

Response to WEBINAR QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY PARENT CARERS

| Provided Theme | OCC Response |
|----------------|---|
| Sufficiency | <p>Following on from the Academies Bill in 2010, councils cannot unilaterally open new special schools. In addition, it is not straightforward to secure funding from central government to increase the number of special school places in our existing special schools.</p> <p>In early 2022, we ran a public consultation that included seeking views on the sufficiency of state-funded Special Schools in Oxfordshire. There was overwhelming support for additional special school places. The SEN Sufficiency Strategy is under review and will be published in early 2023.</p> <p>As well as looking to expand existing special schools, new schools are scheduled to open at Bloxham Grove in 2024 and Faringdon in 2025.</p> <p>In addition, we have submitted to two bids to the Department of Education for new special free schools.</p> <p>Following on from the support for the proposals from the SEND Consultation in 2022 about Resource Bases, we are working with schools to extend the existing offer to allow more children to access specialist support within their local school. This includes ensuring that any new Primary Schools are designed with a Resource Base on site with new Resource Bases in planning in Farringdon, Witney, Banbury and Wantage.</p> <p>Two of the five strategic outcomes in Local Area SEND Strategy relate to the Preparing for Adulthood agenda and the focus is on young people being prepared and able to successfully and sustainably access employment, education and training opportunities in the communities they know.</p> |

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Communication | <p>The role of an SEN Officer is to follow the statutory requirements relating to the Education Health Care Needs Assessment and any subsequent EHC Plan if one is issued. Each SEN Officer has around 250 cases, typical across many Local Authorities. SEN Officers can and do attend Annual Reviews where they can add value relating to the statutory process.</p> <p>We recognise that communication with schools and partners too frequently isn't sufficiently timely. While acknowledging that this is partly due to unprecedented demand on the SEN Casework Team, we are working with staff to address this including clarity on response times and effective management of expectation.</p> <p>We would also like to highlight that this isn't a universal challenge. Parts of our team are working incredibly effectively and we routinely receive good feedback. The leadership team are fully sighted on where the most significant challenges lie and are putting plans in place to address them, including high turnover of staff.</p> <p>Please use the SEN Admin Numbers below to contact your SEN Officer. Our Officers have been given clear guidance on answering calls and there is an escalation process in place.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Central Oxford 01865 815275• North (Cherwell and West Oxfordshire) 01865 816681• South 01865 815354 <p>We will be investing further in the SEND Casework Team as part of the wider Council 23/24 Budget.</p> |
|---------------|--|

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| <p>Tribunal and Fight</p> | <p>Oxfordshire County Council policy and procedure is fully compliant with national SEND legislation, regulations and statutory guidance. Training on SEND Law is part of the induction for new staff and refresher training is part of the annual training cycle.</p> <p>Decision Making is multi agency and evidence based; we can and do reconsider our decisions in light of new information.</p> <p>We are keen to avoid Tribunal appeals where we can but also, when an appeal is lodged, want to continue to work closely with families to see what can be resolved between us. There will be some issues that cannot be mutually resolved and need the Tribunal to determine.</p> <p>Oxfordshire does not have a disproportionate number of appeals compared to other local authorities.</p> |
| <p>Mainstream</p> | <p>We are committed to meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND as locally as possible. For the vast majority this will mean accessing the support they need in their local mainstream setting with needs identified promptly and appropriate support at the earliest opportunity.</p> <p>We are aware that there is some inconsistency of offer for SEN in mainstream schools across Oxfordshire, partially due to lack of clarity on what can be expected. This can lead to loss of confidence in local schools.</p> <p>On 1st February 2023, we launched a number of early intervention initiatives to address the issue of variability across the county and build confidence and expertise in our mainstream schools. These initiatives included The Ordinarily Available Toolkit (guidance for professionals in mainstream schools to clarify the range of special educational provision that they can make), Enabling Environments and the SENDCo Helpdesk. These initiatives will be rolled out over the coming months and their effectiveness in building confidence and expertise in mainstream schools evaluated.</p> |
| <p>Missing Education</p> | <p>Children are best educated with their peers in school. Children with SEN who are deemed too unwell to attend school, including due to mental health, should have a timely referral to the appropriate health professional.</p> <p>We have a new Strategic Lead for Alternative Provision (AP) and welcome working with parents to coproduce the new AP Strategy which will include children who are not attending school fulltime due to health conditions.</p> |

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Waiting Times | <p data-bbox="450 204 2029 279">This query has been forwarded to Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust who are responsible for CAMHS and waiting times and they will respond to you directly.</p> <p data-bbox="450 320 2029 427">Our ability to complete Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments (EHCNA) to statutory deadlines is dependent on the whole system. Shortages of advice providers including Educational Psychologists, Health and Social Care staff, exacerbated by not enough national training places being available for key disciplines.</p> <p data-bbox="450 469 2029 579">Currently, Oxfordshire County Council are making 95.4% of decisions relating to EHCNA requests within 6 weeks of receipt. We have recruited additional staff into the SEN Team, have a more comprehensive programme of Continuing Professional Development and are committed to improving our statutory performance.</p> |
|---------------|--|

| | |
|------------------|---|
| General Concerns | <p>Our ambition is for children and young people with SEND in Oxfordshire to have rich and fulfilling lives at the heart of their community. This means improving the outcomes and lived experiences of children and young people with SEND by providing the right support and opportunities at the right time. Given the current national and local context across education, health and social care, including the lasting effects of the pandemic, this is a challenging agenda but one that we must collectively embrace together if we are to see the improvements that we all want.</p> <p>We have read all of the letters submitted as part of the at the public protest in November 2022 and are sorry that for some of our children in Oxfordshire this ambition is not the reality that they are currently facing. Alongside our schools, we strive to make suitable arrangements for every child with SEN, in particular those with an EHC Plan.</p> <p>There are currently approximately 20,000 children in Oxfordshire identified as having SEN; just over 5,500 of those have an EHC Plan. Every individual child is important and we take the individual cases highlighted very seriously.</p> <p>However, as much as we'd all like, there are no easy or short term solutions to complex problems that have been years in the making and, as above on Sufficiency, some of the possible solutions are outside of our gift of to solve (i.e. cannot unilaterally expand number of maintained Special School places or open new schools, can't increase the funding for SEN available to our schools, can't increase the number of national training places for EPs, SaLT, OT, CAMHS etc). Despite that, we will continue to be proactive and positive in addressing issues across the Local Area that we can tackle</p> <p>High Needs funding is provided by central government. Locally, demand has far outstripped the allocated funding allocated with a 125% increase in the number of EHC Plans since 2015 but only a 49% increase in funding over the same period. We are doing what we can to lobby central government to address this significant mismatch but need to be realistic about what the outcome of that may be and continue to ensure that we use</p> |
|------------------|---|

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Support and Information | <p>The Local Offer provides information on services and how they can be accessed so parent/carers and young people can see clearly what is available. We are reviewing and updating the Local Offer to make sure that it is up-to-date, comprehensive and easier to navigate.</p> <p>Regarding specific age range queries, the Local Offer includes information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Early Years education• Moving into Adulthood• Oxfordshire Family Support Network (OxSFN) 'Moving into Adulthood Handbook' |
|-------------------------|---|