

## **Educational Psychologist Assessment Backlog Position**

### **Statement and Recovery Plan**

**December 2024**

**Written by Victoria Courtis (SEND Lead)**

**This statement outlines the current position in Milton Keynes with the backlog of EHC Needs Assessments and the recovery plan that is in place to clear the backlog and meet the statutory deadline for completion of the EHC needs Assessment in line with the SEND Code of Practice.**

There is a national issue with the recruitment of Educational Psychologists (EPs) to work within Local Authorities with a number leaving to work independently. Milton Keynes City Council have been experiencing difficulties in employing Educational Psychologists (EPs) to both work full time for the SEND Team and through agencies to complete the statutory assessment as part of the EHC Needs Assessment. This is not a position unique to Milton Keynes and is a national concern with the majority of Local Authorities being in a similar position to Milton Keynes.

As a result in difficulty sourcing and retaining high quality EPs Milton Keynes City Council made the decision to implement a two tier project that would clear the growing backlog and the ensure a sustainable model so assessments are completed withing the statutory timeframe without a need to utilise agency staff.

#### **Part one:** Backlog of assessments

MKCC have commissioned 200 assessments that will support in the clearing of the backlog. The assessments are completed with 35 per month which will be completed over a period of 6 months. Once assigned to an EP the EP will have 6 weeks to complete the assessment. This will stagger the assessments preventing work within the assessment team becoming unmanageable. A key focus remains the EHCPs which is a key area of improvement across the partnership. The process for identifying the CYP is based on the following factors:

- Length of time the CYP has been awaiting their assessment
- Vulnerability group such as LAC
- Phase Transfer year

That being referenced MKCC recognise that all cyp with SEND could be classed as being vulnerable. This is a carefully managed process by our Principal EP and Assessment Practice Manager.

This element of the project is now closed down as it started at the end of November 2024 with cyp now being allocated monthly to EPs.

#### **Part two:** Commissioning of ongoing new assessments

There is a project board currently in place which will commission a set number of assessments every month with this planned to commence in March/ April 2025. The contact is out for tender with the closing date being the 6<sup>th</sup> January 2025. There will be 40 assessments per month for the

first 3 months then reducing to 35 per month after that. This will help pick up any further outstanding assessments and ensure that we have sufficient assessments to keep our statutory data at 85% or above completed within the 20 weeks. Although this percentage is significantly higher than national (previous national data for 2023 was 50.3%) in Milton Keynes we have high expectations and aspirations ensuring that if a child needs an assessment it is completed in a timely manner.

Alongside the two tier projects our own EPs are completing assessments as part of their work however still focusing on early identification of need and meeting need which in turn should ensure a reduction in the number of assessments with needs being met through high quality first teaching.

It is proposed that by June 2025 the back log will be cleared and MKCC SEND Team will be focusing on new assessments. While we are in this period of clearing the back log if appropriate we offer top up funding to the school and a consultation/ support from the specialist teaching teams to ensure needs are being appropriately met. It is important to also factor in that although there is an agreement to assess this down not automatically lead to an EHC Plan being issued so the expectation is that schools/ settings continue to meet need through the robust SEND Support Plan that should be in place and also utilising the vast amount of resource available on the Local Offer, including our new Ordinarily Available Provision documents that give a vast array of strategies and resource that are available at SEND Support level. The link to this document can be found here: [Milton Keynes City Council](#)

MKCC are committed to growing our own EPs by working alongside trainee EPs and the local Universities as well as holding an EP information session for anyone considering progressing into this area of employment. This is hoped to attract more EPs to MK.