



WSOA Listening Event 24.01.2022 Questions and Answers

Appendix D – Questions and Answers

Parent question – When can we expect to see a difference and an impact on our lives and those of our children. There are lots of meeting but when can we expect to see a difference in day to day practise for our young people?

LA responded – There are some areas of the local area inspection which shouldn't be lost, which strengths and practises set Rotherham apart. We shouldn't lose sight that there are some areas of strength within our system. To directly answer your question, the WSoA is ambitious, it's got an 18 month window, realistically that has shortened to 12 months because of how the publication of WSoA has panned out chronologically.

There is a realistic expectation that some of the key actions that have been highlighted that have an intrinsic link can be addressed quickly. A couple of examples, the capacity for the Designated Public Officer has an intrinsic link to the graduated approach, that's been addressed already, we've doubled capacity for that role, so that will have a direct impact for outcomes immediately. The other one which stands out and is linked to the wider development of WSoA is SENDIAAS's role as a jointly commissioned service has been addressed already. Another good example would be the work my colleague has done to refresh the SENCO network. Making sure a wider breadth of schools and information settings are involved in that, so again it will have a direct impact on quality of practise almost immediately.

Some of the bigger challenges; If we take preparation for adulthood there are wider systemic challenges that have a number of key stakeholders. This will take time and will need a strong investment right across the partnership to support strong outcomes. Therefore, it's difficult to put an immediate outcome on that but as systems become more defined by the WSoA we should see more distinct improvements.

If we take the area that probably more pertinent and the RMBC position in the immediacy, the quality of EHCP but that outcome is defined by the inputs from health and social care. There is work ongoing now to improve the capacity and quality within that team, so the hope and expectation in the short term is to give parents a better level of support and service that supports those improved outcomes.

The hope and expectation in the next 12 to 18 months is that we make the key milestones set out in that document and we make a tangible impact on the lives of children and young people as we go forward.



Company limited by Guarantee
Registered Charity 1147969

Parent commented - I'm talking more about annual reviews and the issues in getting annual reviews completed. A child hasn't had a completed annual review in 3 years and I know many parents in the same position. That is something that we'd hope to see an impact on pretty quickly because they are so vital.

LA responded - We have increased capacity for what we've christened the review reset project in order to tackle the backlog of annual review. There are two reasons for the backlog, one being that the review hasn't taken place, the other being that the central EHCP team hasn't acknowledged or picked up on any recommendations for change. We have four new very experienced temporary members of staff to pick up on capacity. The care plan co-ordinators are to solely work on reviews picking up on the backlog, working in the background running alongside. Making sure the systems and processes are going to be fit for purpose so, that we have it as an everyday business as usual rather than an emergency.

The aim will be that those reviews are up to date and especially ready for the next academic year and that's the longest timeline I'll give you. We are hoping by the next academic year that everything will be up to date and that's because the senior leaders have allowed extra financial capacity to allow to have those members of staff.

The other part about messages to SENCO's I take extremely seriously. We do need to remind some of our SENCO's what is good practice. Such as sending out invites to reviews 6 weeks in advance, to allow the practitioners that the child or young person who is involved with can attend. If the practitioner cannot attend then we expect a written report which would be shared with the group, before the meeting takes place and the report is then shared during the EHCP review. We have sent messages out to the SENCO's to ensure they know what their role is and to make the review documents as good and as robust as they can be. The good reports can form an amended plan rather than the EHCP team having to phone and chase. It's really important for us to work with school and us to encourage the schools to feel like we are all in this together but for the schools to understand what their roles and responsibilities are.

Parent comment – I just wanted to pick up on some other things that have been said. In my experience with the EHC team currently it's diabolical. People can't get a response by phoning or emailing. I've made a complaint to my local councillor about it and have had a response from Children's and Young Peoples Services, who said that they were really concerned that the team weren't responding to people at all. Since then, people have started getting very random out of office responses from the EHC team. One particular lady received an email saying that "I no longer work for the EHCP team, contact assent" and on the same day she received an email from the same person saying "I have been given your file". This is across the board, no one can get an answer from anyone.

LA responded – I've asked that a clear update is provided to RPCF in relation to changes within the team. There is a significant amount of turnover off staff as part of a number of areas, including the improvement element to support the long term structure. The teams that are currently working while we restructure, we have invested heavily in getting experiences SEN professionals from across the system to work in Rotherham.

Company limited by Guarantee
Registered Charity 1147969



You make an extremely valid point as the other parent did and it's not good enough, It's not good enough to be bumped along and we take responsibility for that.

We are moving away from automated responses. Obviously there is significant pressure and need for improvement but that shouldn't define the improvements we need to make. What I've asked my colleague to do is to provide an update as they have done to all SENCOS in relation to changes in the staffing team and what the staffing structure looks like. I've also asked for a level of clarity to be provided in relation to automated responses from inboxes. Let's move back to a position where people phone and get the opportunity to speak to a person, even if it's not the right person to deal fully with your query, that person should have the level of expertise to provide re-assurance and take it forward.

There are a number of improvements that need to happen but that does take time, so I'm asking for your consideration and patience. Once the unit manager who returns from sick leave returns we are looking at a change of emphasis. There are also some key areas in the WSoA which we will be measured against in the way we work. Restorative practise, fully embedding the four cornerstones, significant work on additional capacity to develop modern ways of working, including a customer service element. Also giving the opportunity for the team to have a number of key areas of CPD to support them. I can't defer from what you're saying because ultimately I'm disappointed.

Parent responded – It's good that there's stuff in place to improve it but I think the automated responses need to stop now because they aren't helping.

LA responded– To support my colleague, it isn't going un-noticed and one of the biggest influences at the minute is high staff turnover. I have spoken to the team and we are making sure that the information on the portal is correct also that the people's names who have left aren't on your child's file. It's something that we are not proud of and it's something that we will make sure is part and parcel of understanding roles and responsibilities within that team and etiquette.

Parent commented – The co-ordinators aren't looking at all of the reports to form a bigger picture. They're looking at them as individual reports for example, one report says that a child is very blank in school, they can't tell what she is feeling or what her emotions are. Then in another report it states that when the child is in sensory overload she will appear very blank and will have no emotion, which clearly explains the reasons but the reports aren't being put together. In a further report from an O.T it says to be able to provide the level of sensory input that the child needs will be very difficult in a main stream environment because of the staffing levels required to fulfil that. Yet the recent annual review says that the child needs to go back into a mainstream school causing the child to have a mental breakdown and she hasn't been able to attend school since. Because of the reports not being seen as a whole, there now has to be a tribunal and during this time the child will be out of school.

LA responded – That's going back to the quality of information provided by school in the reports, the EHC team are co-ordinators they are there to co-ordinate and rely on information from other people.

Parent question – A child's EHC was reviewed last summer but no documents were ever received, no opinions were received and I don't know if they were asked for. When calling the EHC team in November they appeared to be in a state of panic. The co-ordinator who had the child's file had only had it for a couple of weeks. They had seen that the review had taken place in May of the previous year. The information was from when the child was 3 years old and under a different authority, the child is now 6 years old. The co-ordinator said that the child's file was one of the ones looked at by Ofsted and deemed insufficient.

How are you communicating to parents when plans are insufficient with a timeline of what can be done?

LA responded – We rely on the SENCO organising meetings asking for all up to date reports of involvement. The reports should then be submitted to the EHC team where they are reviewed and any amendments necessary will be made. It's not the intention that an EHCP should be changed at the end of every year following a review, changed probably at the end of every key stage.

Parent responded – What hasn't happened is there are no outcomes on the child's report, that's the reason that it has been sent back as being insufficient. There are so many issues regarding communication, not just with parents but also departments, practitioners and schools not communicating with each other and the child's parents.

LA responded – I will feed that back to the designated Clinical Officer who is now also part of the discussions in the sub group for extra training. We do have a determination to improve on that communication and getting people in the same rooms at the same time.

RPCF question – There are some comments around the EHC hub and how families access it?

LA responded – Currently the only plans on the EHCP hub are the brand new ones, any changes as part of a review will go on the hub but not all plans are on the hub. Head of SEN doesn't know how to access the hub but will pass the details along to RPCF. All of the reports will be held on the hub, this should help with communication. It's intended that all plans will be on the hub in the future with the exception of reasonable adjustments. As an action Head of SEN will look into this.

RPCF commented – with new EHCP's you are sent a letter with a link and login details but this is only for new plans.