**Healthwatch Priority Project Decision Checklist**

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| Proposer: Alexia Farmer |  | Date proposed: April 9 2025 |  |
| Decision to be made on which Health and Social Care services should HW agree as priority projects.  |
| Summary of decision to be made A decision is required on should the continuation of the child adolescent mental health service be a priority project for HWS 2025/26 work programme. To include:* The experiences with parents/carers of children with special education needs from under-represented people, who are less likely to be heard by service professionals and decision-makers.
* The experiences of children and young people with special educational needs waiting for support.
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| How much evidence is available about the issue? (1 being limited evidence from limited sources, 4 being well researched with a range of evidence from a range of robust sources)? 4 /4Through gathering local intelligence we have identified from parents that there are challenges with accessing EHCP’s, Accessing SEND schools and support services including CAMHS. As a result of this HWS have completed an initial report based on parents’ views. This will be sent to commissioners and providers with a decision to continue to gather intelligence from parents but to also capture the views and information from providers to gather their perspective. We have already obtained intelligence for the more detailed planned project. Reason for score: We are gathering regular intelligence from parents about the challenges that they face in getting the right support for their children.  |
| Is the issue going to impact on lots of people? (1 being relatively little, 4 being community wide and likely to affect large numbers of people)  4/4 In Sandwell 17.4% of pupils have a statutory plan of special educational needs (statement or EHCP) or are receiving special educational needs support (previously school action and school action plus). This compares to an average of 19.4% across all English metropolitan boroughs. Note that these figures are for pupils attending state schools in Sandwell. 13.9% of school-age children in need have a disability, compared to 11.3% in all English metropolitan boroughs. Sandwell’s vision for children and young people in Sandwell with SEND is that they will be able to achieve their aspiration for a healthy ordinary life through meaningful employment and fulfilling relationships within the community of their choosing. To help with achieving this vision the Local Authority has produced, as required by law, a 'Local Offer' which sets out the support they expect to be available for children and young people in Sandwell with SEND.Reason for score:High levels of children that have an EHCP but also the number of children that still need an EHCP and further intervention.  |
| What is the impact on people on community groups who experience health inequalities and who feel their voice is seldom heard? (1 being relatively little, 4 likely to affect large numbers of those seldom heard) 4/4 Children with SEND needs experience many health and learning inequalities. Without the right support many of these children’s lives are affected greatly and often into adulthood. By getting the right support at the right time can significantly improve their quality of life. Also we have been informed by several parents that due to the lack of support their mental health has also been impacted greatly. It is unclear how many children require an EHCP and or diagnosis but have not received one. Reason for score: Impact on the development of children in Sandwell and the potential impact on their physical health going forward. The families are often not listened to.  |
| Does the issue help HWS to have a positive influence on health and social care services? (1 being unlikely to, 4 being highly likely to) 4/4Reason for score: Changes in services needed. Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission have this week (12 September) published their Area SEND inspection report of the Sandwell Local Area Partnership, following their inspection in July 2023. The report describes a “renewed dynamism in Sandwell”, and states “Leaders across the local area partnership are making sustained improvements for children and young people with SEND.“ Sandwell Council, the NHS Black Country Integrated Care Board (ICB) and Sandwell Children’s Trust are jointly responsible for planning and commissioning services for children and young people with SEND. The report praises the work of education, health and social care professionals to enable young people to take part in decision making about their education, care and support. It also recognises that children and young people appreciate the help they receive in education and training settings, value extra-curricular activities and that mainstream education providers often go ‘above and beyond’ what is expected of them. It also acknowledges that leaders have plans to address the reliance on out of borough post-16 provision for young people and address the increased demand for special school places. |
| Does the issue align with local strategies and needs assessments? (1 being little alignment, and 4 being significant alignment) 3 /4  Sandwell Vision for Inclusion Our Sandwell Local Area Partnership’s vision for inclusion is predicated on the principle of providing the very best experiences leading to the best outcomes for all Sandwell children and young people, aged 0 - 25, and especially for those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and everyone who attends alternative education provision, so that they: • achieve their aspirations for a healthy and successful life through experiencing high quality education and support services during their learning, growth and development stage leading to adulthood and meaningful employment and fulfilling relationships within the community of their choosing. • have choice and control over decisions about their health, education, employment, care arrangements, friendships and relationships; and • successfully participate in the community and access meaningful occupation, employment and life-long learning opportunities. We believe that Inclusion is everybody’s business across the Sandwell Local Area Partnership - embedding the vision of our Inclusion (SEND and Alternative Provision) Strategy into the practice of everyone who works with children, young people and their families in ways that strengthen families. We recognise that our current SEND Strategy 2021-2024 does not go far enough to secure the very best experiences and outcomes for all children and young people with SEND. Too often they are placed in out of borough provisions which have taken them away from their families, their local community and friendship groups. We want to prioritise Sandwell children first, prioritising their placement into high quality education provision and support services, so they can truly thrive in Sandwell. Sandwell children and young people SEND background context: • Sandwell has a long and successful track record of meeting the needs of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. We are a very inclusive authority with many children and young people being educated within mainstream schools and settings. • On the 26th of May, there were over 11,259 children and young people with SEND in Sandwell. Historically, about 1,300 children and young people had received Statements of Special Educational Need (2014). On this date, there were 3228 children or young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP/EHC Plan) in Sandwell across the 0-25 age range. This significant increase, 51% since 2019, is due to the rise of new EHCP assessments within school aged children and the inclusion of young people aged up to 25 years old entitled to have support through an EHC Plan. Our current predictions would suggest that if rate of growth continues, we will have over 3,500 C/YP with EHCPs by 2025Reason for score: Current predictions would suggest that if rate of growth continues, we will have over 3,500 C/YP with EHCPs by 2025The Sandwell Local Area Inclusion Plan 2023-2026 is based on the following principles: • Genuine co-production at a strategic and operational level with children and young people, their parents and carers in all decisions made about them or on their behalf. • A strong focus on high ambition and aspirations for securing high quality education and pastoral support experiences leading to good outcomes to enable them to be in the best possible place to have an independent future. • A greater focus on support that enable those with SEND and everyone within alternative provision to succeed in their education and make a successful transition to adulthood, at all times promoting their independence. • An emphasis on the joint planning and commissioning of services to ensure close co-operation between education, health and social care so as to provide best value and impact on service users. • Specific guidance for education and training settings to apply a graduated and inclusive approach to identifying and supporting children and young people with SEND and those who attend alternative education settings. • For children and young people with more complex needs, a coordinated assessment process which is timely and leads to high quality services and support provided to them and their families |
| Is the issue already being dealt with effectively by someone else? (1 being dealt with satisfactorily by someone else, 4 not being dealt with at all) 3 /4There are improvements being made and additional funding for SEND provision in Sandwell. Express and Star Jan 2025Sandwell MPs Antonia Bance, Sarah Coombes and Gurinder Singh Josan CBE, wrote to the Minister for School Standards asking how the £1 billion uplift announced in the Chancellors budget to improve SEND and alternative provision would be distributed, lobbying the government to make sure Sandwell gets its fair share, after concerns from the local council about how the funding would be allocated. The Minister for School Standards confirmed Sandwell would receive a huge increase of 9.3% per head meaning Sandwell’s overall allocation will be over £81 million.  In her letter, the Minister for School Standards, Catherine McKinnell MP said: “For too long the education system has not met the needs of all children, particularly those with special educational needs and disabilities, with parents struggling to get their children the support they need and deserve.  Although Sandwell has a Local Offer Strategy many parents are still not accessing the support that they need for their children.   |
| Total score: 22 /24Vote of HAB members taken: Majority reached:  |
| Decision of the HAB:  |
| Reasons why the decision was made:  |
| Date decision ratified: April 9 2025 |