



Scrutiny Commission

2 August 2022

REPORT TITLE	Performance & Processing for the issuing of an Education Health Care Plan including the Early Help Offer.
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1. Purpose of this report:

- 1.1 The Scrutiny Commission at their last meeting have asked to receive a report on EHCP (education health care plans). They are keen to receive information on what the process is to get a plan, what the performance in obtaining a plan is, why some plans take so long to put in place and why some children are often put on to a plan rather than go through early help.
- 1.2 This report sets out:
- i. The process for obtaining a plan
 - ii. The SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) delivery plan that is shaping and developing SEND early identification and intervention for our special needs learners
 - iii. EHCP performance to date

2. The process of obtaining a plan

- 2.1 An EHC (educational health care) needs assessment, is a detailed assessment to assess what a child or young person's special educational needs are. It explains the support they may need to learn, progress and achieve. It is an opportunity for multiple agencies to define an individual's needs and, if required, draw up an Education Health and Care plan (EHC plan). When it does not, the information gathered can be used to inform SEN support provided by the educational setting.
- 2.2 In North Northamptonshire, we would expect to carry out a statutory Education, Health and Care (EHC) assessment for children and young people who:



- have special educational needs (SEN) that are long term, severe and complex
 - have not responded to sustained intervention and support from their setting.
- 2.3 The EHC plan is a legal document for children and young people in education, training or an apprenticeship and are for children and young people who need more support than is available through SEN Support.
- 2.4 In North Northamptonshire requests for assessments are usually made by the educational setting and happens when the family and all professionals involved agree that extra provision is necessary. Professionals or parents can make a request, and this is usually done in partnership with an educational setting. For example, through discussion with the setting's Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO). The young person in their own right can also make a request once they are 16 years old. The IASS service is commissioned to support families in North Northants, which includes providing independent support and guidance through the assessment process.
- 2.5 The 20-week process starts when the Statutory SEN service receives a request. The decision to start an EHC needs assessment and issue a final plan is made by the SEND decision making group. This is a panel was introduced in March 2022, meeting weekly and is made up of a range of health and education professionals. The panel co-ordinator informs the young person and/or their parents/carers of the panel's decision, within 6 weeks of receiving the request. If the decision is not to go ahead with an EHC needs assessment, a letter explaining the decision is sent. This information is also sent to the child or young person's main educational setting.
- 2.6 The poster attached outlines in more detail the process for the application. Further information is also available on the local offer website by clicking the link: [Education, Health, and Care \(EHC\) Plans - NNC and WNC - Local Offer \(northamptonshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/education-health-and-care-ehc-plans-nnc-and-wnc-local-offer)
- 2.7 In addition to the new systems being introduced to reduce the time families have to wait, the local authority has been considering its consultation processes on completion of a plan and when securing specialist provision. These are often time consuming, resulting in schools being chased, without officer knowledge of availability and/or suitability. These, together with the poor governance arrangements, through a complete lack of panel process, has meant that the consultation process had also become a bottle neck. The involvement and leadership input of the wider support service, whose teams play a significant role in the allocation of resources, through the graduated approach for allocating specialist resources, is now beginning to improve our timeliness, as well as our family relationships. It brings consistency through known professionals who work closely with the family during the early support for help and then in supporting families through the placement and transition process. The wider support service can help support and manage expectations



and demand and to ensure a really smooth transition. This process will take some time to embed in the coming months.

3. North Northamptonshire commitment to a SEND early help offer without the need for a statutory assessment

3.1 For the majority of children and young people with SEND North, they are educated with others their age in their local community school which is properly equipped and fit for purpose. This is set out in the graduated approach:

3.2 Decisions for additional resources are made at three levels:

- Schools and settings (from schools' notional budget)
- Localities of Schools Early Help funding (from the HNB Block)
- Specialist Provision (from HNB Block)

(Special School, Specialist Unit Provision)

3.3 The Graduated Response and the Local Team:

3.4 Step 1:

3.5 It is expected that the majority of decisions are made at Schools and Setting level. Schools and settings are expected to use their notional SEN funding to make provision for the majority of pupils with SEN.

3.6 Step 2:

3.7 If the child's need persist the school should discuss the child with the link professional attached to the school from the educational psychology/SEND support services, who will provide advice and guidance. Some children may be referred to the early help panel for additional funding

3.8 Step 3:

3.9 For children with more complex needs, the local team provides the opportunity to discuss specialist support and resources, or to refer for a statutory assessment in order to access more specialist provision in a unit and in some cases a special school.

3.10 The introduction of the early help funding for schools in September, will mean that schools will be able to access additional funding for children who have a SEND support plan without the need for an EHCP.

3.11 The new process for the allocation of the funding is being coordinated across the four localities in North Northamptonshire, with support services working closely with school leaders for the distribution of the funding. We anticipate, over time, that this will reduce the requests for children to undergo a 20-week assessment process, as the confidence of schools and families increases in the



new arrangements, with the knock-on effect of manageable workloads for the EHCP team, which were becoming unsustainable.

- 3.12 To further enhance the SEND early help offer, the children's directorate have been reconfiguring its SEND provision, to ensure that it supports schools in developing local provision. It has been strengthening an early help SEND offer through its education teams working more closely with our special schools to support mainstream schools across the four localities. The SEND service has put in place a delivery plan, which sets out how it intends to develop the skills and confidence of settings, through individual allocation of time to the SEND support services and in doing so facilitate an early identification and intervention offer, to ensure the needs of children and young people with SEND are met as early as possible. It recognises the need to provide more timely localised access to support for the pupils, parents and schools and will be using a Team Around the Child approach to ensure that all children and young people with SEND can achieve the best possible outcomes.
- 3.13 In addition to the reconfiguration of the teams into localities, the SEND support service outreach support is currently being distributed to individual schools, to cut down on the unnecessary time of applying for support through a referral process. Work is also taking place with the special school sector in the piloting of an early help SEMH (social and emotional mental health) outreach team, which is commencing in September. To support in the development of the early help offer SENCO forums have now also been established and meeting since March on a half termly basis. Lead SENCOs for each of the localities are working together to coproduce the new developments to support local areas.
- 3.14 We are very clear that the impact over time we expect to achieve will include:
- **greater inclusion** of children educated in their local community school
 - **fewer** pupils in **segregated independent** provision
 - **reduction** in **complaints, mediations, appeals and tribunals**
 - **reduction** in **exclusions**
 - **less demand and pressure on high-cost** provision

4. EHCP Performance to date

- 4.1 The local authority has increased resources within its statutory assessment team and has seen improvement in the time it takes to obtain an EHCP.
- Timeliness of EHCPs has improved from 28% for the period March 2021 to April 2022 to 56.9% of EHC plans finalized within the 20-week timescale for the period January - June 2022.



	Apr 21	May 21	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21	Nov 21	Dec 21	Jan 22	Feb 22	Mar 22	YTD
20-week EHC Needs Assessments completion rate	26.7%	19.4%	8.0%	14.6%	20.0%	20.0%	9.1%	8.8%	40.9%	40%	59%	53%	28%

	Jan 22	Feb 22	Mar 22	Apr 21	May 21	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21	Nov 21	Dec 21	YTD
20-week EHC Needs Assessments completion rate	40%	59%	53.3%	63.2%	65.4%	59.5%							56.9%

- 4.2 Weekly decision-making groups were introduced in March 2022, where the head of SEND, SEND EHCP team manager; EHCP locality team leads; panel coordinator; principal educational psychologist; service manager and team manager for the SEND support services as well as the designated clinical officer meet. The purpose of the group is to discuss requests for a statutory assessment, as well as the issuing of draft/final plans.
- 4.3 Weekly performance meetings have recently been introduced by the Head of SEND, with the SEND EHCP manager and the locality team leads to monitor the timeliness of the assessments process, including out of time assessments
- 4.4 These meetings are enabling SEND managers to better plan, allocate and monitor performance as well as escalate where cases are stuck and to continue to improve the number that are issued within the 20-week timescale, whilst addressing the backlog for the out of time assessments.
- 4.5 Whilst the service is seeing some improvements in addressing the backlog, it also recognizes the systemic and longer-term issues that the local authority face, in relation to sufficiency of specialist provision. To address this the local authority undertook a sufficiency report outlining some of the key issues in meeting the needs of children and young people who require more specialist provision. A summary of the report shared and endorsed by the school forum, outlines the six key areas of focus moving forward to address the issues the report raises. These include:
- 4.6 The service is also in the process of putting in place a parent help line to improve our communication with our parent carers who are awaiting an assessment outcome.



- 4.7 The performance scorecards form the basis of the underpinning EHCP improvement service delivery plan which includes: the recovery programme for out of time assessments; the completion of the operational guidelines which articulate procedures for assessing and reviewing children with and EHCP; embedding the weekly performance reporting highlighting and actioning areas causing concern; reconfiguration of EHCP and business support team into a permanent structure; embedding of all the new SEND decision - making groups for SEMH/ASD & cognition and learning/sensory & medical complex.

5. In Summary

- 5.1 We are supporting schools in developing local provision by strengthening an early help offer, including early help funding and building our local teams around the four localities of mainstream schools. Over time we expect to see a reduction in the number of referrals for an EHCP plan as confidence in the new system increases.
- 5.2 We have improved our performance in the timeliness of EHCP plans by 29% since 2021 and expect to clear the out of time assessments by the end of August.
- 5.3 In the wider context we have undertaken a sufficiency review to address specialist capacity and are working to a delivery programme that sets out 5 areas for development:
- repurposing existing spare capacity in mainstream schools to develop unit provision
 - expanding existing special school provision
 - establishing a new early help model for pupils with SEMH and developing an integrated graduated approach
 - reducing reliance on the independent/non-maintained sector for specialist provision and redeploying financial resources into local provision
 - developing opportunities for Alternative Curriculum Offer delivered by mainstream schools

Glossary

ASD – autistic spectrum disorder
EHCP – education health care plan
HNB – high needs block
IASS – independent advice and information services
SEMH – social emotional and mental health
SENCO – special educational needs coordinator
SEND – special educational needs and disabilities