# Directorate for Children & Young People

Jo-Anne Sanders

Service Director for Learning & Early Support First Floor South

Civic Centre 3 High Street Huddersfield HD1 2EY

Tel: 01484 221000

**EHCNAsuppor**t**@kirklees.gov.uk**

25th November 2021

Dear colleagues

# Update regarding Education Health and Care Needs Assessments (EHCNA) timescales

You may be aware that, unfortunately, we are currently experiencing some challenges affecting our ability to offer timely assessments for children with SEND who may require provision through an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

A range of factors are contributing to this and I would wish toassure you that we are working hard to deliver the support that our Kirklees children deserve. As we work through these difficult and hopefully temporary challenges, please be assured that we are utilising our resources in the most effective ways we can.

# Increased demand

We have been working hard to make improvements to EHCNAs within Kirklees. This includes changes to the Request for Assessment process, along with the development, and quality assurance, of EHC Plans that we issue. Ensure high quality EHC plans is important to us.

So far this year, we have seen a 34% increase in requests for assessment compared to the same period last year, this has meant that there has also been an increase in the agreement to assess by 5%. This has resulted in over 100 additional assessments being undertaken.

# Reduced capacity

We have experienced capacity issues within the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Assessment and Commissioning Team (SENDACT) and Educational Psychology team due to levels of staff absence and staff turnover. Alongside increased demand for assessments, this is adding further pressures.

With regret this means we are not currently able to allocate an Educational Psychologist (EP) at the point of the agreement to assess. However, as the EHC Needs Assessments are

allocated, the EP will be in touch about starting their involvement in the assessment process. The shortage of EPs is a regional and national issue and are not the only area that is facing challenge in capacity. We are working to find solutions to increase capacity as quickly as possible.

# Actions we are taking

* We will be making contact with all families to make them aware of the delays and will keep in regular contact with them (copy of initial letters, attached for your information)
* We will keep you regularly updated on the situation
* We have produced a FAQ document which will be continually updated and shared with schools, families and professionals
* We are investing additional resources in the SENDACT team
* We will retain a core team of interim staff within SENDACT until the new capacity is embedded
* We are working closely with a number of recruitment agencies to secure locum EP capacity and recruiting new EP staff as quickly as possible
* We are working both regionally and nationally to find best practice solutions to our current EP capacity issues as we know a number of other authorities are experiencing the same challenges
* All requests for assessment will be progressed in date order of the decision to assess
* Within the EP service, we are exploring opportunities to undertake assessments within other streams of work for our most vulnerable children and young people
* All EHCPs issued beyond timescale will have the top-up funding backdated to the point it would have been received if the assessment had been completed within the 20 weeks

Both the Kirklees Local Offer (www.kirkleeslocaloffer.org.uk) and the Inclusion Support Offer (ISO) are a valuable resource if you have any questions or need information about supporting children and young people with SEND in your setting. The ISO is available on 01484 416440, or you can schedule a call through the Local Offer webpage.

We fully understand that you may have questions or concerns. Please feel free to contact us on EHCNAsupport@kirklees.gov.uk. Our ambition is to ensure every child has the best start in life and is able to access the support they need when they need it. I can assure you that we will continue to work hard to resolve these challenges as quickly as possible and, in the meantime, ensure families have access to any support that can be provided.

Thank you for your support. Yours sincerely

Jo-Anne Sanders

Service Director for Learning & Early Support