

Neurodevelopmental Pathway Improvement Update

Report To (Meeting):	ONE Stockport Health and Care Board		
Report From (Board Lead)	Tim Bowman, Director of Education, Work and Skills, Stockport MBC		
Report From (Author):	Dr Martin Powell, Principal Educational Psychologist, Stockport MBC		
Date:	29/02/2024	Agenda Item No:	10
Previously Considered by:	Not applicable		

Purpose of the report:

This report is to provide an update to the ONE Stockport Health and Care Board on the Neurodevelopmental Pathway Improvement Work.

Key points (Executive Summary):

1. Autism is one of the largest and growing categories of need among children with SEND and accounts for 36.5% of all Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
2. The number of children and young people waiting for an autism assessment is at an all-time high. With significant wait times, there is the risk of escalating need, leading to more costly provision in the long term.
3. The development of a neurodiversity early help and support offer for children, schools and families is one of Stockport's work streams under the DfE's Delivering Better Value in SEND Programme (DBV) and draws on the transformation work undertaken by Portsmouth, including the development of a Neuro-development profiling tool and neuro-diversity team. As in Portsmouth, the key aim is to provide a needs led system of early help and support, without the need for a diagnosis.
4. The Portsmouth Neuro-diversity Profiling Tool has been adopted as part of a GM led initiative and is currently being revised, following pilot work undertaken by colleagues in Manchester. This new GM Neurodiversity Profiling Tool is expected to be available from April 2024. In addition, work is underway to support the development of a digital platform with links to information and resources to support action plans generated from ND profiles. This will be available to professionals, schools and families.
5. A review of Stockport's Autism Team has been completed. A key proposal is for the service to move from a post diagnostic to a pre-diagnostic service, as part of an integrated service offer.
6. Further work is planned with partner agencies, with the Bramhall Pathfinder providing a 'test bed' for a needs led model of service delivery.

Recommendation:

The Board are asked to:

- Consider the information presented in the paper.



- To secure a commitment from your respective organisations with the development of a needs led, early help and support system for neuro-diverse children and young people in Stockport.

Decision		Discuss/Direction		Information/Assurance	
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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 growing number of children with neuro-diverse needs whose needs are not being adequately met as part of a graduated approach and therefore are requiring higher and more costly levels of SEN provision. This is most evident among children and young people with a diagnosis of autism, which represents the largest category of need among those with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).</p> <p>LA SEND Inspection- There are significant wait times for children and young people on the diagnostic pathway and for children and families requiring help and support from post-diagnostic service. This is impacting on the lived experience of children and families and potentially leading to more costly provision in the long term.</p>
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Consultation and Engagement:

Local People / Patient Engagement:	<p>Programme updates have been shared with Parents and Carers Together (PACTS) representatives at the CYP Neuro-development Pathway Working Group, chaired by Gina Evans.</p> <p>Further engagement and comms with parents and carers is required as part of the Bramhall Pathfinder work.</p>
Workforce Engagement:	<p>Regular updates have been provided to key agencies via senior leads and representatives attending the Neuro-development scoping event in September 2023 and Neuro-development Pathway Working Group Meetings.</p>

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)	£				
	Funding stream	Yes		No		
	Included in the s75 Pooled Budget					
	GM ICB (Stockport) delegated budget					
	Other, please specify:					
Finance Comments:						
Performance Impact:						
The Neuro-developmental Early Help and support model is one of the work streams under the DfE's Delivering Better Value (DBV) Programme.						
Workforce Impact:						
Quality and Safety Impact:						
Compliance and/or Legal Impact:						
Equality and Diversity:						
Has an equality impact assessment been completed?	General Statement:					
	If Not Applicable please explain why	Yes		No		N/A
Environmental Impact:						
Has an environmental impact assessment been completed?	General Statement:					
	If Not Applicable please explain why	Yes		No		N/A

Neuro-developmental Early Help and Support Pathway

Introduction

Autism is one of the largest and growing categories of need among children with SEND. According to the 2023 JSNA data for Stockport, Autistic Spectrum Disorder accounts for 36.5% of all Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) issued and is the category with the largest growth since 2019.

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%)

In contrast, autism is the fifth largest category of need for children at SEN support. This discrepancy suggests that there is a challenge for the current system in meeting the needs of autistic children and young people as part of an early help and support offer. As a consequence, schools and families are seeking higher level provision and support for autistic learners at a statutory level.

SEN Support Primary Need Type	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Change: 2019 to 2023
Social, Emotional and Mental Health	868	1008	1030	1118	1314 (23.7%)	+446 (51%)
Moderate Learning Difficulty	1163	1192	1221	1170	1284 (23.1%)	+121 (10%)
Speech, Language and Communications needs	907	991	1054	1148	1258 (22.7%)	+351 (39%)
Specific Learning Difficulty	553	570	577	587	677 (12.2%)	+124 (22%)
Autistic Spectrum Disorder	191	269	245	307	359 (6.5%)	+168 (88%)
Other Difficulty/Disability	260	255	240	243	203 (3.7%)	-57 (-22%)
SEN support but no specialist assessment of type o	72	99	98	154	134 (2.4%)	+62 (86%)
Physical Disability	134	136	112	101	100 (1.8%)	-34 (-25%)
Visual Impairment	59	61	69	78	88 (1.6%)	+29 (49%)
Hearing Impairment	57	71	70	69	73 (1.3%)	+16 (28%)
Multi-Sensory Impairment	28	34	28	34	28 (0.5%)	0 (0%)
Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulty	4	11	12	14	20 (0.4%)	+16 (400%)
Severe Learning Difficulty	5	11	7	10	14 (0.3%)	+9 (180%)
Total	4301	4708	4763	5033	5552	1251 (29%)

In health, colleagues are dealing with a significant rise in neuro-diagnostic assessments, resulting in lengthy waiting times for children and families, particularly for those seeking autism assessments. According to CAMHS data (July 2023), 801 children were on the diagnostic pathway for autism, with an estimated waiting time for new referrals of 4 years from referral to diagnosis. With such significant waiting times, there is the risk of escalating need, leading to more costly provision in the long term.

Neurodiversity Early Help and Support Model

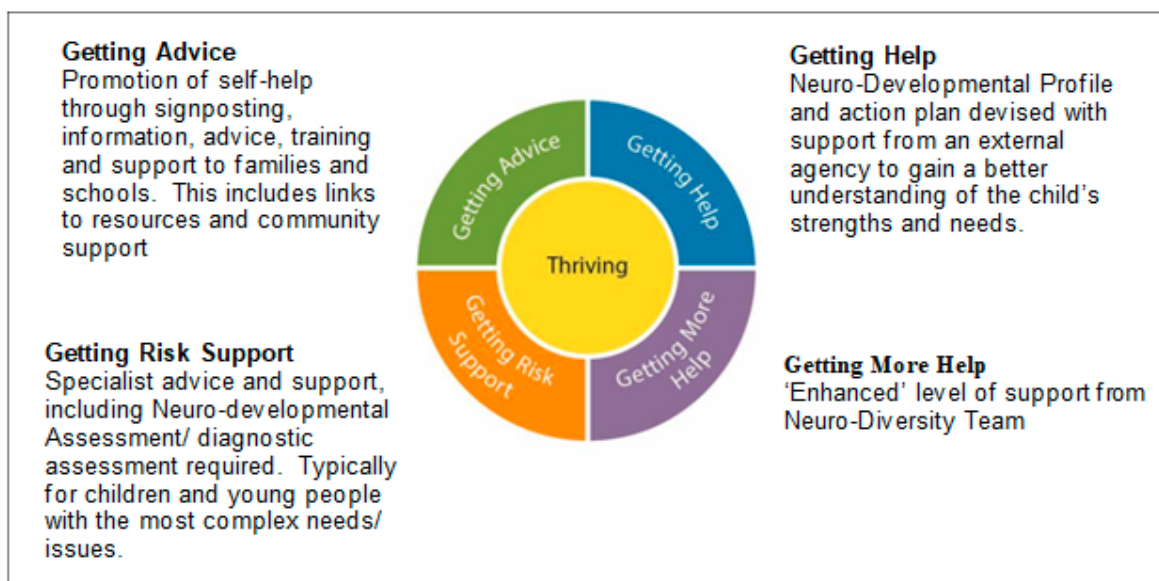
It is clear that there needs to be a shift in the way services are delivered so that there is timely access to help and support for children, schools and families at an earlier point, based on need rather than a formal diagnosis. The Neuro-development Early Help and Support offer is one of the work streams linked to the DfE's Delivering Better Value in SEND Programme (DBV) for Stockport, and draws on the transformation work that has taken place in Portsmouth, including the development of a Neuro profiling tool and a Neuro-diversity Team (NDT).

The Portsmouth Neuro Profiling Tool has been adopted as part of a GM led initiative and is currently being revised, following a pilot project by colleagues in Manchester, led by Jo Bromley, Strategic Lead for Learning Disabilities and Autism. This new GM Neuro Profiling Tool is expected to be available from April 2024. Both the Portsmouth and the GM Neuro Profiling tools are not diagnostic measures but are tools that are designed to help adults to better understand a child's strengths and areas for development. Essentially, both profiling tools are used to scale a child's abilities/ needs across a number of domains (e.g., cognition and learning, attention and concentration, communication, sensory etc). This profile is then used to generate individual action plans for children, as part of an Assess, Plan, Do and Review cycle. To support this, work is also underway at a GM level on the development of a digital platform, with links to information and resources that will guide and help schools, parents/ carers and professionals to identify suitable adjustments and interventions that can be included in the action plans for children.

A service review has been completed on the Autism Team which recommends a shift in service delivery from the current focus on post-diagnostic support towards a pre-diagnostic offer. Work is already in progress for the launch of a pathfinder located within the Bramhall area to provide a more robust integrated early help and support offer to children, families and schools. This provides a 'test bed' for a new service delivery model, with learning used to inform the next stage of development in preparation for a wider roll out across the borough. It also allows for a phased transition for the Autism Team as it widens its offer of support to all children and young people with neuro-divergent needs. Drawing on the i-Thrive model (see Figure 1), a key function of the Neuro-diversity Team, working in conjunction with other partner agencies, will be to build the knowledge, skills and confidence of staff working in settings to support the needs of neurodiverse learners as part of the 'ordinary available provision' in schools, and so reducing the need for more specialist support and provision. It is proposed that the team will also continue to provide information advice and training to parents and carers on meeting the needs of neuro-diverse children and young people.

The role and function of the new service will largely be determined through the DBV Work Stream planning for a Neurodiversity early help and support offer and the Bramhall Pathfinder work. This is likely to include a continuation of many of the current activities undertaken by the Autism Team, particularly in relation to capacity building through training, advice and support to families and schools.

Figure: 1: Proposed Model based on The iThrive Approach



Recommendations and Next Steps

1. A meeting with partner agencies is scheduled for March 2024 to explore how agencies can support and enhance the work of the Neuro-Diversity Team and the pre-diagnostic support offer.
2. The GM Neuro profiling tool is expected to be made available to local areas following a training event in April 2024. The date is yet to be confirmed.
3. Between May and July 2024, the GM Neuro profiling tool will be piloted by the Autism Team and Educational Psychology Service, as part of the Bramhall pathfinder, with a group of children and young people on the diagnostic pathway. The pilot will seek feedback from children and young people, parents/ carers and schools to inform the training plan and wider roll out of the tool.
4. Training on the Neuro-diversity profiling tool will be developed and rolled out to school support service staff from September 2024.