FVS Thoughts on Action Plan Items – 04/01/17

1. Action items

Longer term but immediate implementation:

1. Immediate effective data collection and analysis – leading to needs driven outcomes/ initiatives
2. Immediate focus on Early Years – ID and support SEND children and young people and families (without early work any child or young person will always be falling behind and will never catch up)
3. Immediate focus on EY – Reception: Year 6/7 and Year 11/ College transitions and Year 9 readiness for exams time – also when due to move to adult services, when moving between provisions/settings, particularly if a placement has previously broken down
4. Long term monitoring and tracking of SEND cyp using SEND Plans/ Passport – map and support the life journey – 1 record throughout

Short term actions with immediate implementation – 3-6-9 month’s timelines

1. EHCP immediate effective EHC Plan process and experience; timetable for transfers accelerated; children and young people and parent satisfaction measured throughout
   1. Immediate learning from case studies; we and schools have offered this
   2. Immediate restructuring of front line teams and decision making
   3. Immediate mapping of ECHP process and thus agreed/ common materials for use by participants – parents/ SENCO’s/ therapists
   4. Central panel to work through cases raised by parties – unblock system
   5. Immediate learning from review of tribunals experience over last 2 years – change processes/ resolve current cases/ heal historic cases – restorative work, Truth and Justice style independent commission would be key to rebuilding trust between Local Area partners and families
   6. Immediate learning from mediation as in legislation – is this applied consistently in Surrey? Apply rapidly
   7. Map EHC support services – therapies etc., and effectiveness of provision specified in plans – demonstrate the interim emergency provision plan while awaiting full implementation of new integrated service
   8. Work with schools on barriers
2. Immediate effective identification of SEN support population and programmes
   1. Immediate return to consistent recording and monitoring of SEN support needs by schools – understand needs and locations
   2. Immediate mapping of best practice support – what is working well and why – both in Surrey and nationally
   3. Roll out best practice support across schools; based on a combination of upskilling schools and LA central resources
   4. Set and measure SEN support outcomes for individuals – within the context of a SEN Support Plan – a cut down version of EHC Plan
   5. Identify where successful SEND support measures have reduced need for support via EHCP – what are the tipping points which make statutory provision necessary? What could be done to reduce – not suppress – the need for support at a statutory level? What could be done to reduce the costs of the statutory assessment process while improving quality of assessment?
   6. As the LA’s oversight role has been reduced by central govt, it will need to be a voluntarily adopted function agreed with schools as partners
3. Plan items

The local area is required to produce and submit a Written Statement of Action to Ofsted that explains how the local area will tackle the following 5 identified areas of significant weakness.

i) The timeliness, suitability and quality of statutory assessments and plans, including when statements are transferred to education, health and care plans.

* Ownership of EHCP writing needs to be clear - the person who has met the family should be writing it and communicating with the family - this will improve the quality and timeliness.
* Outcomes and Provision are frequently very vague. There needs to be training on SMART provision and realistic outcomes (with timescales) that link back to aspirations.
* Would it be possible to have an independent review of all plans before they are finalised – perhaps through IS or SSIAS, if they had capacity or through an independent body such as IPSEA? Even if this was not sustainable for every plan, it could be a useful exercise to do this for a limited period so that plan writers and send managers became skilled up in producing plans which would meet external scrutiny, be accepted by parents and lead to less recourse to tribunal?
* It's essential that Surrey have one EHCP process county-wide for new assessments and transfers.
* Are needs assessments done with a template? Are health professionals etc giving the SEND team the information they need with regards to outcomes and provision.

ii) The under-developed and often limited involvement of parents and carers, and the narrow range of those included, in planning, monitoring and evaluating services. The ineffective promotion of the local offer and the incomplete statutory transition plan.

* Parents involved in the statutory process of EHCP throughout the 20 weeks (whether new or transferring), with opportunities to work on the draft plan, be updated on a very regular basis, asked to sense check things like outcomes and provision before or as they are being written. This is key particularly before evidence is submitted to decision making panels like PRF. Ideally, there should be an opportunity for families to have direct contact with decision makers, whether this is by attending PRF or by some other means. The limited ability of some young people or parents to self-advocate is used as a reason to bar all young people/parents from having a direct voice in the process at any point before reaching tribunal. A more equitable response would be to ensure advocacy support is available to anyone who needs it rather than to exclude any family involvement.
* Parent involvement in SEN support is critical, but most often they are dismissed when they raise issues. This makes early help much harder. Having parents involved in the inclusion index might be useful, for example in the pilot schools??? On the other hand, with significant budget restriction, these are the children who will be dropped. The only way to avoid a direct path to EHCP is to help schools and parents work better together. And the LA must support schools in some way to do that...

iii) The inefficient management and coordination of area information, in administrative processes, to inform evaluation of services and outcomes, and to hold leaders and staff at all levels to account for rapid improvement.

* There must be a mechanism which makes it clear to both families and staff where the accountability for decision making lies and how concerns can be addressed in a timely and conciliatory fashion.
* Data gathering needs to be consistent and flexible to follow the evidence base to drive improvement; also data needs to be shared and understood by the whole of the Local Area – 1 dataset – 1 truth

1. The relatively low identification of need at school support level, indicating inefficiencies in the early identification of special educational needs and/or disabilities.

* Listen to parents. Can we consider a method whereby parents can log their concern if they feel that it is being dismissed by their school? Although the LA’s ability to influence is restricted by changes imposed by central government.
* Even though central government is pushing to reduce the role/influence of the LA, the key partners in the local area – LA, health, schools, families – can choose to work together in a collaborative way.
* Training school staff seems pretty important. And it's crucial that school staff are empowered to raise concern without fear of reprisal. Including TAs.

v) The increasing rates of absence and exclusion experienced by children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in mainstream schools.

* We must ensure that there is no blame culture. These are SEND children, yet children and young people and parents are made to feel guilty for not getting their children into school. The LA must accept that these children are not able to come into school – and then there must be a mechanism to find out why and support a move forward.
* Illegal exclusions must stop. Most parents are not aware of what an illegal exclusion looks like, because it's often couched in "maybe you should keep him home if this day is going to be too much for him". Schools do not feel able to say when they cannot meet need, and this leads to such exclusions.
* Surrey could have a transparent policy of flexible and or reduced timetables for SEND children who are struggling with mainstream school.
* Set up a supervisory body modelled on the virtual school for children who are looked after for children with identified or suspected SEND who are out of school- this could include cyp whose attendance falls below an acceptable threshold, children who have been permanently excluded or have had a number of temporary informal exclusions as well as those who have been signed off as medically unfit and potentially electively home educated children, although this group might need to be on a voluntary basis.
* Review and reform the role of the EWO service. Frequently experienced as punitive rather than supportive, there needs to be a clearer steer from senior SCC leads about how the EWO role impacts on SEND support and appropriate training so that the two services are working to achieve the same positive outcomes for cyp and families.
* All of these reforms need to happen with families and schools as partners in the process.

The approach to responding to findings from inspections, including the production and review of the statement, is set out in Annex A of the Local area SEND inspection handbook.