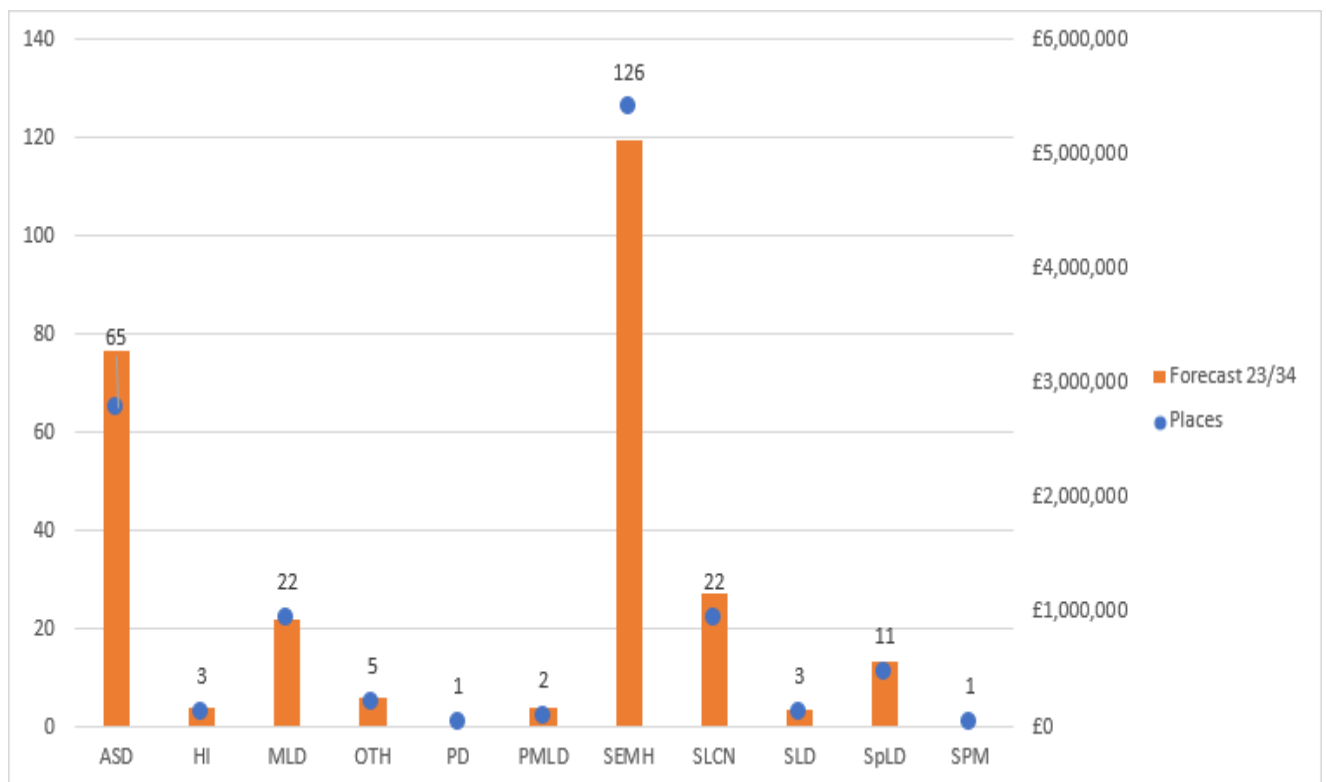
As highlighted above there are significant pressure both nationally and in Stockport in relation to SEND. In Stockport we have some distinct and specific issues which need strategic planning and oversight. An area requiring further, and deeper understanding, consideration and planning are those children and young people who have a social, emotional, and mental health need (SEMH) requiring an EHCP and additional support.

In published data there are 218,392 children and young people in England with an EHCP who are coded as having a primary need of social, emotional or mental health. This is 15.2% (June 2023) In Stockport the current rate is higher at 17.7% with the starkest difference being at our secondary phase. (25.6% as opposed to 21% nationally). Either we appear to over identify numbers in Stockport comparably to other areas or we have not got our emotional wellbeing offer right across the systems. Assumptions appear to be in line with findings of BEEwell surveys undertaken at a Greater Manchester level.

The largest number of pupils we are currently sending to independent placements are secondary age pupils with social, emotional, and mental health needs. As the graph below shows the majority of the spend is year 10 onwards and when taken in consideration of the second graph, for pupils who have recently moved on to an EHCP in the secondary phase:



This is a concern as these young people are moving late in their school careers. The graph below details our current external placement cohort overall.



It is clear from the graph above that we need to look in more detail at the overall system wide support offer and sufficiency of placements within Stockport for this cohort, many of which were not identified as having a SEND need until secondary age.

We are in the process of finalising the analysis of SEND needs correlated with the cost of SEND services. This investment position statement will provide further highlights of areas that are potentially of growing concern and where a review of provision linked to funding is required. The previous report, published in 2019, gave a firm evidence base for reviewing our provision and funding decisions for specific SEND needs and supported the identification of the priorities for the SEND strategy and the Joint Commissioning Plan. The publishing of the 2023 report has been paused to enable the inclusion of costs associated with health provision for SEND. At the time of writing this paper, we have not been able to include health costs given the change to the funding flows and responsibilities for overseeing provision funded by Greater Manchester Integrated Care Board. The Investment position Statement will reflect council funded services; however, we continue to strive to identify, report and comment on the appropriateness of the total system budget for SEND in Stockport.

4. What we have heard about lived experience

We have work closely with the parent/carer forum PACTS to coproduce and to listen to the lived experience of Stockport residents be that young people or their parent/carers. We also have strong links with other support groups. We run a fortnightly young person's group SAYS at Disability Stockport. These relationships are invaluable and provide much needed feedback on lived experience and shape the direction of transformation. In listening to these groups, we know that there are common themes:

- **Communication-** is felt to be still not good enough both strategically and at a personal level across education, health, and social care across Stockport. The community do not feel informed on strategic focus, and it is fed back that there is too much onus on individuals to chase information. In relation to this we now have a communication plan signed off by SEND Board but there is a need to focus system wide as well as at individual service level on better communication.
- **Need for more early help-** The feedback often is seen in the context of having to “fight” to gain support in a very bureaucratic system which is hard to navigate.
- **Tell it once-** This is felt to still not to be embedded for SEND families in Stockport. Often feedback is that individual agencies are not communicating and there is no one plan. Individual agencies do not always communicate effectively together meaning parent/carers have to chase and repeat information.
- **Timescales-** Wait times for support particularly in relation to emotional wellbeing and the impact of wait times of diagnostic pathways is having a profound impact.

There is a need as a whole system as well as individual agencies to take on board this feedback in planning and commissioning arrangements.

5. Transformation and future plans

Stockport SEND has been on a distinct journey since 2019. Strategically we are now more aligned across education, health and social care with the SEND board overseeing the agenda across Stockport. The Integrated Planning, Design and Delivery group reporting into the Board is now embedded as is the Quality and Performance Group. We have some distinct transformational pieces of work underway in relation to the issues raised in this paper:

Speech and language review and implementation- This is a jointly led review between the council and NHS GM Integrated Care. We are now in the planning and implementation phase of the review which is supported by Better Communication, a nationally recognised specialist provider of speech and language support. This will see a new specification for the speech and language offer across Stockport focussing on early years and areas of biggest impact. This will have a positive impact on the large group coming through in early years post covid identified as needing support. The implementation is planned for 2024.

Occupational therapy and physio review- This is a jointly led review between the council and NHS GM Integrated Care and is currently underway. This review is also supported by Better communication and will be reporting back before Christmas.

Accelerated Progress plan- This plan was put in place following the SEND revisit in 2022. This focusses on social care input into the planning and assessment process. This is currently being monitored by the Department of Education and has seen a review of operating guidance from the front door onwards.

Social, emotional and mental health schools review- This has started in October and will be running until January looking at our support offer in schools and the sufficiency strategy of specialist places in the next 5 years. This needs to link into the wider work on emotional wellbeing.

16+ SEND planning and placements Review- This has begun and will run until December. This will focus on our planning from year 9 upwards for post 16 options for our SEND children. The review will inform our wider post 16 planning across Stockport.

SEND Transport Review-This piece of work is linking in with the post 16 planning and will look at how we can further expand our travel training offer. It was also look at the use of personal budgets for travel to and from education.

Delivering Better Value- This is a Department for Education run national scheme of which we are in the first tranche. This has been progressing since autumn 2022 with the council putting in an action plan to receive £1 million transformation monies. This was awarded in March 2023. This is a two-year change programme and focusses on the following areas:

1. Governance and accountability

In this workstream we are:

- Undertaking a full review of early years processes and systems of identification- this is underway currently.
- Review of school age panel processes and graduated response to support children and young people at the earliest opportunity and provide evidence of intervention and impact. This is underway and new panel processes have been launched.
- Post 16 planning review- this is underway and to be completed by December.
- Strengthening links between new inclusion service and school improvement to ensure challenge in system.
- Rolling out digital systems for referral and tracking- initial implementation underway from now until new year.
- Reviewing our mainstream top ups/bandings/SEN finance guidance- this is to be completed by January for roll out in new financial year.

2. Early Help and Integrated working

In this workstream we are:

- Planning SEN early help school age pathfinder in Bramhall starting in Jan 2024 to focus on early help and SEN support to ensure support is available at earliest point. This will be part of the wider team around the school approach.
- Rolling out SELF early help funding in pathfinder in first instance to ensure schools can put in support at earliest points.
- Taking learning from Bramhall to roll out new system across Stockport in Sept 2024 for success at SEN support.
- Taking learning and transferring into early years and post 16 planning.

3. Neurodiversity support offer

In this workstream we are:

- Reviewing our neurodiversity support offer for pupils who have not got a diagnosis. Currently the support offer is focussed on post diagnosis and there is a need to shift the focus to pre diagnosis.
- Rolling out the Portsmouth model for screening and support for neurodiversity aligning into Greater Manchester planning
- Ensure this workstream both feeds into the Mental Health, Learning Disability and Autism Planning and Delivery Groups plans and influences the approach taken given the close working relationship between the SMBC Autism Team and Stockport parent/carers, children and young people.

6. Conclusion

Stockport has been on an improvement journey since 2019 and continues to transform the SEND offer considering increased prevalence and acuity of needs.

The revisit to Stockport in 2022 evidenced greater integrated working and joined up strategic approaches to manage the needs of our local population. Stockport children and young people continue to show an increased level of need which has been associated with the impact of COVID, however COVID alone cannot account for the spikes of need based on children's age.

Further work is required to understand more fully how the system can identify and respond effectively to early needs to ensure these do not go un-noticed and do not escalate further or become more acute. This requires all frontline workers across education, health and care to be aware of the signs of additional need and know how and when to refer to other appropriate services as well as support families through joint assessments, planning and delivery.

7. Recommendations

The Board are asked to:

Consider the information presented in the paper.

Consider what your respective organisations can do as key partners to improve the lived experience of children with SEND and their families.

Cascade this report to services within your respective organisations who work with Children with SEND and their families with the expectation that better communications becomes a key improvement focus for all services that support our local families.