

SEND UPDATE - SEN PLACES & ATTENDANCE

Report of the Director of Education, Work & Skills

1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report is to provide an update to Childrens Scrutiny on the current position and context of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in Stockport. The report will have a particular emphasis upon SEN school places and attendance.

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 we saw a national rise overall of 9.5% on EHCP plans maintained. This was 8% in Stockport. 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 a 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.

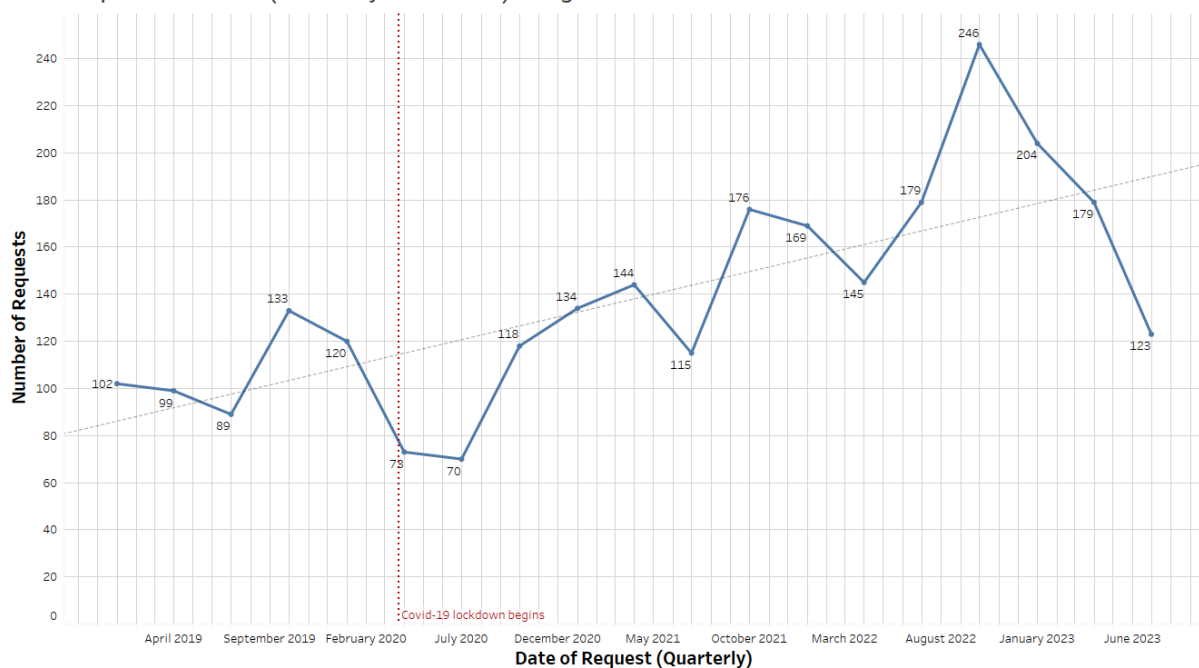
A [new inspection regime](#) has however been launched in 2023. This is a joint inspection programme between OFSTED and CQC of local areas. It is based on the new proposed Green Paper and provides an independent, external evaluation of the effectiveness of the local area partnership's arrangements for 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.

1.2 Current Stockport context

There are currently 4.6% of our overall pupil population with a EHCP compared to 3.9% for our 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.



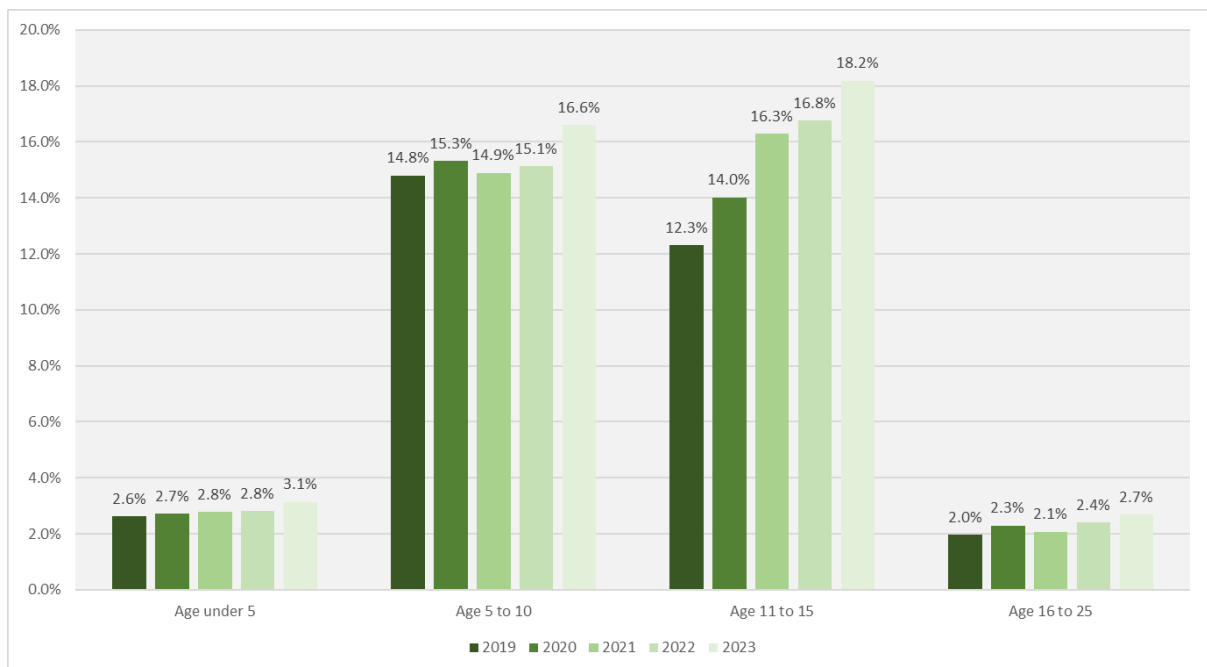
The trend of distinct count of Case ID for Date of Request Quarter. The data is filtered on Age Today and Date of Request Quarter. The Age Today filter keeps 31 of 31 members. The Date of Request Quarter filter keeps 20 of 43 members.

Most referrals come from schools. Although in recent years there has been a rise in parental referral for assessment, this stands at 36.6% of referrals in 2023 as opposed to 24.3% in 2022

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%. This decline is due to capacity within the system to complete advice for the assessments, 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.

We have heard from our SEND families that currently their experience is not what we would want. There is an impact of the delay in the EHCP process and a need to have an

additional focus on SEN support and early help to ensure that need is met at the earliest point. We have heard that the time taken to gain support is too long and families feel that there is too much bureaucracy. This learning is being taken into our transformation work as detailed below.

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. There is a transformation programme for SEND in place and current focus includes:

- Joint work with health colleagues on implementation of a whole new specification for the speech and language offer. 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.
- Joint **Occupational therapy and physio review**- This is a jointly led review between the council and NHS GM Integrated Care and is currently underway. This will report back by 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.
- **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.

2. Focus on SEN school attendance in Stockport

2.1 Current context nationally and Stockport

Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996 parents in England are responsible for ensuring that their child receives an appropriate full-time education. When a child is registered at school, parents are responsible for securing their child's regular attendance. This is the case whether a child has a SEN need or not. The importance of school attendance and attainment is clear. DFE published data shows that in 2019, primary school children in Key Stage 2 who didn't achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and maths missed on average four more days per school year than those whose performance exceeded the expected standard. On average, pupils with higher absence over key stage 4 (year ten to year eleven) had lower GCSE attainment in 2019. Pupils who did not achieve grades 9-4 in English and maths GCSEs in 2019 had an absence rate of 8.8%, compared with 5.2% among pupils who achieved grade 4 in both subjects, and 3.7% among pupils who achieved grade 5 or above. Attendance is especially important for children with additional needs.

The covid 19 pandemic has had an impact on school attendance nationally and there has been a fall in attendance rates. In relation to children with SEN attendance pre covid nationally was lower and has remained lower than their peers. In 2021/22, pupils with complex SEN had much higher absence rates than those with no identified SEN (12.1% compared to 6.9%). Pupils with less complex needs (SEN support) recorded absence rates in between these two groups (10.0%).

The lower attendance rates for SEN are complex. In some cases, pupils with SEN (and in particular those with EHC plans) are more likely than other pupils to attend medical appointments during the school day, or not attend school due to illness. This is particularly the case for children in some specialist school provisions. However, this is not the whole reason and the rise in social, emotional, and mental health needs as discussed in the report also needs to be taken into account. Nationally there has been an increase in non-attendance related to anxiety and the Childrens commissioner reports that 1 in 4 11- to 16-year-olds accessed mental health and well-being support at school in the past year.

In relation to the position now for SEN children. The attendance rate across all schools in England was 92.6% in the week commencing 6th February 2023. The current attendance figures below for our Stockport SEN children show a picture of attendance which is below the averages for other pupils mirroring the national picture.

In our mainstream primary schools for 22/23 academic year the overall attendance was 94.4% however for those on SEN support it was 92% and for EHCP learners only 89.8%

In our mainstream secondary schools for 22/23 academic year the overall attendance was 89% however for those on SEN support it was 83.4% and for EHCP learners only 79.7%

In the tables below we can clearly see that there has been some improvement in relation to attendance in our mainstream provision for SEN learners, but there is still more improvement needed.

In our special schools the overall attendance rates for 2022/23 academic year were higher than national with 88% attendance as opposed to a national figure of 86.8%

Attendance 2023-24 (year to date)

	National	All	NON SEND	SEN Support	EHCP
Primary:	95.8%	95.4%	95.9%	93.2%	91.7%
Secondary	92.2%	92.6%	93.8%	86.8%	84.9%
Special	89.4%	89.2%		79.1%	89.9%
PRU	No data	46.2%	68.9%	42.9%	53.8%
All	93.9%	94.5%	95.6%	90.2%	89.6%

Attendance 2022-23

	All	NON SEND	SEN Support	EHCP
Primary:	94.4%	94.9%	92.2%	89.8%
Secondary	89%	90.3%	83.4%	79.7%
Special	88%		84.5%	88.1%
PRU	43.3%	48.6%	44.3%	41.1%
All	92.5%	93.5%	88.2%	86.3%

Attendance 2021-22

	All	NON SEND	SEN Support	EHCP
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Primary:	93.9%	94.4%	91.7%	89.5%
Secondary	90%	91.1%	84.5%	82.4%
Special	87%		85.8%	87%
PRU	52.5%	45.6%	55.2%	49%
All	92.2%	93.1%	88.2%	86.6%

2.2 Actions to improve attendance

Given the importance of attendance of children at school including our SEN pupils we need to have a Stockport wide focus on attendance in this academic year. In specific relation to SEN pupils the following actions are planned:

- Working group established between the EHCP service and Educational Welfare to bring operational practice closer together in relation to EHCP cohort who have persistent absence.
- Secondary Inclusion group established by secondary headteacher colleagues focussing on issues of inclusion.
- Specific SEMH review underway focussing on current and future pathways of support and specialist provisions. This includes a focus on our PRU systems.
- Attendance to be a focus of the Delivering Better Value Pathfinder commencing in January 2023 focussing on support at SEN level.

3. SEN school places

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 person's 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 at current sites to accommodate additional children. This also 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.

We are currently completing our 5 year sufficiency ESN strategy which will be presented to school place planning board before Christmas. Currently we know we have a distinct issue in relation to support and placements for our children with social, emotional and mental health needs. As described above this group have risen since the covid pandemic. They are currently the largest number of pupils we are sending to independent placements.

There is a need to ensure we have enough placements within Stockport portfolio to ensure we do not have to commission external independent placements. The current review concluding in Jan 2024 will provide a plan for future commissioning needs aligning into the wider sufficiency plan for SEND places.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Childrens Scrutiny committee are asked to consider the information in this report and the current actions to address distinct issues. It is recommended that a further update is given in February 2024 once the actions as outlined have been completed.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are none.

Anyone wishing to inspect the above background papers or requiring further information should contact Tim Bowman on telephone number Tel: 07977 661073 or alternatively email tim.bowman@stockport.gov.uk