

# Overview & Scrutiny

## March 2022

### Objective 2 – Getting the Basics Right – SENAR Update





# Progress To Date...

- Secured additional funding from Cabinet to fulfil capacity issues in the service
- Recruited over 50 new officers into the SENAR service – increased capacity to complete casework - initial number of service staff was 22 – we now have over 80
- Rearranged the SENAR service into 4 area teams – North, East, South & West
- Added in further management capacity – this will drive the change and improvements into the service
- Changed the decision making process from the DMG (decisions making groups) back to multi layered decisions including SEN officers and SEND panel attended by partnership representation.
- Developed the training plan for NEXUS – the upgraded case management system - and delivered to SENAR staff to allow for the upgrade to be implemented
- Reviewed and Identified the needs from the Nexus case management system upgrade
- Reviewed the Quality Assurance processes and a holding regular meeting with partners to develop a Quality Assurance framework.



# Progress To Date...Quality Assurance

This multi-agency Quality Assurance Framework sets out a shared approach to QA across partner agencies, each of whom have their own internal quality assurance processes. This enables a co-ordinated and coherent approach to cycle of learning / continuous improvement and action monitoring that demonstrates impact for children, young people and young adults.

- We have a working group attended by all partners and at present we are working together to create a Quality Assurance Framework – This is currently in final draft stage and should be ready to finalise by the end of March 2022
- A 'What good looks like' document linked to the QA framework - This is currently in draft stage and should be ready to consult as a final draft by the end of March 2022
- Reviewing the system tool – Invision and agreeing roles and responsibilities for all partners The final meeting has taken place and the tool extension agreed through IT partners.
- We are scheduling a meeting with parents/carers to review and consult on the final draft during April 2022.



# Progress To Date...NEXUS

## Benefits to using Nexus:

- Better usability for all partners – this will replace the high number of spreadsheets currently used in the service to track caseloads, decisions etc.
- Give managers deeper insight into staff case loads and allow for capability management and training to be supported
- To keep a more stringent handle of the completion of workload to ensure compliance against statutory deadlines
- Documentation and process directly linked to the Quality Assurance framework
- More robust recording capability of linked partners – aligned to Eclipse for example
- The NEXUS system provides direct access to the young persons SEND file through portals directly accessed by parents & young people, professionals - including Education Phycologists, Health colleagues and Social Care colleagues, Schools & Settings, advisory services and SENAR service staff.
- Bespoke user dashboards and reporting function to allow for development of time frame tracking additional to the stator timescales. This would include the time frames for individual reviews and assessments versus statutory timescales versus national average.
- Parent/Carer consultation will be needed to ensure the Parent Portal is developed in line with needs/wants of the young people and families and user friendly – this consultation will take place during April 2022



# Progress To Date...Service Structure

Activity (by end of September 2022):

- Confirmation of the draft permanent structure – to include costing model inline with additional roles and responsibilities identified and confirmed over the last 6 months – ensuring this is fit for purpose for the next 5 years
  - Review job descriptions of existing roles and submit for Job Evaluation – ensuring they reflect the SEND Code of Practice 2015 and any new changes likely following the upcoming SEND reforms
  - Review new required job descriptions and submit for Job Evaluation
  - Growth Bid report submitted to cabinet for decision
  - Union activity and S188 notice issued to permanent staff
  - Start external recruitment activity
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- It is likely to take up to 2 years to create a permanent structure of staff within the SENAR service and in the meantime we will have to continue to rely on agency resource.
  - The entire West Midlands network is struggling to recruit permanent staff because the agency market is very lucrative but we hope to combat this with our attractive competitive salary bandings for roles
  - Following the improvement journey we hope to make Birmingham a place where people want to work
  - We need to focus on a workforce development strategy and promote within where possible to build our permanent service
  - We also hope to keep a number of the interim agency staff currently with us as they have contributed to the change



# Impact / Green Shoots...

- We have Increased staffing levels in the service teams and introduced senior officers to track and monitor work and timescales.
- Upgrading contact points for SENAR officers – providing all officers with phones to work alongside the parent link service.
- **Reviews** - Although we are currently still dealing with a backlog that is impacting on timescales we expect to be back within timescales by end of September 2022
- **Assessments** - We are working to bring the Assessment timeframes back inline with the 20 weeks. There is a current backlog that we are working through but once cleared we can impact positively.
- We are building a new assessments process through coproduction (further info to follow)
- **Complaints** for SENAR are currently sitting at **18** (as of 18<sup>th</sup> March 2022). Dedicated officers have been assigned and training delivered to corporate complaints team to align the corporate procedure. More officers in the service has led to less complaints around communication and the majority of complaints are in relation to lack of special school places.



## Next Steps...

- Plan & design the pilot for the development of the assessment process
- Review all templated documentation associated with the pilot programme
- Reviewing the contract with the CACI (Nexus case management system providers)
- Review the restructure of the service to create more permanence
- Review Communication pathways into the service



# Next Steps...EHC Needs Assessments Project

**Aim** - to develop the assessments process inline with the SEND Code of Practice 2015. Which will create a more comprehensive and compliant process for all.

## **Actions**

- Complete an internal review of all processes and associated documentation, training plans and ways of working.
- Co-production to refine process and documents by consulting with Access 2 Education team, health colleagues, social care colleagues, school/settings sample and parents/carers.
- Implement a pilot project to test and evaluate the process
- Provide clear feedback and updates on progress and any further development needed through co-production through running the pilot.
- Develop training materials for all professionals and timescale roadmaps for parents/carers
- Build process and all associated documentation and transfer process to Nexus case management system
- Feedback from parents/carers is key to the success of this programme.





## Risks / Issues ...

- Contract negotiations with CACi – Nexus case management system providers – delays could lead to risks with implementation of newly developed process
- Officer time to complete transformation work alongside pressures around business as usual activity
- Finance – currently no permanent funding available to secure the SENAR staffing structure post March 2023

