ANNUAL REVIEW

Wolverhampton SEND Local Offer 2015

Introduction

From 1 September 2014 the Children and Families Act required all local authorities to publish and maintain a ‘local offer’. A local offer is a wide range of information about all the support and facilities which families can expect to find in their area for children and young people who have special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities.

The information should cover education, health and social care support and services for children and young people aged between 0 and 25. The local offer is not a guarantee that a particular service will be available, but should be a useful guide to what you can expect to find in your area, and how you can access that service.

Review of Local Offer 2014/15

Wolverhampton Local Offer has now been ‘live’ since 1st September 2014. The SEND Partnership Board have undertaken a review of the local offer using the principles set out in the Code of Practice as a basis for the review.

Evaluation of the activity linked to the Local Offer shows that it was accessed 16,256 times between 1st September 2014 and 31st October 2015. The 10 most popular pages were:

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Full details are available in Appendix A.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Principle 1

The local offer should not just be a list of services. It should give a broad range of information about the support that the local authority expects to be available across education, health and social care. The information should be clear and easy to find.
Current Situation

The Local Offer was developed and designed by a group of parents and professionals. Young people then reviewed the website and made further recommendations. The steering group were committed to developing a Local Offer that was not just a directory of services but also provided families and young people with information advice and guidance about the type of support that was amiable the city and how to about how to access services. The homepage includes 12 buttons for Key Area’s that lead to sub sections of the Local Offer.

On clicking onto a ‘Key Areas’ the information is then set out in two ways, the first page provides information about how to get support and who can help, as shown below for the Key Area on Care.

It is them possible to move into information about specific services, as shown below.
It is then possible to obtain more detailed information about services, address contact details, how to access the service, who they are available for, referral routes etc.

Good practice

The landing pages for each Key Area includes a button to click on if the person can’t find the information they are looking for, pages also include information about Jargon Busting, advice on how to co-produce information and a link through to the Information Advice and Guidance Service.

Recommended changes

Having reviewed the Local Offer is it obvious that there is a large amount of information available within the site. The Local Offer includes information about services and how to access them, and how to get support. It is more than just a directory of services.

It can however take a number of ‘clicks’ to get the information that people might be looking for and there is some repetition. Having reviewed other Local Offers there are a number of actions that can be taken to improve the lay out and the accessibility of the information.
The Local Offer is going to move on to a new platform and be hosted by Open Objects. The information will become part of a city wide portal called WIN (Wolverhampton Information Network). In the first instance this will just be a ‘lift and shift’ of the information. However the navigation of the site will be easier and the site itself will be more visually pleasing.

The SEND Partnership Board would then like to look at some redesign options including the ability to put ‘Frequently asked Questions’ on each key Area and a more dynamic way of splitting the information about services from the support advice and guidance.

The local offer needs to include more information that is accessible to young people

**Principle 2**

**Children, young people and parent carers must be involved in developing the local offer and it should reflect what they need.**

**Current Activity**

The Local Offer Implementation group fully embraced the need to co-produce the Local Offer. Parents were activity involved in the design of the site, the wording for each of the Key Area’s and decisions about what information went into each section. This work was led by Voice for Parents.

It was also critically important to get input from young people. The Local Offer Implementation group commissioned Changing Young Lives to work along-side them to make sure the Local Offer was accessible for Young People. The group of young people made a number of excellent recommendations. These included using video more and they also developed a set of Good Practice Standards that are applied to the current Local Offer.

The chair and vice chairs of Voice4Parents are members of the SEND Partnership Board. These meetings provide parents and carers the opportunity to work in co-production with professionals, to share areas of good practice and to raise issues of concern. Parents told us via the Local Offer how they struggle to access suitable leisure facilities in the City. In response to this Voice4Parents invited local authority representatives to meet parents to hear first-hand about the difficulties they face. Together they discussed ideas about how things could be improved. All of these ideas are being collated and a further meeting will be taking place to discuss ways of implementing some of the improvements.

During a recent review of the Local Offer it was obvious that the information about Short Breaks was not easy to find. Parents have been consulted on the best place to put the information so that it is easy to find, the information has also been updated.
Good practice

Members of the SEND Partnership Board were involved in a video made by Contact a Family which sets out how to work in co-production with families and young people.

The Health work stream insisted that all information put on the health pages of the Local Offer was checked by family carers to make sure it was easy to understand. It is not unusual for parent to send information back to professionals to re-write.

Recommended changes

Young people have requested the use of more videos in the future and are keen to be involved in making them.

The young people’s Good Practice Standards will be published on the Local Offer so that all authors can use them.

Principle 3

Local schools, colleges, health services and other services which support children and young people should also help to develop the local offer.

Current Activity

The Local Offer is populated by a range of people and organisation who take responsibility for developing and maintaining their information. Information is managed through the council website at present. As the Local Offer moves over to the new platform, authors will have sole responsibility for maintaining up to date accurate information.

The SEND Partnership Board have been able to user test the prosed new platform to make sure that it meet their requirements and the needs of disabled young people parents of disabled children.

The information about local schools is transferred onto the Local Offer from the Schools own websites. The sheer quantity of information available on the Local Offer has resulted in the SEND Partnership Board identifying that it is not possible to quality assure all the information available.

Good practice

The CCG instigated a process where by parents of disabled children read and signed off all information available on the health section of the Local Offer to make sure that it is easy to understand and provides all the relevant details families require.
Recommended changes

A post is being developed that will have responsibility for the oversight of the local offer, to assure it is meeting its statutory requirements and to quality assure all the information available in partnership with parents and young people.

Principle 4

It should say who a particular service is for, how to apply, and how decisions are made about who gets that service.

Current Situation

A single template was designed for all services to complete to make sure information was presented in a consistent way. The template included all of the required information specified by the Code of Practice. The template meant that new information can be easily added as it is uploaded as a PDF. The link below show and example

http://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=5790&p=0

Good practice

All of the services included in the local offer include the required information about referral process, eligibly and accessibility.

Recommended changes

When the local offer moves to WIN there will be designated authors who will have responsibility for keeping the information up to date and quality assuring the information for their area.

Principle 5

The local offer should say clearly where families can get information, advice and support. It should give information on making complaints or challenging decisions.

Current Situation

Throughout the Local Offer there are links back to the Information Advice and Support Service (previously Parent Partnership)
These green buttons take families directly to information about how to contact IASS who can then provide families with further information including how to make a complaint to challenge a decision. They will talk through the family’s individual circumstances and advice and support them accordingly.

There is also information available about other organisations who can provide independent support for families, including Carers support, Healthwatch and Independent Support.

Good practice

Information is available on each service area page about how to make a complaint or a compliment

Recommended changes

The local offer needs to include more information about how to challenge decisions and it would also be beneficial to be able to use the local offer to showcase good practice and new ideas.

Principle 6

The local offer is not just about what is within that local authority. It must also include services outside the local authority area which children and young
people might use. For example, a specialist hospital in another area or a school or college in another local authority.

Current Situation

The local offer includes information about schools outside of the area that the city council can purchase school places from and it also includes information about special health services that are provided included some Child and Adolescents Mental Health services. The SEND Partnership Board recognise that this is an area that needs considerable improvement, however the move to the WIN site alongside the Family Information Service and the portal for adult information will be beneficial.

Good practice

There is comprehensive information about out of area schools that parents can access.

Recommended changes

It is recommended that once the local offer has moved over to its new site that an audit is undertaken of all information about services out of area and the site is updated accordingly.

Principle 7

The local offer must be reviewed regularly to make sure it is up to date and still meets the needs of families in the area. The local authority should involve families in this process.

Current Situation

The SEND Partnership Board agreed to formally review the Local Offer annually. The review process has actively involved families, who have made recommendations about the future lay out of the site.

Families have also been invited to the join the stakeholder group for the new Local Offer platform WIN. They have been part of a user testing exercise and been able to feedback comments to the development team.

Good practice

The SEND Health workstream requires all information to be checked by parents to make sure it is easy to understand, does not use jargon and provides relevant information.

Recommended changes

The annual review needs to be agreed by the SEND Partnership Board and published.
All new content and the new layout for the local offer must involve families and young people. A quality mark will be developed and used on the site to show that information has been confirmed as ‘family friendly’

The site also needs to be more accessible with access to translation and audio facilities.

**Principle 8**

The local authority must make public what children, young people and parents tell them about their local offer and say clearly what they will do about the comments they receive.

**Current Situation**

Wolverhampton Local Offer went ‘live’ on 1st September 2014 and feedback mechanism is available for comments to be made. These comments are monitored and managed via the SEND Partnership Board. The nature of the comments made relate to:

- 1 compliment about wheelchair services,
- 2 comments about leisure services, which have resulted in mainstream leisure services talking to families about developing accessible services, in particular swimming lessons, so change is in process.
- 3 comments about ABA which have been referred to the Autism Strategy Group for consideration within refreshed strategy.
- 1 comment about local college – no change yet
- 1 comment about the nature and frequency of Occupational and Physiotherapy services – no change required but meeting held with service providers and parent/carer representative to look at service improvements.
- 1 comment about Habilitation – the Local offer was changed to reflect the concerns raised.
- 2 comments about child mental health that gives an update regarding current services and the HeadStart lottery programme
- 1 comment about response time to local offer comments which has resulted in a new process being agreed.
36% of these comments have resulted in changes to service provision, process and procedure according to the nature of the comment made.

The Local Offer also publishes the responses to the comments on the local offer.

Good practice

Members of the SEND Partnership Board have agreed a protocol for allocating the comments for response, being reviewed by Voice for Parents and agreeing the response for posting on the site. There are also indicative timescales agreed. The information includes advice for authors on how to finalise a high quality response.

The flow chart below shows the process for responding to comments made on the local offer and the timescales for responding which the SEND Partnership Board will be using as performance indicators.
Local Offer Feedback Cycle

Comment made by user on local offer

Comment received by the Information Advice and Support Service (IASS) via email to the IASS inbox

CYCLE STARTS

Comments will be reviewed by IASS. IASS to follow up non-LO related comments

The 'sender' receives an email to say comment received and the process (see overleaf)

Comment logged by IASS, anonymised and forwarded to Voice4Parents (or Changing Young Lives), All Age Disability Commissioning and web team

Web team publish comment on ‘you said’ section with the date received

Comments taken to next planned SEND Partnership Board. (Which meets on the 1st Friday of every month)

Discussion at SEND PB regarding most appropriate person(s) to respond (if that person is absent, an email will be sent) three weeks to complete response

Appropriate colleague completes a response in line with the guidance (see overleaf)

The response is sent within 3 calendar weeks to the Voice4Parents inbox

V4P@wolverhampton.gov.uk

Voice4Parents (chair and two vice-chairs) check the response (to see if guidance has been followed and to consider if ‘user friendly’).

Responses to comments from young people, will be sent to CYL.

Within two weeks, V4P forward response to the Local Offer officer (cc AR) with a clear message that it’s ok or that it needs to go back to author.

Local Offer Officer either sends to webteam OR back to author with guidance

If back to author, cycle starts again

If sent to webteam, response is published

CYCLE ENDS

responses to be published within 6 weeks of allocation to the most appropriate person

On an annual basis, in November, the LOPB will produce a report on the Local Offer feedback inline with the SEND Code of Practice requirements which requires feedback to inform commissioning decisions about local provision. This report will be published on the LO.
Recommended changes

The protocol including timescales need to be published on the Local Offer.

Conclusions

There is some information that needs to be included or improved on the Local Offer, including the leisure offer for disabled children, improved information about short breaks options, and how they differ from after school provision, personal budgets and how to access them, criminal justice, and quality assurance of the schools local offer information.

The development of the Local Offer and its first annual review has identified the need for dedicated time to keep it updated, and support on going involvement of families and young people. The All Age Disability Commissioning team are therefore creating a new post that will have this as part of its responsibilities.

The SEND Partnership Board consider the move of the Local Offer onto the WIN site as being positive. It makes clear links between the Local Offer, the Family Information Service and Adults information portal, creating an inclusive information service.

The annual review report has been presented to and agreed by the Voice for Parents, Changing Young Lives, SEND Strategy Group and the Children’s Trust Board.