

SEND UPDATE - SEMH AND ALTERNATIVE PROVISION

Report of the Director of Education, Work & Skills

1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 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 provides an update in Education Health and Care (EHC) Plan Timeliness, pupils with Social, Emotional, And Mental Health (SEMH) needs, Alternative Provision (AP) and the SEND Inspection Framework.
- 1.2 This report builds on the scrutiny paper of November 2023.

2. NATIONAL CONTEXT

- 2.1 Local Authorities across England are experiencing significant and rising demand for SEND services. There has been a sustained and significant increase in the number of children with an Education Health and Care Plan since the implementation of the SEND reforms in 2016. Nationally there has been a 64% increase.
- 2.2 The Governments Green Paper on SEND published in 2022 noted:

“The government is making an unprecedented level of investment in high needs, with revenue funding increasing by more than 40% between 2019-20 and 2022-23. However, spending is still outstripping funding. Two thirds of local authorities have deficits in their dedicated schools grant (DSG) budgets as a result of high needs cost pressures. By the end of 2020-21, the national total deficit was over £1 billion”.

3. CURRENT STOCKPORT CONTEXT

- 2.1 As stated in the November scrutiny update Stockport continues to have high numbers of children and young people with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- 2.2 In Stockport 8,993 children and young people (0-25 year olds) have Special Educational Needs and/or a Disability (SEND). Of those, 67.3% have their needs met at SEN Support and 32.7% have an Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP). 10.7% of the total population of 0- to 25-year-olds in Stockport have a SEND need. This is higher than the national average (8.5%).
- 2.3 The number of EHC Plans in Stockport have increased by 28.8% since 2019. We continue to have high numbers of referrals for statutory assessment. This has had a significant impact upon timeliness of the EHC Plan. Although we have issued more plans in 2023 than ever before, those issued within the statutory timescale have fallen.
- 2.4 Because of this increased demand and capacity challenges in our teams, most notably the Educational Psychology Service, timeliness has fallen between 2022

2023. We have received additional corporate investment, and have been able to take a number of steps to address this implement an improvement plan and reshape the offer. These steps includes:

- Increasing coordinators in the EHC Plan Team – including short term agency workers recruited to clear backlogs.
- Commitment for additional Educational Psychologists - more associates recruited.
- Strengthening links between school improvement and inclusion service to ensure inclusion and SEN Support is further embedded.
- Delivering transformation plans under “Delivering Better Value” to work towards financial sustainability.
- Fortnightly timeliness meetings with key leaders and the Director of Education
- The launch of the Parent Portal to allow parents to access live progress on assessments and well as finalised plans and the Provider Portal to receive information digitally through a secure site from education, health and care professionals who are informing the content of the plan.

2.5 In terms of primary or most prevalent need for all children with SEND, in 2023 the most common types of need were Autism (36.5%), followed by Social, Emotional and Mental Health (17.7%), Speech, Language and Communications needs (13.7%) and moderate learning difficulty (8.8%). Together these four needs account for 76.8% the primary need of children and young people with an EHC Plan.

4. SOCIAL EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH (SEMH)

3.1 The greatest increase in numbers of children with SEND has been for Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH) with numbers increasing by 446 between 2019 and 2023 (a 51% increase). We have increased numbers of children with emotionally-based school non-attendance (EBSNA), huge rises in requests for special schools and not enough capacity within the system leading to escalating costs relating to Independent Special Schools with associated travel costs. A focussed piece of work is underway in relation to the needs of children and young people with Social Emotional and Mental Health needs.

3.2 The term “ social, emotional and mental health needs” is defined in the SEND Code of practice 2014 to replace SEBD, which stood for Social Emotional Behaviour Difficulties. This was a move that was designed to recognise the direct link between behaviour and mental health difficulties.

3.3

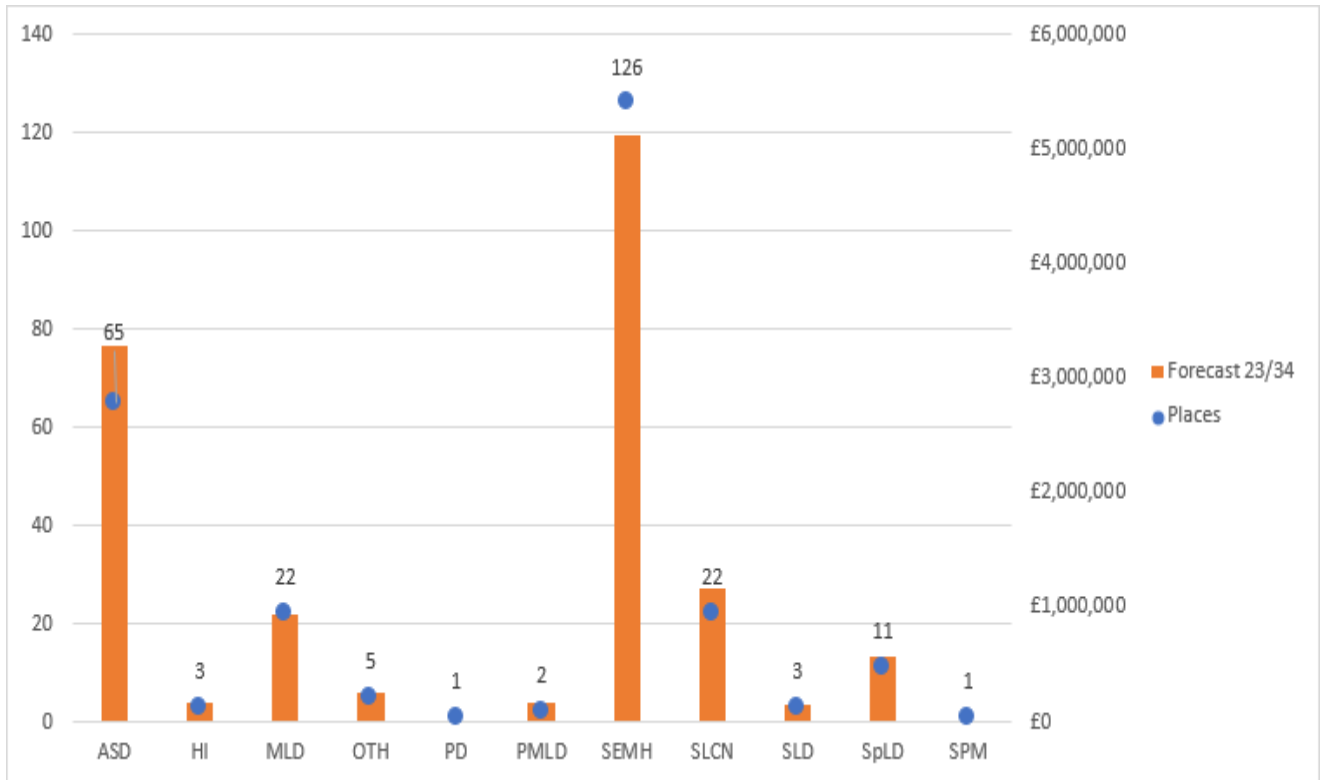
3.4 “These may include becoming withdrawn or isolated, as well as displaying challenging, disruptive or disturbing behaviour. These behaviours may reflect underlying mental health difficulties such as anxiety or depression, self-harming, substance misuse, eating disorders or physical symptoms that are medically unexplained. Other children and young people may have disorders such as attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactive disorder or attachment disorder.”

3.5 SEND Code of Practice 2014

- 3.6 It is worth noting that for many children there will be several co-morbid conditions and needs, including speech and language delay or autism alongside SEMH needs. This means that the actual identification of primary need can be complex and can lead to an identification of SEMH if other needs are not recognised and addressed. An example would be a child displaying behaviour that challenges due to a language delay, and this being termed a SEMH need.
- 3.7 In Stockport 24.3% (22% in England) making up the biggest cohort overall on SEN Support. However there is a distinct change between school phases with 19.5% of those in primary (similar to national at 19.4%) and a higher 28.9% in secondary (3.9% higher than national). DfE data return June 23.
- 3.8 For EHCPs, in England SEMH is 15.2% compared to 17.7% in Stockport. At our secondary phase this is significantly more, 25.6% as opposed to 21% England. DfE Data June 2023.
- 3.9 The differences and further analysis and lived experience will be further explored during the SEMH review. A focus will be the current Stockport Entitlement Framework and reviewing whether this document created for early years, primary schools, secondary schools and colleges is being put into practice to identify early, assess and support SEMH needs.
- 3.10 In Stockport currently we have the following specialist provisions offering SEMH support:
- 3.11 **Primary phase:**
- 3.12 **Oakgrove Primary School** is a small 37 space school in Heald Green. The intake has historically been mainly in years 4 upwards. The children having all been to mainstream primary schools and have then been identified as having SEMH needs by those schools. Historically this was in conjunction with the “behaviour support service” In terms of current cohort there are 3 girls and 34 boys. All of whom had been at high risk of exclusion before they were given places at the school.
- 3.13 There is a planned one classroom expansion on the school happening to provide additional places. All children at Oakgrove have an EHCP.
- 3.14 **Primary Jigsaw** is a team that provide advice and support to primary school settings for pupils struggling with their emotional well-being. They offer one to one work with specific children in blocks of 12 weeks.
- 3.15 **Secondary phase:**
- 3.16 **Windlehurst** is a 48 place small school based over two sites, one in Marple one in the centre of Stockport. The school currently has a cohort of only boys. This is a feeder schools for Oakgrove and other primary schools. Those attending display some degree of behaviour that challenges and have been at risk of exclusion. All children at Windlehurst have an EHCP.
- 3.17 **Pendlebury** is a 44 place Pupil Referral Unit based in Cheadle. Pendlebury offers a mixture of 12-week reintegration placements for years 7 8, 9 and 10 students, bespoke placements for year 11 children. They provide 6 placements in Cedars for

young people who have more complex mental health needs including those who have had hospital stays.

- 3.18 In 2022/23 we have also commissioned Pendlebury paths. This offers 4-to-12-week intervention for entrenched non-attenders with SEMH needs. This offers two sessions per week to help students into a learning environment. This has been highly successful in helping students to re-engage.
- 3.19 Children do not need to have an EHCP to attend Pendlebury. The admissions route is through Secondary Panel for Inclusion (SPI).
- 3.20 **Secondary Jigsaw** is our secondary age emotional wellbeing team based at Pendlebury. Secondary schools directly refer pupils to this service which is delivered within the secondary schools and at the Pendlebury Centre. The service links into Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust CAMHS provision. They provide blocks of intervention for 12 weeks. They have an open caseload of 40 pupils. The service supported 212 pupils in Stockport secondary schools last year.
- 3.21 **Highfields** is Stockport's day 6 permanent exclusion commissioned Pupil Referral Unit. The usual capacity is 125 pupils, however, this has been increased to 160 in the last year due to level of exclusions in the borough. They have a cohort of both boys and girls. Their young people have displayed some behaviour that challenges and have often experienced high levels of trauma. Highfields have a main site in Brinnington and a satellite site in central Stockport providing day 6 support.
- 3.22 The numbers of children there with EHCPs have risen and there are currently 24 children with EHCP. This provision often picks up unidentified SEND need once pupils are in attendance.
- 3.23 **Autism Team** works with both primary and secondary pupils. They currently only work with children with a formal autism diagnosis with link workers to every school. They carry out ADAPT meetings with schools/parents/children following a diagnosis on how best to support the child in school. The team have rolled out autism in schools training and Autism Education Trust training. They carry out parental support training, and case hold families but do not provide support special schools.
- 3.24 In the current Delivering Better Value agenda there is a workstream that is focussing on the neurodiversity early help offer. This will be supported and informed with the expertise of the Autism Team.
- 3.25 **Special Independent Schools** are used when we either don't have capacity with our current state or Local Authority funded provision, or we don't have the expertise needed for the level of complexity. The graph below represents the total spend and age groups it covers:



3.26 These are largely in the secondary phase and are mainly young people who have been assessed for an EHCP at secondary school.

3.27 We recognise the need to ensure we have enough placements within Stockport's LA/state funded provision to significantly reduce commissioning external independent placements. The SEMH review has this included in the scope. This has not yet concluded but we will aim to conclude this work in April 2024. Since September 2023 the following activity has taken place:

- Establishment of a specialist SEMH Headteacher reference group meeting, to provide oversight, direction and check and challenge.
- Secondary Headteacher inclusion group established to look at wider inclusion issues. Three sessions already undertaken.
- Data Analysis
- Business Process mapping of current routes to support
- Best practice review and contacts have been made with other areas to discuss their offers (Rochdale/Oldham)
- Links to other programmes established.
- Young person's voice gathering in at SEMH schools being scoped

3.28 The initial work has found the following areas of improvement:

3.29 **Issue:** Many young people classified as having a SEMH need have unmet wider SEN needs

3.30 **Action:** Need for a revision of graduated response for emotional wellbeing linking into wider screening for SEND Need.

- 3.31 **Issue:** There is a lack of joined up information about best practice across the local area which is accessible in one place to give guidance.
- 3.32 **Action:** Need for a best practice approach with specialist support services and information readily available in one place which is easily accessible.
- 3.33 **Issue:** Although some good nurture provision is available in our secondary schools there is a need to ensure that this is consistent and linked in.
- 3.34 **Action:** Specific nurture provision in every secondary school with a link to specialist support.
- 3.35 **Issue:** We have a high rate of young people going to external independent provision in year 9 onwards.
- 3.36 **Action:** Assess the effectiveness of nurture space and time in secondary schools. Ensure we have sufficient maintained SEMH provision in the borough.
- 3.37 In the next two months the full review will conclude with a final recommendation report then submitted to scrutiny.

5. Alternative Provision (AP)

- 4.1 The Department of Education describes Alternative Provision as;
- Education arranged by local authorities for pupils who, because of exclusion, illness or other reasons, would not otherwise receive suitable education;
 - Education arranged by schools for pupils on a fixed period exclusion;
 - Education for pupils who are directed by schools to off-site provision to improve their behaviour.
- 4.2 A review by the Department of Education was undertaken in 2023 and published in February 2024: [Alternative provision in local areas in England: a thematic review - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/alternative-provision-in-local-areas-in-england-a-thematic-review)
- 4.3 In conjunction with this the National SEND improvement plan and new Inspection Framework has a clear focus upon alternative provision and the Councils oversight of provision. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-and-alternative-provision-improvement-plan>
- 4.4 There is a need to ensure that all areas have an oversight of this vulnerable group of young people and the Department of Education have stated:
- 4.5 “to improve the experiences and outcomes of children in AP, there needs to be better commissioning and oversight of AP at both a strategic and area-wide level, and at the level of individual placements”.**
- 4.6 Area SEND Inspection Framework (updated in Jan 24) outlines what it expects from Local Authorities with regard to AP.

Item	Description
Strategy and commissioning arrangements	Information about the local authority's strategy and commissioning arrangements for alternative provision
Needs of children and young people	Information about the needs of the children and young people in the area who are in alternative provision; information about how the local authority monitors likely future need for placements, and maintains sufficient provision
Settings attendees	Information about the alternative provision settings used by the local authority and the children or young people attending, including where these are part-time placements; this should include a record of all individual intervention plans for children and young people
Monitoring oversight information	The most recent information about the quality and performance of alternative provision settings, including outcomes for children and young people, such as destinations following alternative provision; information on how the local authority quality assures alternative provision, including relevant frameworks

4.7 In Stockport as discussed in the section above we commission Highfields to fulfil our duties under Section 19 of the Education Act in relation to providing secondary age children with alternative provision. In relation to primary age pupils, we do not have a specific alternative provision and their education is supported by the provision of alternative school placements.

4.8 In respect of council oversight as described in the documents above, there is currently a senior officer working group strengthening Stockport's position to be in line with national expectations and inspection criteria. This includes:

- Access to an approved AP framework for schools to be able to ensure consistent guidance and quality of all provision. There are currently frameworks in place within GM which we are negotiating access to rather than creating our own call off framework.
- Further work on operational process and oversight including ensuring all those with an EHCP accessing any alternative provision are monitored for attendance and their outcomes.
- Ensuring data on outcomes and quality are collated consistently for AP provision accessed by Stockport young people.

6. SEND INSPECTION FRAMEWORK

5.1 The new SEND Inspection Framework for was launched in 2023. Inspectors focus on how effectively the Council and Integrated Care Board plan, evaluate and develop

services for children and young people with SEND. However, they will also consider duties on partners to cooperate under Children and Family Act 2014 and SEND Code. The inspection covers Children and young people aged 0-25 with SEND who are educated in the local area or who live in the local area and are educated elsewhere.

5.2 The inspection will also focus on Alternative Provision and duties under section 19 of the Education Act 1996.

5.3 The inspection is now graded with three outcomes available:

5.4 The local area partnership's SEND arrangements typically lead to **positive experiences and outcomes** for children and young people with SEND. The local area partnership is taking action where improvements are needed - Next inspection in 5 years

5.5 The local area partnership's arrangements lead to **inconsistent experiences and outcomes** for children and young people with SEND. The local area partnership must work jointly to make improvements - Next inspection 3 years and monitoring meetings

5.6 There are widespread and/or systemic failings leading to **significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes** of children and young people with SEND, which the local area partnership must address urgently - Priority action plan / monitoring meetings / reinspection within 18 months and then within 3 years

5.7 In addition there are thematic visits to a small number of areas looking at specific areas of interest.

5.8 There is an expectation to meet OFSTED colleagues for engagement meetings on a quarterly basis to look at the self-evaluation and discuss progress.

5.9 In the inspections carried out so far across the country, the following have been raised as key lines of enquiry:

- Evidence of strong partnership working.
- Waiting times for diagnostic pathways and ensuring plans are in place for waiting well.
- Evidence of embedded co-production.
- Use of data to inform decision making and planning.
- Whether transition to adulthood is supported across health, education and care.

5.10 Stockport currently has a monthly inspection preparation group which all three agencies attend. It is recognised that Stockport has made a number of improvements to our SEND offer which have been delivered since our inspection in 2018, these were noted by inspectors in our revisit in 2022.

5.11 Despite these improvements we are challenged by demand for our services and we know, from speaking with families, that there remain challenges.

5.12 Our SEND improvement plans are well developed and their implementation is underway, we have also invested significant resources to extend and improve our capacity, and accelerate our improvement. However, if we were to be inspected in the near future it is likely that inspectors would conclude our offer was not consistent and

that more needs to be done to reduce waiting times for services and improve timeliness.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Childrens Scrutiny committee are asked to consider the information in this report and the current actions to address distinct issues and make comment.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 Anyone wishing to inspect the above background papers or requiring further information should contact Geraldine Gerrard geraldine.gerrard@stockport.gov.uk