



Warwickshire Parent Carer Webinar (SEND)

10th June 2021 Q&A's

Support in Mainstream Settings for Children and Young people with SEND

1. How can the Local Authority make sure schools have the skills to meet individual needs?

The Children and Families Act 2014 secures the general presumption in law of mainstream education in relation to decisions about where children and young people with SEN should be educated and the Equality Act 2010 provides protection from discrimination for disabled people. Warwickshire County Council (WCC) recognises that some students will require specialist support to manage their special educational need. In response WCC has significantly invested in the continued development of special schools and Enhanced Resourced Provisions for children and young people with Autism and/or SEMH needs.

Access to the right support at the right time will enable most children and young people with SEND to have their needs met in a mainstream setting within their local communities. A great deal of work is underway with mainstream settings to build skills and capacity; this is an ongoing process to reflect the changing SEND landscape and growth in mental health needs.

Mainstream schools have access to a wide range of training and support packages, some of which are free to schools and some of which can be purchased from the school's SEND budget. The training packages delivered have a strong evidence base.

In addition to the delivery of training, WCC is developing ongoing support for school-based staff including network meetings and Significant Adult Provision support. The SEND and Inclusion Change Programme includes several projects focused on building skills and capacity in mainstream settings; we know that in most cases, early identification and support can significantly reduce the likelihood of children and young people reaching crisis point.

2. My son is in an independent specialist school and he would have stayed there if the school had not put him in seclusion. We need to prevent restraint and seclusion in order to prevent the trauma this causes and the associated school phobia which follows

WCC encourages schools to use a 'Team Teach' approach which advocates using de-escalation strategies and the limited use of restrictive physical intervention. However, if a parent has any concerns about their child, then we would urge them to speak to their Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) Coordinator in SENDAR.

3. The bigger and more impersonal that mainstream schools become, the less likely it is that many students with anxiety/MH needs will thrive there. So, specialist provision has to fill this need unless the school's model is going to change?

Whilst WCC recognises that some students will require specialist support to manage their special educational need, the majority of children and young people with an identified SEN (over, 13,000 in Warwickshire) have their needs met within mainstream school. Regardless of size, larger schools can often meet needs of the most complex children and young people with SEND. The SEND and Inclusion Change Programme also aims to improve early intervention and identification to support children and young people with SEND.

4. What support is available for the large number of parents who have had to give up work because their vulnerable children are not in school because mainstream is failing to meet need?

Any family that finds themselves facing financial difficulty across Warwickshire can contact the Family Information Service to find out what services are available to support them. <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/children-families>. The Family Information Service helpline is a one stop shop for parents/carers to access signposting and one to one practical support including employment, finance, carers assessments, and EHC Plans.

5. My school said they don't subscribe to STS! That would be brilliant to offer services where there is need rather than asking schools to pay for them. Just need to ensure school staff are adequately trained to recognise need. ASD training cannot be a one-off event for schools. It's a complex spectrum and support needs to be dynamic and continuous. They only want their children in mainstream if they are going to be happy and understood there. It's not a special / mainstream choice. It's a child's mental health choice.

WCC recognises that not all schools subscribe to WCC STS service and other services are often commissioned, independent of this provider. The SEND and Inclusion Change Programme includes projects to explore different ways for schools to access specialist support services and funding.

6. How many parents who wanted their children to go to mainstream, changed their mind later on, when the setting failed them? Do you have stats for that please?

Data is not collected on this. However, we know that the vast majority of children and young people with SEND have their needs met within a mainstream setting.

7. I was told my son had to fail at mainstream before he could get the support he needed. He had to be excluded from two schools before he got a specialist placement! And they are still dealing with the emotional impact of that. It is tragic that some of our amazing talented, autistic children end up being classed as medically unfit just because they are in a setting not able to understand or adjust their practice for them. What steps are in place to train mainstream staff sufficiently? What about those children unable to attend due to disabling mental health, who end up with Flex Learning, and are unable to transition back to mainstream? Children end up in a cycle of attempted reintegration, collapse, withdrawal from being able to access learning, and barely able to tolerate a Flex Learning offer.... What time frames are in place to ensure children are not left with Flex Learning and a transition to a fully supported placement can happen (and that this may not be mainstream - it invariably isn't for these cohorts).

The Educational Psychology Service along with the Specialist Teaching Service provide support and training for schools in meeting needs of children and young people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). If a child or young person is referred to the WCC [Flexible Learning Team](#) under the medical needs policy, the expectation is that Health practitioners maintain an oversight of their care, along with the school and support reintegration back into school. Colleagues will work in a multidisciplinary way to ensure the package of support and next steps are discussed and developed in line with the individual children and young person's needs.

Funding:

8. Could you explain a little more about how much the Warks SEN budget has been cut by in recent years? And who sets that budget?

As outlined in the Webinar, budgets have not been cut. There has been more money put into the system, albeit there is a recognition that the level of funding is not adequate to meet the continued pressures and demand for Services.

9. Whilst I recognise there is a limited amount of money, why do WCC choose to spend so much money fighting against parents at tribunal? The parents view on placement does not seem to count for much.

Chapter 11 of the [SEND Code of Practice](#) outlines the route of redress for children and young people and their families. This route of redress is via the mediation, tribunal process. Parental preference is always considered when placing a child or young person. The Local Authority through formal consultation with schools and taking into consideration parents' preference will make a formal decision on where the children and young people SEN needs should be met.

Most disagreements are resolved without the need for a tribunal; however, parents and carers have the right to appeal any decision made under the [SEND Code of Practice](#) and WCC fully supports that right.

10. In the Change Programme it states that there is an "overuse of specialist placements". What does "overuse" mean?

When comparing Warwickshire placements of children and young people against our regional neighbours, statistical neighbours, and national partners the evidence suggest that Warwickshire utilises specialist placements significantly more than the others. This is particularly evident in the use of Alternative Provision (AP).

11. We have heard recently that AP is only a short-term arrangement. If so, where is the longer-term placement for YP with severe anxiety and social phobia/MH issues please?

WCC must ensure that all providers who operate across Warwickshire do so within the legislative framework, are safe and can deliver better outcomes for children and young people.

The DfE guidance states:

An 'independent school' is defined as a school that is not maintained by a local authority or is not a non-maintained special school, and at which full-time education is provided (a) for five or more pupils of compulsory school age or (b) for at least one

pupil of that age who is looked after by a local authority (within the meaning of section 22 of the Children Act 1989) or has a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.

*Independent schools in England must be registered by the Secretary of State for Education, the independent school's regulator, before operating. **It is a criminal offence to conduct an independent school that is not registered.** If convicted, a person could be subject to an unlimited fine and/or imprisonment up to six months.*

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/690495/La_Guidance_March_2018.pdf

Alternative providers can be split into two categories a) Registered as independent schools and b) Unregistered providers.

A) Registered AP: Registered alternative providers are really independent schools and can therefore be the full-time provision for children and young people in receipt of an EHCP. However, if a registered alternative provision was able to meet the needs of a children and young people with severe anxiety, social phobia and mental health needs this could also be consulted with as a long-term placement.

B) Unregistered AP: unregistered providers **cannot legally** be the substantive provision for 5 or more children and young people or one child/young person in receipt of an EHCP or a one Child Looked After. Therefore, unregistered alternative provision can only be a short term/part time/interim provision as part of a 10-week revolving door process, with a clear exit strategy established from the outset, that is reviewed as children and young people are supported back into full time registered provision. Some schools may commission alternative provision as part of their universal/targeted offer on a part time basis **as enrichment**, but the child or young person **must physically attend their school/registered provider** more than they would ever attend the unregistered provider and this must take into consideration the attendance at the unregistered provision over the whole year.

12. Thresholds seemed to relate specifically to therapies, please correct me if I am wrong on this?

This is not necessarily the case; the Code of Practice - Section 9.16 states "Local Authorities may develop criteria as guidelines to help them decide when it is necessary to carry out an EHC needs assessment".

13. Our experience is that formal processes are not being completed effectively. E.g. in a mediation process why if you go through mediation is the parent not included in the actual mediation meeting between the LA and the mediator? Our case was closed without this opportunity to be engaged.

The parent/carer should always be included and be part of the mediation process. WCC apologises if this was not the case and will ensure that this does not happen again. There is a timeframe set for when appeals and mediations take place.

14. It is good to hear from Ian that you are wanting to work together, however my experience is the opposite with plan coordinators not responding to emails and not communicating effectively with parents. I wonder when this working together will start?

WCC are committed to working with children and young people and their families. This is also central to the Children and Families Act 2014. WCC through the SEND and Inclusion Change Programme are actively working with children and young people and their families.

15. Why was IDS disbanded?

IDS (Integrated Disability Service) has not been disbanded. The IDS Communication and Interaction Team and the Early Intervention Service were merged in 2018.

16. Where lobbying is falling on deaf ears, what is the next step for the Leader of the Cabinet or Warwickshire SLT?

WCC will continue through the F40 Group to lobby for additional funding. WCC are also awaiting the outcome of the SEN Review which is currently being undertaken.

17. Question from Parents on behalf of WPCV: Can you rerun this session during the daytime please?

Yes, no problem. We appreciate there isn't a good time for everyone so all sessions will be recorded, and we will endeavour to try and run sessions at various times to enable different people to attend live.

Comments

There seems to be a lot of push back on the exact wording in EHCPs. Therapy is being questioned where it has been provided over multiple years to good effect.	The new quality assurance framework aims to improve the quality and timeliness of EHC Plans and clarity of the specific support to be provided.
We appreciate your sentiment, but access to therapeutic services has many obstacles. You acknowledge the benefit of therapies such as SALT and OT however access to these are difficult and to be honest blocked by Warwickshire authority. Even when specialist recommendations of needs are provided access to the appropriate provision and in the format recommended (i.e. direct therapy) is not made available. Constantly given reasons of "this is not within our local offer".	Please see the point above. A 'Team Around the Child' model (or Early Support) is in place for pre-school children to provide support and signposting to appropriate services. All schools are provided with a NHS Speech and Language Therapy 'Resource File' - an information resource and details how to make a referral, and also have access to the Children's Occupational Therapy Fine Motor Programme. A new OT model has been commissioned for children attending special school, to be launched in Autumn 2021.
SENDIAS are currently overwhelmed with cases. They are struggling to support parents.	WCC along with Education Health and Social Care have jointly commissioned a post within SENDIAS to support this area.
It is interesting that you talk about outcomes being on a downward trajectory. Is this not a symptom of services being much harder to access.	If parents are concerned about access to services, then we would urge them to speak to their EHC Plan Coordinator in SENDAR.
Increasing barriers to support - Warwickshire used to have a full ASD team supporting schools much of which was free for schools to access.	The same level of support is in place. WCC Significant Adult and Inclusion Mentors deliver capacity building support to schools, and Autism Education Trust Tier 1 training is provided free to all Warwickshire schools by WCC. A strategic lead for Autism is now in place and post graduate Autism training is provided to STS staff.
It seems there is a huge gap between the authority's perspective and families' actual experiences.	WCC is committed to building relationships with parents, carers and families to understand their needs and experiences to help to bridge this gap.
Disability isn't linear. Provision still feels very linear in terms of specialist / mainstream.	Support and provision for children and young people is based on the individual assessments and needs of the child. We hope the changes being made as part of the SEND and Inclusion Change Programme will make a real difference to Warwickshire families.
The SEND & Inclusion Change Programme was NOT co-produced. At best, it was – consultation. The SICP was written, developed and written without the involvement of the old parent carer forum or wider alternative parent, child and young people voice.	The SEND and Inclusion Strategy was developed with a series of events both face to face and online with parents, carers and other stakeholders. It was signed off by the SEND Partnership Board in February 2019 including the chair of the Parent Carer Forum, prior to being approved by WCC Cabinet in April 2019. The strategy underpins the SEND & Inclusion Change Programme which consists of around 30 projects running from 2020 to 2023. WCC is committed to involving parents, carers, young people and has invested in the new Parent Carer Forum and parent carer engagement to strengthen this area.
SENDAR are informing parents that EP reports can only be obtained once every 3 years. That doesn't seem particularly needs based.	This is not the case. Updated professional advice can be requested as part of an annual review. WCC recommends that EP advice is updated at least at every key stage.

Other comments

A move to focus on our children's needs rather than statistical comparisons is required.	WCC is committed to work in partnership to improve outcomes for children and young people.
"Communication fails when people to listen to respond rather than listen to understand". I would like to encourage the LA to try to get a greater understanding of families' experiences & difficulties. Tonight, it feels like these experiences have been quite often dismissed.	WCC is committed to strengthening engagement with parents, carers and young people and to better understand family's experiences.
I think you shouldn't just summarise but record all of these comments. People don't have the energy to comment again and again. Each of these comments are important.	Comments have been grouped into themes to make it easier to read. If parents/ carers feel their questions have not been answered fully please contact WCC on: sendchange@warwickshire.gov.uk or Parent Carer Voice: warwickshireparentcarervoice@gmail.com