

SCRUTINY REPORT



MEETING: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 7th March 2023

SUBJECT: Update on Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)

REPORT FROM: Councillor Lucy Smith, Cabinet member for Children and Education Services

CONTACT OFFICER: Isobel Booler, Director of Education and Skills
Michael Kemp, Strategic Lead for SEND

1.0 Background

1.1 Bury Council and Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) are committed to ensuring that all of our children are safe, have the best start in life, fulfil their potential, and are independent; this commitment extends to all, including our children with a disability and/or learning need.

1.2 Local area leaders from health, social care and education have acknowledged the challenges faced by Bury in implementing the SEND Local Area reforms. Bury as a local area is committed to a programme of transformation and is determined to work in co-production with parents to improve both outcomes and experiences of children, young people with SEND and their families.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 This report provides an update on recent developments in regard to Special Educational needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision in Bury and in particular the progress in regard to the Education Health and Care Plan process.

2.2 It provides an overview of the data in regard to the growth of Education Health and Care Plan (EHCPs) in Bury and also details the service improvements made in light of the growing number of Education Health and Care Plan requests.

2.3 There continues to be significant progress made regarding improving the EHC process and developing our work with parents to continue to deliver an improved SEND service in Bury at pace. The team has remained stable and this has enabled a greater focus on quality and co-production. Weekly reporting allows for better understanding of the trajectory of demand to plan resources more effectively to deliver quality plans in a timely manner. The team have mapped out work and robust tracking has ensured improved compliance.

2.4 However, the improved systems have been matched by a high level of increased demand for EHCP assessments. There were 589 EHCP assessment requests in 2022

which is a 23.1% increase on the number of requests in 2021 (477) and following a 28.9% increase in requests the year previously with 370 requests in 2020.

2.5 It is important to note that the improved QA at panel ensures that all EHCPs are appropriate. However, it needs to be acknowledged that although the Graduated Approach has been launched there is a lot of work to do to embed this across our school system and we are committed to working through our newly launched SENCo network to raise the level of need met at SEN support.

2.6 The Graduated Approach is key to managing demand and ensuring need is identified earlier and met appropriately through SEN support. The full roll out started in January as has the revised SENCO network offer. Evidence of the use of the graduated response is now required for the referral to Inclusion board and for a school's request for an EHCP. However, it will take some time before we will see the impact on the number of new EHCP requests.

2.7 We recognise that Bury has historically been under-provided with its own specialist provision, with only two Special Schools, both of which have been expanded significantly in recent years. Therefore, we have placed a high priority on increasing our specialist SEND capacity, both with new Special Schools and with new Resourced Provisions.

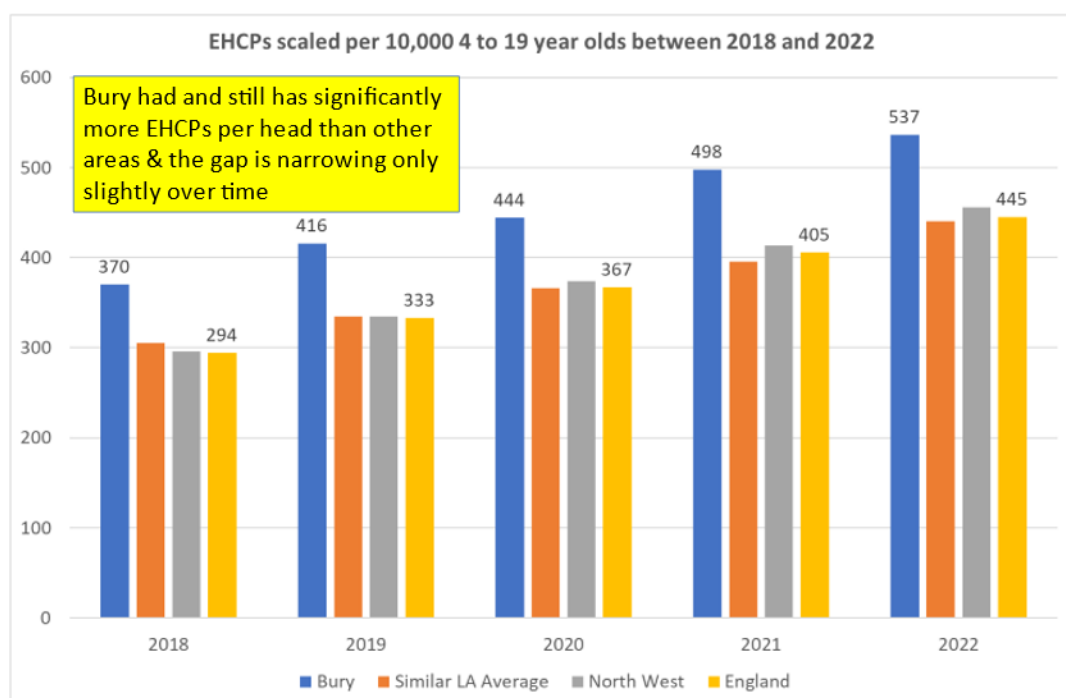
3.0 Current Data

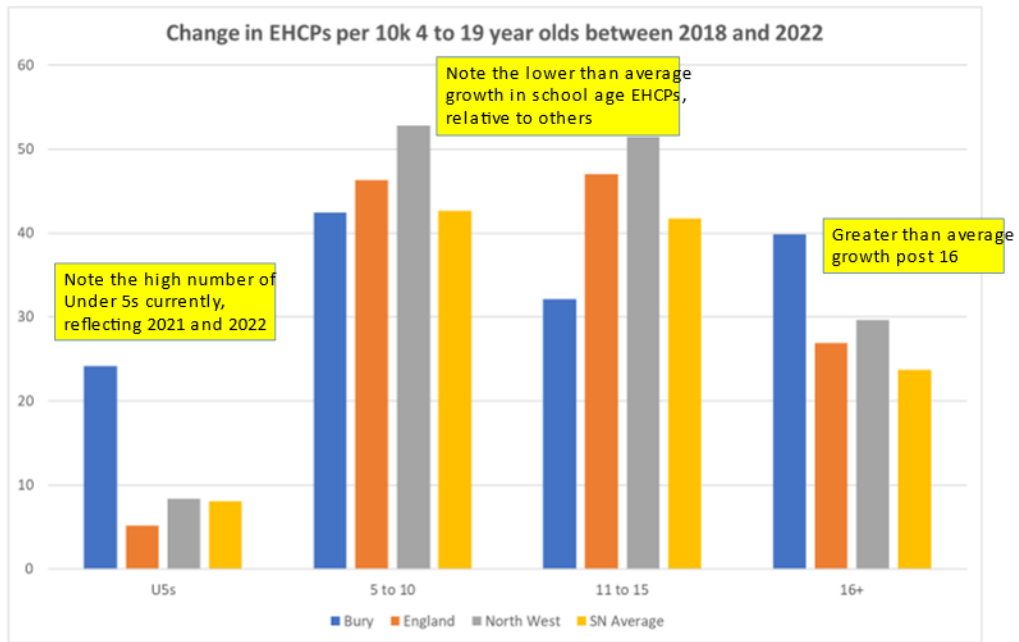
3.1 Bury continues to have a higher proportion of children and young people with Education health and Care Plans than other areas. Currently Bury has 5% of children and young people in its school population with EHCPs compared to 4.1% nationally.

3.2 The following tables reflect the EHCP prevalence and growth. The commentary is included in the tables for ease.

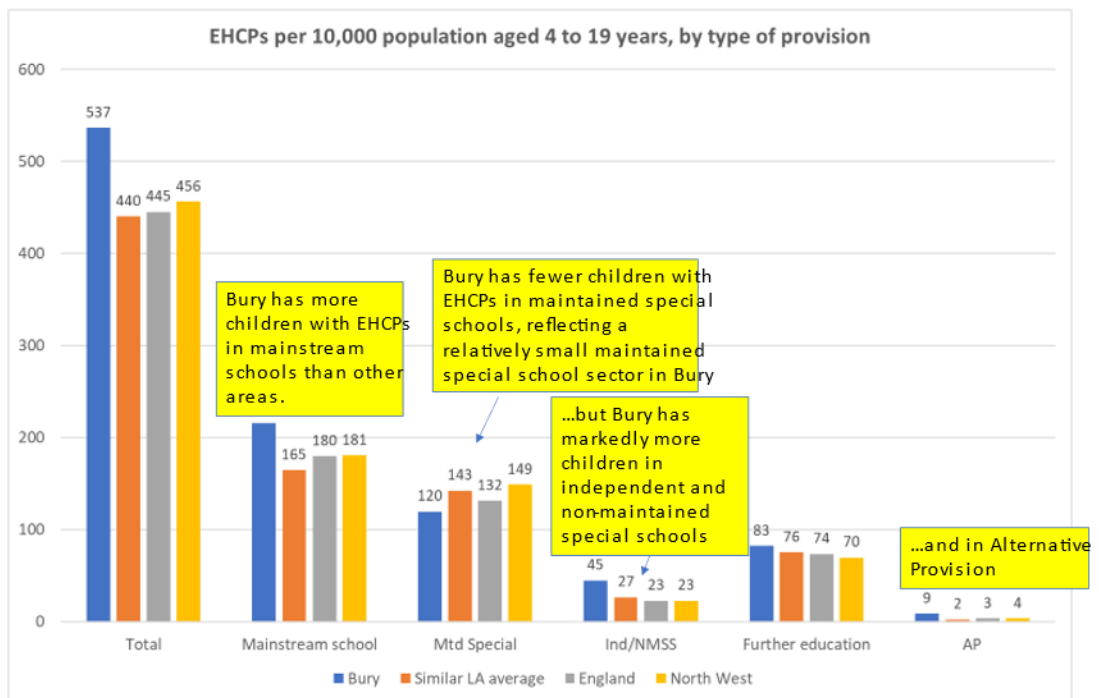
3.3 EHCP Prevalence and Growth

Comparative Analysis of the SEN2 National Data Return – scaled per head of population





3.4 Education Health and Care provision



3.5 SEN support

This is a key priority for our focus as this impacts on the pressure on EHC plans. The embedding of the Graduated Approach will support greater consistency of our schools in regard to SEN support provision.

Comparative Growth in identified SEND over the last 5 years
– Change in SEN Support rate per 10,000, split by Primary Need change since 2018

	Primary		Secondary	
	Bury	England	Bury	England
Autistic Spectrum Disorder	36	19	17	48
Hearing Impairment	1	-1	7	3
Moderate Learning Difficulty	-100	-58	34	0
Multi- Sensory Impairment	-4	0	2	2
Other Difficulty/Disability	15	-8	-13	3
Physical Disability	-5	-2	4	5
Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulty	0	0	2	0
No specialist assessment of type of need	34	6	-29	12
Severe Learning Difficulty	-10	-1	-4	-1
Social, Emotional and Mental Health	69	21	88	90
Specific Learning Difficulty	-82	1	-81	29
Speech, Language and Communications needs	65	70	23	39
Visual Impairment	5	0	13	3
Total	25	48	62	233

The relative number of children supported at SEN support in schools has risen, particularly in secondary schools nationally.

In Primary there has been a shift away from the primary need of Moderate Learning Difficulty, towards Speech, Language and Communication and this is a national feature.

Locally, we have seen a shift away from Specific Learning Difficult as well. We have seen significant growth in SEMH – greater than national.

In Secondary, Bury has seen nothing like the national expansion in SEN support, with only support for SEMH keeping pace with the national increase. The difference between the national pattern and that evident in aggregate in Bury's schools is apparent across most other primary needs.

4.0 Progress in regard to SEND Improvements

4.1 Service Improvements

Since September EHCPs have remained stable which has allowed us to continue to develop the team. This can be measured by the fact that all the case workers are now writing new EHCP plans. We have also started to reduce, on a phased basis, our dependence on the use of agency staff.

4.2 Staffing

The Education Directorate restructure was agreed at Cabinet in December 2022. If approved, following consultation, this will enable us to make permanent the additional posts; this equates to one Senior Caseworker, one Quality Assurance officer and 5 Assistant Caseworkers. This will support the team to meet demands in relation to the duties around annual reviews. There will also be a focus on out of area placements and contract monitoring by one extra senior and two additional case workers. Our aim is to support effective and proactive casework by bringing caseloads to under 300.

4.3 Current activity

The team has mapped out the work required to enable the current phased transfers to be completed within required timescales and with amended plans in place. This work is being tracked to support compliance and management grip. This also means that the work on annual reviews going forward will be easier.

Dedicated worker time has been established around the post 16/cease to maintain for this year. All letters have been sent out and we have established that there are 100 plans that need to be reviewed and considered for ceasing. This work has been ringfenced to ensure

that work is completed within the required timeframe. Linked to this, we have got the admission panels in place for our special schools as well as establishing bimonthly complex cases/stuck cases meeting for the primary spherical school and then for secondary.

The Monday morning performance clinic is now an established meeting. The data report has become a live data tool. This means that progress on compliance can be seen in live time and any stuck cases can be reviewed and additional action taken where appropriate. Monthly reporting on case activity links into overall progress and support an improved experience for our parents.

From the end of December 2022, we introduced, as part of the EHCP assessment process, a telephone call to families where they gave consent to gather information about the child for section A. This will also establish the key outcomes for the child which will feed into the request for advice.

Work commences with the EHC team on their agreed standards/charter. This will become our commitment to parents/carers/children and young people.

4.4 Timeliness

In 2022 we received 589 requests for an EHC assessment. To put this into context, the amount of work that the team are managing now, when compared to data on previous years, is as follows:

Total	
2016	174
2017	272
2018	267
2019	336
2020	370
2021	477

With this increase, we need to be mindful that as of 1st January 2023 we had 199 active cases going through the 20-week process, with the highest pressures in the assessment and final issuing stages. This causes stress when seeking to get final plans out within 20 weeks, meaning a potential fall in 20-week percentages despite improved performance and consistent accumulative figures over the year.

It is important to note that the team's performance on the 6 & 16 week is now strong and well embedded which is why we are confident that our performance at the 20 will improve going forward once we are able to unlock capacity in terms of placements.

Despite the team level of activity in terms of the percentage issued within 20-week frame, we reported an accumulative figure of 53% over the 2022 year. This is up from previous year's figures of 34% (2021) and 27% (2020). When we have audited the case files, the key factors to overstepping the deadline are the lack of provision and late advice.

Attention is being given to these cases as we understand the impact of this in terms of

lived experience. The three cases that have been waiting the longest were because the parent did not agree with the plan and were seeking additional assessments.

4.5 Advice update

Social Care advice has been an area requiring development. We now have agreement for an additional post to undertake an overview assessment conversation with all requests for children/young people who do not have an active social worker. This enables us to screen better for a full assessment. The post is under recruitment and will sit within the CWD Short Break team.

There are now weekly slots in Social Care 'Teaching Tuesdays' with a focus on SEND. We have already completed sessions on Social Care advice, role and timescale, DSR and DOLs. We have also held a session with Social Work Managers and developed a flow chart setting out the advice pathway and timeline.

4.6 Quality assuring plans

All new plans are now quality assessed by the Manager and Seniors.

4.7 Panel update

Within the last three months we have seen an increase in attendance at the EHCP panel by Heads and SENCO's.

4.8 Transition

There is a multi-agency task and finish group looking at transition for our looked after population (these pathways are not as established as those within SEND). We have also restarted our bi-monthly meeting with Elmsbank Secondary Special School to support effective transition.

Within the reporting period, the outcome of the work undertaken by Ernst and Young to review our transition pathways and to create options for a 14-25 service was reported back. We have now commenced the project work to develop the recommendations for a 14-25 shared service.

4.9 Collaborative working

We have jointly developed a Memorandum of Understanding with Bury2Gether, NHS and the Local Authority. We have also increased the level of collaborative working on task and finish groups, for example: short breaks, transport, local offer and transition.

Parent engagement sessions continue as reported previously.

4.10 Graduated Approach (All age)

Full roll out started in January 2023 and sits alongside the redesign of the SENCO network. SENCO's have undertaken a review of the offer and have set out an ask in which we have:

New SENCO network offer has been developed over the Autumn term in partnership with SENCO and OAK Acadamy. The new offer is:

- LA information session and case discussion – termly minimum.
- Direct learning session – on a themed basis.

- Coaching and outreach offer.
- Roll out and embedding of the graduated response is now underway, with:
- Presentation to SENCO network meeting has taken place in January
- Intensive Graduated Response training scheduled for February.

5.0 Next steps:

- 5.1 Bury as a Local Area is committed to SEND transformation and continued progress to ensure improved experience and outcomes for our children and young people with identified Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and their families.
- 5.2 Commence the roll out of the graduated response training
- 5.3 To work with the Council for Disabled Children to co-produce an outcomes framework against our ambitions for all children with SEND to be happy, healthy, safe, successful and independent
- 5.4 Complete the embedding of the outcome conversation with parents. This information will feed into the request for advice request
- 5.5 To review thw Local Area SEND Action plan to ensure that all priorities are considered with parents and young peoples

List of Background Papers:-

Cabinet Report, March 2021: Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Deficit Recovery

Contact Details:-

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Executive Director sign off Date: 23/8/21

JET Meeting Date:24/8/21