HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
SCHOOLS FORUM

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Update on the SEND SAS Review and implementation of the new Service

Report of the Director of Children's Services

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1.   Purpose

1.1   To update School Forum on the new SEND SAS Structure as a response to the recommendations in the SEND SAS Review and formal Consultation.

2.   Summary

2.1   The SEND SAS Restructure Consultation ran from 11th November 2019 to 18th December 2019, resulting in a re structure.

2.2   This report summarises the progress that has been made to date in establishing the new SEND SAS service and sets out the vision for the future including next steps.

3.   Recommendations

3.1   The School Forum is asked to recognise and note:

- o   the new SEND SAS restructure including strengthened leadership in response to the SEND SAS review and consultation
- o   the aligned leadership to area of specialism and local partnership networks
- o   the next steps for implementation of new structure and long-term vision for SEND SAS

4.   Background

Key Themes from SEND SAS Review and Consultation Response

4.1   The Review identified some key recommendations including in relation to the following:
- Leadership Structure
- Capacity and Capability
- Customer experiences

- Service delivery
- Quality assurance

4.2 The SEND SAS response to these, including progress made to date is summarised in the sections which follows.

5. Progress update on implementing the new SEND SAS service and next steps

5.1 Introduction

I have been in post as head of Service since mid-January 2020. My initial focus has been to gain an understanding of the current service offer, its skills, capacity, ways of working and in consultation with the staff team build a shared vision including the identification of priorities to further develop the quality of our offer. This report summarises the progress that has been made to date and sets out the vision for the future including next steps.

5.2 Launch of new Service

5.2.1 Leadership

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is now fully in place, as per the new structure, and working well. Despite the impact of Covid 19 which has precluded meeting in person, we have developed strong and productive working relationships within the SLT, and more widely across the Service, which have already resulted in a number of new developments, as identified elsewhere in the report.

My focus has been on providing strong but supportive leadership, clarity of purpose and direction, drawing on the knowledge and understanding of my senior leadership team to help shape our vision, and build consensus about both priorities and future direction. A key aspect of this has been the development of the strategic plan. The morale appears to be high and there is a strong sense of shared purpose and a commitment to continuing to review and develop the quality of our offer.

Although a new team, the staff which make it up are well established and I am fortunate to lead a service of committed and capable professionals. I recognise however the importance of taking them with me, as we seek to create a new and shared identity as a reshaped team. A key focus of my early time in the role has therefore been to forge positive relationships which foster professional dialogue and promote shared understanding, whilst at the same time providing strong leadership.

5.2.2 Strategic development plan

The Strategic development plan, which has been co-produced in consultation with the SLT and shared across the staff team, sets out 8 strategic aims and 14 associated priorities, as identified in Appendix 1. The table below represents extracts from the plan, selected to exemplify some of the strategic aims, what success will look like and providing a summary of some of the key actions.

Examples of Strategic aims	What success will look like	Examples of Key Actions	Close date
Vision and Communication	A clear, shared and well communicated vision informs practice, policies and documentation, and is reflected in all aspects of service delivery including the Local Offer. Staff team support service development priorities and there is a shared sense of purpose and direction.	• Co-producing and sharing clear vision, which articulates service purpose. • Development of SEND SAS Strategic plan	• Sept 2020 • May 2020
Capability	SEND SAS undertakes effective development activity to ensure that as a service we maintain and develop the specialist skills of our teams and the quality of our work, including effective leadership and succession planning.	• Recruitment to key posts post re-structure. • Development of new CPD process and policy.	• April 2020 for SLT • Completed - ready for implement ation Sept 2020
Voice of stakeholders	Effective action is taken to gather and use feedback from key stakeholders to ensure that our offer is responsive, meets needs and promotes high quality inclusive action.	• Development of processes to gather and use stakeholder feedback. • Working in partnership with settings, to identify what we mean by high quality inclusive practice, within legislative context, and use this to create a framework which builds capacity and facilitates support and challenge.	• Dec 2020
Service delivery	An effective understanding of demands on staff time in relation to roles, responsibilities, workload and caseloads ensures that SEND SAS fulfils its legal responsibilities and maximises impact for the children, families and settings we work with.	• Analysis of service needs and time and motion study. • Review of referral process. • Implementation of eerily years review recommendations. • Review of transition process, protocols and documentation to support effective transition between key phases and settings.	• Sep 2020
Quality assurance	The work of SEND SAS is effectively evaluated using robust quality assurance procedures which support us in evaluating and continuously improving our offer and impact.	• Develop and actively pilot a service scorecard that identifies and reports on agreed KPI's and progress indicators. • Review and develop ways of measuring and demonstrating impact,	• Completed - ready for implement ation Sept 2020

Examples of Strategic aims	What success will look like	Examples of Key Actions	Close date
		including service and pupil outcomes. • Review and develop quality and consistency of report writing. • Development of appraisal and PMDS process	
County wide integrated support	SENDSAS works in an integrated way both across ISL and with relevant Children's Services partners including Early Years, Herts for Learning to promote effective ways of working collaboratively to impact outcomes and ensure positive experiences for pupils across the county.	• Establish a consistent and clearly articulated approach to support effective collaborative local delivery across ISL and in partnership with external services. • Ensure that implications of geographical areas are taken into account, especially for specialists working County Wide (PNI, MSI some VI)	Sep 2020
Efficient Use of resources	The funding and resource allocation processes used by SENDSAS are designed to facilitate education resources for education in an effective, well-coordinated and outcome focused manner.	• Effective process for allocation of resources/budgets appropriately to support progress and achievement.	Sep 2020

I am confident the Strategic development plan aligns well with the recommendations from the review and demonstrates a sound understanding of the strengths and areas of development for the SEND SAS service. The plan will be instrumental in supporting us to continue to build on the quality of the advice and support we offer to children/young people (CYP), families and educational settings, so that all CYP with SEND can achieve the best possible outcomes. It will enable us not only to plan, but to deliver and monitor progress towards the achievement of the identified priorities at a strategic level.

The strategic plan articulates the route by which I plan to deliver against the recommendations of the review. Whilst we have made good progress with a number of key developments, as this report will evidence, it is important to recognise that building a cohesive and effective team, and implementing the changes required to enable us to offer the best possible service, will take some time. As noted above, therefore, a core purpose of this report is to set out our direction of travel, and highlight some of the key development activities, not yet started, which we plan to undertake in the coming year.

5.2.3 **Recruitment**
We have successfully appointed 2 new specialism leads for SLCN & Autism and Early Years. We have also appointed 3 new Lead Teachers for SLCN & Autism, 2 Lead Teachers for VI, 1 new Lead Teacher in PNI and 2 Lead Teachers in Early Years. As a result, we have substantially strengthened the quality of offer and leadership.

5.2.4 **Capacity and Capability**
As noted above, we have recruited to the leadership positions and now have a full leadership team. We are currently recruiting into other SAT and H grade vacancies and expect these to be filled with staff ready to work from September 2020.

5.2.5 **Job descriptions**
New job descriptions have been developed to reflect the new structure and expectations of SATs. These provide clarity of role throughout the structure and support a service relaunch focused on high quality advice and support.

5.2.6 **Appraisal and PMD process**
A well trained and effective work force is key to offering high-quality advice and support. A key strategic priority is therefore to undertake effective development activity to ensure that as a service we maintain and develop the specialist skills of our teams and the quality of our work, including effective leadership and succession planning. To facilitate this, we have adapted the Hertfordshire PMDS process, reviewed the Centrally Employed Teachers Appraisal policy and documentation to contextualize it for the needs and purpose of SEND SAS. The revised Appraisal policy will be ready for implementation from September 2020.

5.2.7 **CPD Process and associated documents**
The CPD process and documentation has also been revised and amended to ensure that it aligns well with our new PMDS process and will provide a clear and transparent process for planning and delivering CPD which will add value to individuals, specialisms and the service overall, and importantly, support the achievement of our strategic objectives, as articulated in the development plan. The CPD protocol and associated paperwork will be ready for implementation from September 2020.

5.3 **Customer Experience**

5.3.1 **Working with families**
A key priority is to ensure that the SEND SAS offer is designed, delivered and reviewed in relation to demand feedback from children, young people and their families, ensuring it is flexible and responsive to their needs. To achieve this, we will be seeking to identify opportunities, informal and formal, to gather feedback from CYP and families, to include evaluating existing practice in gathering feedback and identifying any missed opportunities. The outcomes will be used to shape our future offer.

5.3.2 **Partnership with Educational settings**
As above, we need to get better at listening to our education partners and responding to what they tell us about the quality and impact of our service. In addition to developing mechanisms to support us in this, as part of our strategic development plan we will also be working to establish a shared understanding about what we mean by high quality inclusive practice, and our respective roles in working together to fulfil our legislative responsibilities, to ensure that CYP with SEND in Hertfordshire are able to access high quality provision, and wherever possible, live and learn alongside their mainstream peers. We are also targeting key areas which we know have been the source of some concern from settings, such as the quality and consistency of report writing.

5.4 **Service delivery and demand**
The strategic plan is focussed on ensuring that our practice and processes support effective working and that we target our resources to maximise positive impact for children, young people and their families and provide high quality support to the educational settings they attend. In addition to building ever stronger partnerships with educational settings, this will involve reviewing current ways of working in order to identify and prioritise those activities which have the greatest impact. This will include undertaking an analysis of service needs/demand and a time and motion study. We will also be implementing the recommendations of the Early Years review and developing our approach to transition, to support CYP with SEND to make a successful transition between key phases, stages and settings. All our teachers will be focussing on supporting educational settings with direct support and modelling good practice.

5.5 **Quality assurance**
We are committed to ensuring that the work of SEND SAS is effectively evaluated using robust quality assurance procedures which support us in evaluating and continuously improving our offer and impact. We know for example we need to develop our use of data in order to better support us to report, analyse and improve performance, monitor budget and demonstrate impact. In addition to outlining the core activities within the strategic development plan, I have created a Project brief in relation to developing KPIs, QA and outcomes and we are beginning to progress the work relating to establishing KPIs for the service against best value principles, and identifying appropriate and meaningful outcome measures to support us in evaluating the impact of the service.

As noted above, we will also be seeking to improve the quality and consistency of our reports. We have already made substantial progress in developing the quality of our appraisal and PMDS process. This, and our CPD process are now much more closely aligned with our strategic priorities so that there is a clear line of sight between our purpose, which is focussed on improving outcomes and experience of CYP with SEND, their families and the settings they attend, our strategic priorities, and the process by which we evaluate our performance and identify development needs.

6. **Covid19 Response**

In response to Children and Young People (CYP) returning to schools/settings in a phased way, the SEND SAS team have developed a 'return to school' protocol to support CYP and families in a flexible way which takes into account some of the challenges that many may experience after such an unsettled time. In order to prioritise our most vulnerable CYPs and to respond effectively to the expected high number of children/schools that will need support, the service will provide prioritised visits, school systemic advice and transition support visits based on the needs of the CYPs. SEND SAS will continue to provide an extended advice line service for schools and parents during the transition back to school. The specialism teams have also worked to produce/source a range of resources and guidance documents for schools to support CYPs in settling back into school routines and in adapting to changes in the school which may be necessary to support social distancing measures.

I am proud of the way the team has responded in these challenging times, and there have been some lovely examples of innovative and effective approaches to

both supporting pupils and settings using technology to overcome the need to social distance/avoid face to face meetings.

During Covid19 we will continue to seek the views from our schools / settings how SEND SAS can best offer targeted high-quality support and advice in their settings.

7.   Budgets and finance

As part of the re-structures, the budgets have now been aligned to specialism areas. This will make it much easier to track where and how budgets are being spent, and in conjunction with the ongoing quality assurance development work, ultimately to evaluate the impact of resources, both financial and in terms of staff.

We have successfully recruited into vacant posts, and the budget allocation by specialism for this year, 2020/21 is shown below, including a breakdown of the proportion of SLCN & Autism resources in Early Years.
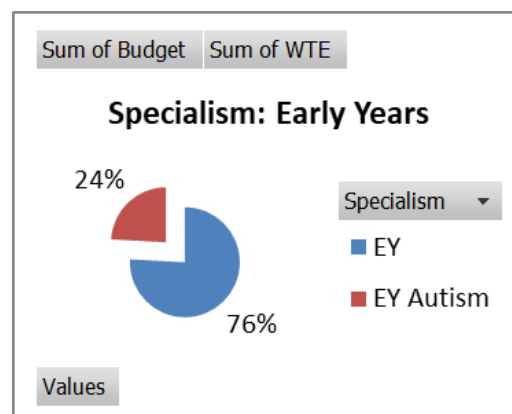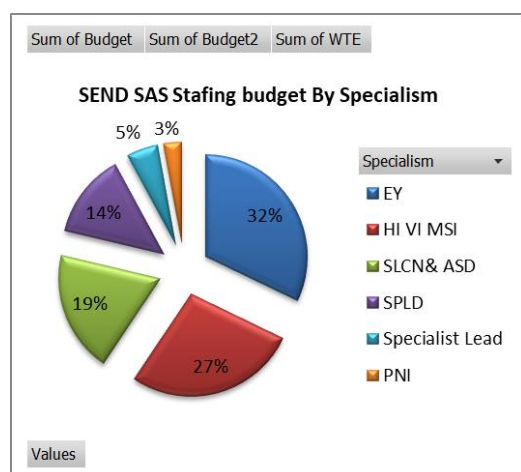
8.   Conclusion

School Forum is asked to note the implementation of the new SEND SAS Service as an outcome from the review and consultation.

Despite the impact of COVID 19, which has precluded face to face interactions and substantially restricted the options to meet as a team, I am pleased with the achievements made in progressing a number of key actions. I have for example, written and approved new Job Descriptions, and in consultation with the Service secured agreement to the Strategic Development plan, as well as a new appraisal/PMDS and CPD process. A lot of effort has been put in to building team morale, to listening, involving key staff in co-production and ultimately to securing agreement and commitment to the future strategic direction, and planned changes to ways of working identified within the strategic plan.

The restructure has facilitated a more targeted and focused approach. We now have in place a strong senior team who will enable us to maximise the impact of a skilled and effective specialist staff team. The strategic plan articulates my vision for the future, I have recruited to capacity, and have new systems in place that will support staff to perform at their best. To summarise, despite the challenging

circumstances resulting from COVID 19, I feel that quite a lot of progress has been made, during a relatively short period of time.

The SAS Service will continue to work in a collaborative way across ISL and our local area.

Strategic Aims and Priorities

Vision and communication
1. Shared and well communicated vision and identity 2. Effective Team working and personal well being
Well trained and effective work force
3. Well trained and effective workforce
Voice of stakeholders
4. Voice of children, young people and their families 5. Voice of educational settings and other key stakeholders
Effective working to support impact
6. Partnership with educational settings 7. SENDSAS ways of working 8. Early Years Review 9. Effective processes to support transition
Quality assurance and systems (including outcome focused reports and referrals)
10. Developing and using effective measures to evaluate impact 11. Producing high quality reports 12. Performance management and development
Countywide high-quality integrated support
13. Cross county joint working
Efficient use of resources
14. Effective process for allocation of resources/budgets appropriately to support progress and achievement.