

North Somerset Council

Report to the Children & Young People Policy & Scrutiny Panel

Date of Meeting: 29th June

Subject of Report: SEND Improvement Plan and Safety Valve

Town or Parish:

Officer/Member Presenting: Pip Hesketh

Key Decision: NO

Reason: This report is for information only.

Recommendations

Member of Scrutiny Panel to note the Council's progress and commitments.

1. Summary of Report

The SEND Improvement Plan and Safety Valve Plan are attached to this report for Members Review. These Plans provide the main Corporate Governance in Special Educational Needs delivery across the Local Area SEND Partnership including expenditure.

2. Policy:

North Somerset SEND Strategy

3. Details

The SEND Improvement Plan is a Plan required of us by the Department for Education and NHS England. It follows the Improvement Notice issued to the Local Area SEND Partnership in November 2021 following an inspection of SEND earlier that year. At the point the Notice was issued, there were 6 remaining Areas of Serious Weakness (ASW) in North Somerset. In December 2022, the DfE and NSHE were sufficiently satisfied with the progress in two areas that these were stepped down. We have recently had a formal review of our progress by the DfE and are awaiting their assessment of the progress made to date. The Plan captures the work we have committed to in the 4 remaining areas and the progress we have made against it.

It is important to note that the SEND Improvement Plan is for all agencies and partners in North Somerset, including schools and settings but brings together the work undertaken by statutory partners in Health, Social Care (children and adults) and Education. 'LA' in the context of the SEND Improvement Plan means Local Area, and not Local Authority.

The SEND Improvement Plan is monitored by the SEND Improvement Board which is chaired by the Executive Member for Children's Services, Families and Lifelong Learning, Catherine Gibbons with two other members, Jo Walker, Chief Executive of North Somerset Council and Shane Devlin, Chief Executive of the Integrated Care Board. Advisors to the

Board include Sheila Smith, Director of Children's Services, Lisa Manson, Director of Performance and Delivery at the ICB and Kenton Mee, Chief Executive of the local parent carer forum, North Somerset Parents and Carers Working Together. The SEND Improvement Plan is attached.

Safety Valve is a DfE led programme to support Local Authorities to manage spiralling costs in the are of High Needs. In many, if not most Local Authorities, there has been an exceptional increase in demand for specialist resources to support children with SEND and this has created large deficits in the budget Direct Schools Grant, in which the High Needs Block sits. A Safety Valve Agreement allows the DfE to make significant financial contributions to Authorities to help settle the deficit in exchange for a clear and deliverable plan which brings expenditure back within the budget limits. North Somerset Council has achieved a Safety Valve Agreement with the DfE which provides a financial contribution of over £20m. We are currently in month two of a five year recovery plan, agreed with the department. This is attached.

4. Consultation

N/A

5. Financial Implications

Members of Scrutiny to note the importance of adhering to the Safety Valve and the philosophy and commitments which deliver this Plan.

Costs

N/A

Funding

A financial contribution of £1m by the Council has been agreed to deliver Safety Valve. This investment will create new capacity and resources within the Finance, Education and Social Care Teams.

6. Legal Powers and Implications

N/A

7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

No impact

8. Risk Management

A Risk management Plan is included within our Agreement.

9. Equality Implications

No

The work in SEND is aimed to significantly improve outcomes for children with Special Educational Needs.

10. Corporate Implications

Our work in SEND, including Safety Valve is owned at a Corporate level and requires colleagues within the Council to work together to deliver the PI

11. Options Considered

N/A

Author:

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Appendices:

NS SEND Improvement Plan June 2023

Dashboard 2023-24 final for submission

Monitoring Template DRAFT 16 June Final

Nurture Pilot Evaluation 22-23

Background Papers:

None.