

SEN Assessment Service

Discovery

London Borough of Ealing
July - September 2018

THE SCOPE

The scope of this discovery; the areas of the service lifecycle we analysed



Application process

Drivers for application - ERSA



Pre-assessment stage

First panel meeting



Specialist assessment

Advice / input from CCG and EPs



Legislation

Policy and code of practice



User experience

Process from the perspective of external stakeholders



Decision making

Panel and other decision points



Communication and collaboration

Parent / child / young person input to the process and notifications



Annual review

Monitoring of provision against outcomes



Placements and commissioning

Placing a child / young person inc. high level of non-maintained and independent



Payments and reconciliation

Process of releasing money, receiving invoices, validating and checking

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

[Rainmaker](#) have carried out an extensive Discovery into the SEN Assessment Service - from ERSA application to the communication of the outcome. Our work was to be the first that is truly aligned to the newly expressed clarity of purpose for SEND:

*Working **together as a community**
so that **all our children** and young persons
can be the happiest and the best they can be.*

Our team used a range of techniques including service blueprinting, user shadowing, business analysis, user surveys and interviews to gain a detailed understanding of the service's user base and their needs. This has enabled us to make clear recommendations to resolve user pain points, improve the service to end users, and enable the service to meet statutory timescales.

WHAT WE FOUND | A SENAS service full of dedicated individuals who want to make a difference to children and young people but who are constrained, rather than empowered by process and systems. The service is perceived as vital, but also stressful for **users**. The service is **missing target timescales set by government**. The process, people and systems landscape - now blueprinting and mapped to user needs - clearly shows **manual processing of administration-heavy work** outweighs the time spent in direct engagement with users. Increasing demand is only making things worse. Substantial but achievable change is needed for the service to become compliant with its statutory obligations.

RECOMMENDATION | Based on our research with parents, schools, staff in ESCAN and with professionals we believe the service can **deliver an ECH plan from ERSA application within 20 weeks** with the right changes.

In order to achieve this we have put together a set of recommendations to lay the foundations of operational good practice - based on feedback from staff and managers, combined with our experience of impactful change in other clients. This good practice can then be underpinned by a managed transition to a fit for purpose case management solution will enable the service to vastly improve delivery to meet targets, lift experience and enable people to refocus their expertise on higher value work with service users. Opportunities such as the use of big data, a smart paperless panel and multi-disciplinary virtual collaboration can all flow from investing in this.

Alongside this, we recommend moving the application process online, and taking advantage of existing technology available to the service to reduce some pain points immediately.

These **changes can be implemented quickly, in parallel** with planning for the next phase, which will deliver the right technology to support the service by **freeing up staff time to focus less on administration and more on engagement** directly with children and young people, helping them be the happiest and the best they can be.

THE CHALLENGE

The current service offering to users needs some focused change

A service that...



Needs to meet **statutory timescales of 20 weeks** from 'apply' to 'award' (averaging 28 weeks, 47% within timescale to Oct)



Hampers multiple stakeholders with **administrative tasks** and **manual processes**



Is **very important** to users and is **highly emotional** and **stressful**

A process that...



Leaves **little capacity** for engagement and early intervention



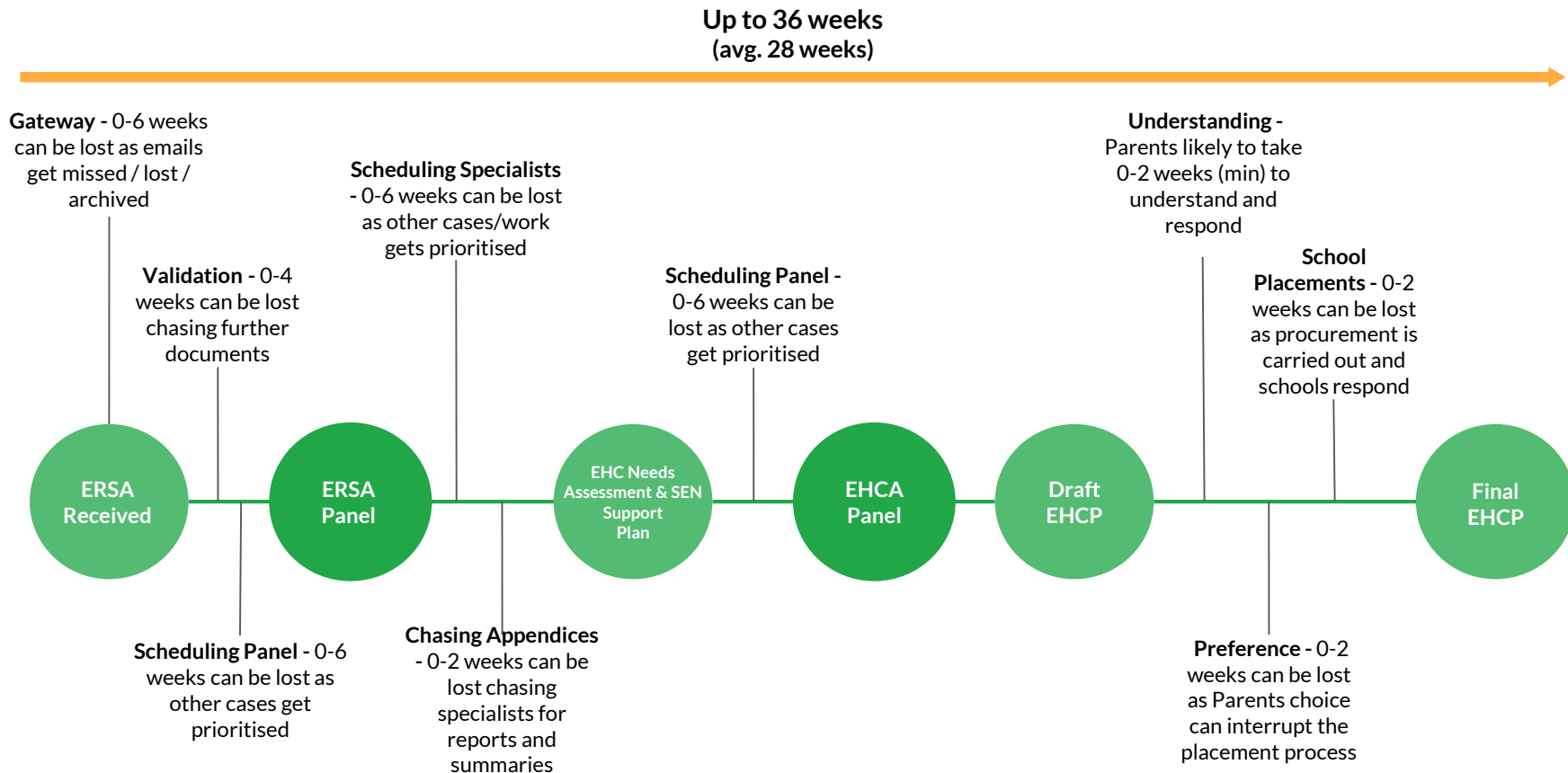
Does not collect **enough data** to **inform change**



Does not **empower** parents with information

THE CHALLENGE

The current service timeline can be extensive for users, and painful for staff



CLARITY OF PURPOSE

We're aligning our work to an evolving purpose and guiding principles

"Working together as a community, so that all our children and young persons can be the happiest and the best they can be."



**Stubborn on vision,
flexible on approach**

Staying focused and honest to the vision. Recognising that how we achieve it will change



**Do different
not more**

Reimagining front-to-back, top-to-bottom, end-to-end service to deliver user needs



**Collaborate
with purpose**

Spending time with our people and other groups to build better services, not reviewing and measuring what isn't working



**Users first
and foremost**

Building and changing services with users at the core from day 1. Investing in skills for those with the opportunity to best influence.



**Design, be driven
by outcomes**

Designing first before we build or buy. Focus this design on creating the right outcomes for users



**Experiment
and iterate**

Having the courage to try, learn and improve services, iterating them to meet evolving user needs and landscape



**Pragmatism
over bureaucracy**

Upholding a common-sense approach to dealing with risk. Don't be bound by unnecessary constraints, nor politics and pessimists



**Think clearly
to act fast**

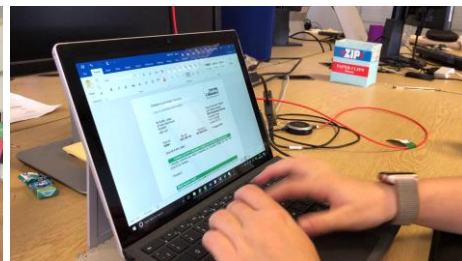
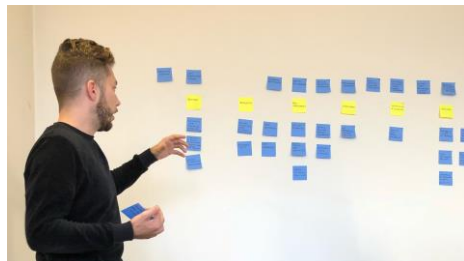
Bringing data, people and experience together to make decisions fast. Make changes happen in weeks not years

A woman with dark hair, wearing a black top and a necklace, is sitting on a beige couch. She is looking down at a document held by a young boy. The boy is wearing a grey t-shirt and is writing on the document with a blue pen. A young girl, wearing a pink shirt, is sitting next to the boy, also looking at the document. The background shows a window with white blinds.

USER RESEARCH AND SERVICE BLUEPRINTS

USER RESEARCH

Timeline of engagement



July

August

September

Schools closure

5
Blueprinting
Sessions

5
School visits

4
Shadowing
sessions
(EHCCo & BS)

2
Shadowing
sessions (Panel)

10+
Expert interviews

266
Parents reached
through a survey

11
Parent and carer
interviews

USER FEEDBACK

Highlights from our survey on the EHC Assessment process, which reached 266 respondents in total

53.2%



**Got information
on how to apply
from a SENCO**

We had 137 responses, from which majority of 53.2% found out how to apply for the EHC assessment from School SEN Coordinator, whilst only **2.9% found it from the Local Offer website.**

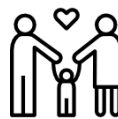
38.5%



**Think EHCP is reflecting
and addressing the child's
needs well**

We had 147 responses, from which 38.5% on average, believe the EHCP is reflecting the child's Educational (39.7%), Social (37.5%) and Health (38.3%) needs well enough.

37.2%



**Were either fully satisfied
or satisfied with the level of
support and guidance**

We had 137 responses, from which 37.2% were either fully satisfied or satisfied with the level of support, whilst **29.9% were neither satisfied or dissatisfied** and **9.7% did not receive any support or guidance.**

35.7%



**Felt stressed during the
assessment process**

From the 137 responses we had, the assessment process made 35.7% feel stressed, whilst **31.9% felt hopeful** and **22.6% felt powerless.**

USER FEEDBACK

Parent and carer satisfaction with the EHCP

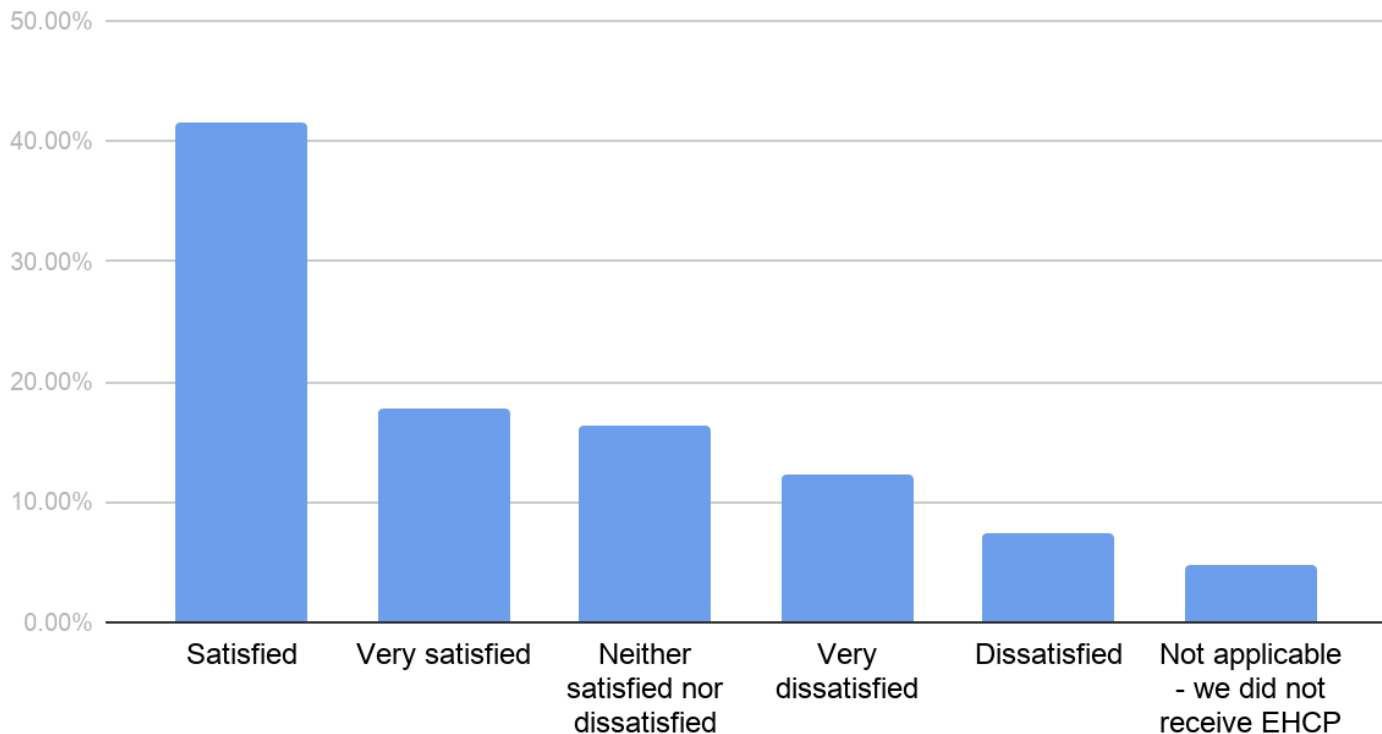
41.5%



**Are satisfied with
the provision
of EHCP**

We had 147 responses, from which just over 40% said they are satisfied with the provision set out in the EHCP, whilst 12.2% are very dissatisfied.

Total of 147 responses



USER FEEDBACK

Parent and carer involvement in the EHCA process

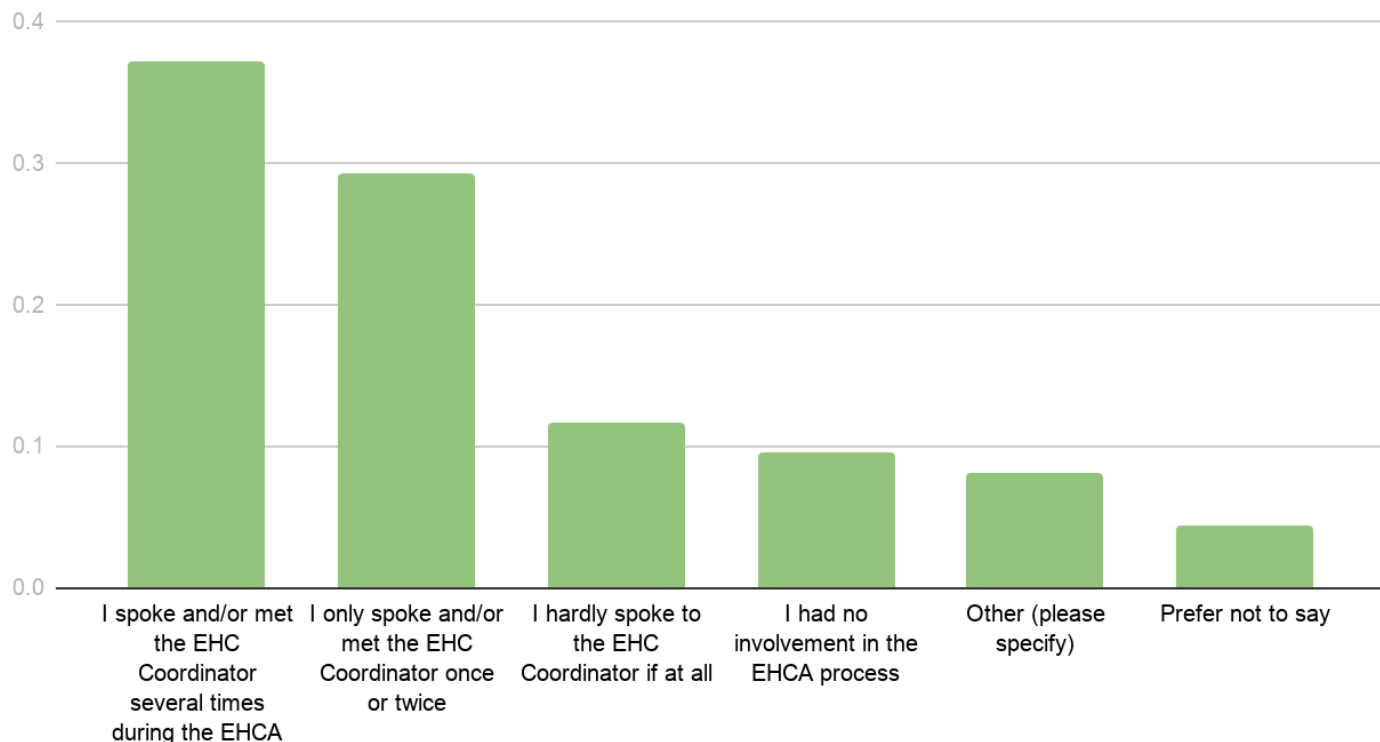
37.2%



Said they were personally involved in the process

We had 137 responses, from which many said they spoke and / or met with the EHC Coordinator several times over the course of the assessment process, whilst **9.4% had no involvement at all.**

Total of 137 responses



USER ASPIRATIONS

Parent and carer feedback on the future of the assessment process

"There should be an easy to follow schedule showing when things will happen, what parents can expect and the milestones around the child's educational expectations."

"More communication with the council and the SEN officer."

"More accessible, I felt penalised for choosing a nursery out of borough"

"1- less delays 2- same coordinators not a million to deal with 3- knowing each milestone timeline at the time we reach it 4- impartial mediation"

41.6%



Out of 137 respondents, 41.6% on average would like to see the improved assessment process to **include better and more communication**

63.5%



Majority of 137 respondents, 63.5% would prefer to **communicate through email** with the Council in the future whilst 46.7% would prefer phone calls and 45.9% face-to-face

40.8%



Most of 137 respondents, 40.8% would like to see the assessment process **be more simple**

35%



Most of 137 respondents, 35% would like to assessment process to **be more informative**

USER DEMOGRAPHICS

94.7% of 151 survey responds reported they are parents or carers (2.6% Adoptive or Foster and 2.6% Preferred not to say)



66%

Speak English

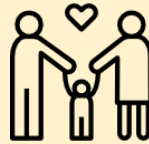
Majority of respondents, 66% said that English is either their first language or a language they speak most often



44%

Speak another language

44% of respondents speak another language either as their first language or in addition to English



46.3%

Visits their local leisure centre

34.4%

Said they didn't do any of the listed activities in the survey within their community

24.5%

Attend services at their place of worship



92%

Use a smartphone regularly

49.6%

Use a tablet regularly

47%

Use a laptop regularly



34.4%

Stated their child is eligible for free school meals



92.7%

On average, said they use digital devices to do online shopping, internet banking and more

USER PERSONAS

The groups who use or help to deliver the service

SERVICE USERS



Daniel the
VOCAL PARENT



Meera the
SILENT PARENT

EDUCATION



Leo the
SCHOOL REP.

SEN STAFF



Corinne the
ADMIN



Laura the
COORDINATOR



Stuart the
LEADER

EXPERTS

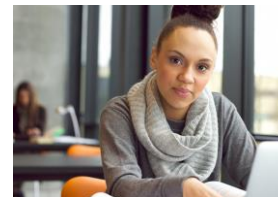


Howard the
SPECIALIST



Sonia the **PANELIST**

SUPPORT



Pamela the
SUPPORTER

An overview of the future state of the EHC Assessment process

PHASE/TIME	PERSONA	BEFORE	THREATS/ISSUES	REQUEST	PRE-ASSESSMENT	ASSESSMENT	NEGOTIATION/FUNDING	CLOSURE
CUSTOMER JOURNEY	PARENT	Discover parent's needs and expectations	Identify potential threats/risks	Request for information	Pre-assessment of request	Assessment of request	Negotiation/Funding	Closure
	SCHOOL/REPRESENTATIVE	Identify school's needs and expectations	Identify potential threats/risks	Request for information	Pre-assessment of request	Assessment of request	Negotiation/Funding	Closure
FRONT STAGE	COORDINATOR	Identify school's needs and expectations	Identify potential threats/risks	Request for information	Pre-assessment of request	Assessment of request	Negotiation/Funding	Closure
	ADMINISTRATOR	Identify school's needs and expectations	Identify potential threats/risks	Request for information	Pre-assessment of request	Assessment of request	Negotiation/Funding	Closure
BACK STAGE	PRINCIPAL	Identify school's needs and expectations	Identify potential threats/risks	Request for information	Pre-assessment of request	Assessment of request	Negotiation/Funding	Closure
	SPECIALIST	Identify school's needs and expectations	Identify potential threats/risks	Request for information	Pre-assessment of request	Assessment of request	Negotiation/Funding	Closure
SUPPORTING PROCESSES	FINANCE	Identify school's needs and expectations	Identify potential threats/risks	Request for information	Pre-assessment of request	Assessment of request	Negotiation/Funding	Closure
	SYSTEMS	Identify school's needs and expectations	Identify potential threats/risks	Request for information	Pre-assessment of request	Assessment of request	Negotiation/Funding	Closure
KEY POINTS								

PHASES & TIME	PERSONA	BEFORE	REQUEST	The dark starts	ASSESSMENT	SOURCING & PLACEMENT	IN-STORE	ANALYSIS & REVIEW
CUSTOMER JOURNEY	PARENT	Search for schools, information, community, support, and confidence. Study school.	Looks for the USA and information in that website. Confirms the school.	Reviews a comprehensive school profile.	Is able to register to the website and see the request list.	Considering whether to accept an admission request. Goes through the school.	Reassigned to another school if the school is not available or if it is not meeting the criteria.	Reviews the school's performance and the school's reputation.
	YOUNG ADULT	Business needs.	May find the USA and information in that website. Confirms the school.	Reviews a comprehensive school profile.	Is able to register to the website and see the request list.	Considering whether to accept an admission request. Goes through the school.	Reassigned to another school if the school is not available or if it is not meeting the criteria.	Reviews the school's performance and the school's reputation.
	SCHOOLER	Observes the school and its environment.	May find the USA and information in that website. Confirms the school.	Reviews a comprehensive school profile.	Is able to register to the website and see the request list.	Considering whether to accept an admission request. Goes through the school.	Reassigned to another school if the school is not available or if it is not meeting the criteria.	Reviews the school's performance and the school's reputation.
CHANNELS								
FRONT STAGE	AMBASSADOR	Increasing visibility in community.	May find the Parent's school.	Can communicate directly with the Parent, Ambassador, or the Parent's school.	Highly visible in the community.	Highly visible in the community.	Highly visible in the community.	Highly visible in the community.
BACK STAGE	PANELIST							
	SPECIALIST	Develops a plan of action for the school.	Highly visible in the community.	Can communicate directly with the Parent, Ambassador, or the Parent's school.	Highly visible in the community.	Highly visible in the community.	Highly visible in the community.	Highly visible in the community.
SUPPORTING FUNCTIONS	FINANCE							
SYSTEMS								
IMPACTING FACTORS								

- Improved user experience - internal and external
- Streamlined procedures with the aid of technology and case management
- Collaborative ways of working and consistency assurance
- Improved quality of data from the start of the process
- Ability to track case management and performance



Laura the AMBASSADOR

She works in a team of SEN Ambassadors who are advisors for the children's' needs within the Local Authority. She is a mobile worker, often paying visits to schools, community centres and families who need her support the most. She delivers a regular training session to Schools, EP's and other Specialists instructing them on how to fill in the new online forms so that they include succinct summaries along the complete reports. She collaborates with parents on draft versions of plans and represents them at panel meetings. She gets to know the children and their families really well. She is passionate and equipped with enough knowledge to support the families in the assessment process.

I am an Education, Health and Care Coordinator (EHCCo)

What you used to find me typically doing and what I do now:

”

“I’m passionate about changing children’s lives for better.”

“I’m working for a good cause.”

“Building and maintaining relationships is an important part of my job. I’m a people’s person.”



COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS & SCHOOLS VIA EMAIL OR PHONE



CALCULATING THE RAS SCORE



ATTENDING WEEKLY PANEL MEETINGS



COLLATING CARE PLANS



ENGAGING WITH COMMUNITIES, SCHOOLS AND PARENTS



REVIEWING PROVISIONS



MEETING WITH PARENTS & SCHOOLS



ASSISTING PARENTS DURING THE PROCESS

Needs

- A lean business process to be able to focus on the key responsibilities of her new role
- To be able to track the progress of different cases
- Stay in touch with parents
- A system for automatic updates for parents
- Accurate annual reviews from schools

Challenges:

- Disjoined services across LA, NHS and Schools
- To unravel the legacy of distrust towards the Local Authority
- Building trust with the parents can be difficult at times
- Working with schools to be on the same page and aligned on the common goals is not always easy

A photograph of a two-story brick building with a modern glass entrance. A large white rectangular sign with a green border is superimposed over the center of the image, containing the text 'HOW DO WE GET THERE?'. The building has several windows, some with dark frames and others with lighter frames. The entrance is marked by a yellow sign with the word 'Spr' visible. The foreground shows a paved area with a pattern of light and dark stones.

**HOW DO WE
GET THERE?**

FROM SCOOTER TO MOTORBIKE

The Agile development of a service, focusing on addressing pain points and delivering user needs fast

This is where you
are now



The Skateboard



The Scooter



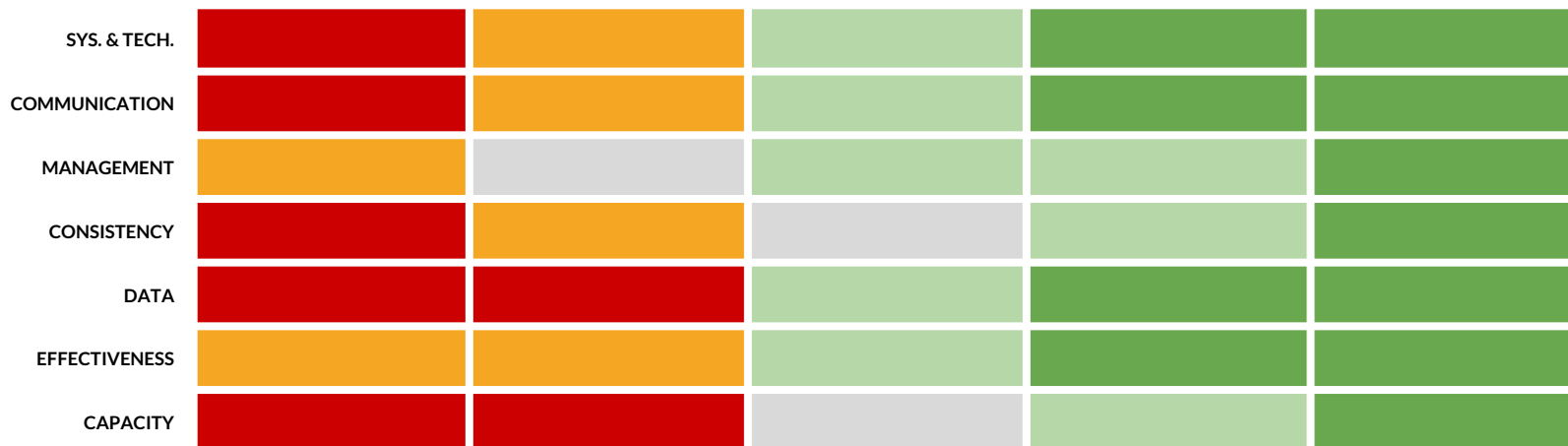
The Bike



The Motorbike



The Sports Car



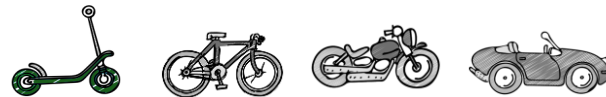
This analysis is based on pain points identified during the Discovery and opportunities that can mitigate them, full thematic analysis can be found [here](#).



NEXT STEPS

THE SCOOTER

Quick wins the service could implement



OPPORTUNITY



Digitise ERSA form in CMS (similar to SEN-T) - going to case allocation manager (see management item)



Create easy-to-understand supporting information targeted at parents with approx. timeframe



SEN Travel Assistance assessment workflow joined up with SEN-AS - choice of provisions offered with transport options



Enforce good practice operational procedures including the use of tools and systems (case allocation, RAS, Synergy, O365)



Proactive prioritisation of cases based on due date, possibly using Driver Screens / other options



Improving and adding consistency to the RAS score by having specialists give a score to their expertise area

PAIN POINTS RESOLVED

Poor quality of data with manual validation, Capture parent preferences

Hard to understand process and timeframe; unclear what the required documents are and what happens next

Currently two separate processes, no consideration of parent's working lives and the families' daily commutes

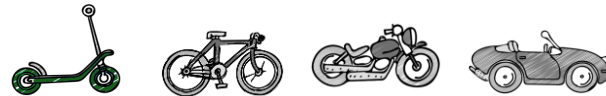
Multiple tools and systems, inconsistency in quality, time wasted

Poor time management, fire-fighting rather than timescale driven priority

Not all EHCCo's use RAS, lack of common language: what does 'severe' / 'moderate' etc. mean

THE SCOOTER

Potential time recouped through quick wins



Up to 4 weeks gained - primarily from digitising the statutory request form to allow for **automated validation** and information collection



Up to 0.5 FTE unlocked - primarily from **reduced need for chasing** information and **call volumes**

THE BIKE (1/2)

The first iteration of the fully digital service



OPPORTUNITY



Fit for purpose case management system; from online application to pro-active workflow



Reallocate FTE into community engagement and early intervention



Establish simple criteria for ERSA panel - enable Ambassador to take decision on ERSA > EHCA



Digital input from specialists directly into case management system

PAIN POINTS RESOLVED

Statutory timescale not being met, EHCCo chasing, consistency and data quality improved

Currently no time for parent or school engagement, Annual Reviews or active monitoring of milestones

Pre-assessment process lengthens the timescale, manual case allocation, printing, scheduling physical panel

EHCCo's have to chase specialists and then cipher the reports to write draft plans

BENEFITS

Reduced business support overhead.
Effective prioritisation and case allocation

Rebuild relationship of trust with schools and parents, early awareness of children with SEN or potential for SEN

0-6 weeks gained from avoiding panel scheduling, up to 1.6 FTE and up to £2k p/a printing

Potentially 1.5 FTE from automated drafting EHCP, efficient gathering of reports; cut down efforts of copy pasting and plan drafting

ASPIRATION / VALUE

Principle 7 - Pragmatism over bureaucracy

Principle 3 - Collaborate with purpose,
Principle 4 - Users first and foremost,

Principle 2 - Do different not more,
Principle 7 - Pragmatism over bureaucracy

Principle 3 - Collaborate with purpose

THE BIKE (2/2)

The first iteration of the fully digital service



OPPORTUNITY



Parents have the ability to **view** draft online, comment and give feedback on it



Smart Paperless Panel, in which data is presented directly from the case management system



Set up a foundation for data capture which will allow us in the future to: make suggestions and recommendations based on data, track data and analyse it

PAIN POINTS RESOLVED

Currently parents view plan without interaction and unable to ask questions

Creating and shuffling through paper bundles wastes time, paper waste

Currently a 'manual', multi-agency effort, relying fully on expertise and professional experience, no decision patterns registered - no intelligent data capture or use of data

BENEFITS

Potential reduction in calls chasing update, encourage/enable continuous collaboration and feedback

2.5 FTE from preparing for EHCA panel and drafting EHCP, £6k p/a printing

Instill mindset of continuous data capture and research, commence building comprehensive data for future use

ASPIRATION / VALUE

Principle 3 - Collaborate with purpose

Principle 3 - Collaborate with purpose, Principle 2 - Do different not more

Principle 6 - Experiment and iterate, Principle 7 - Think clearly to act fast

THE BIKE

Potential time recouped from the first iteration



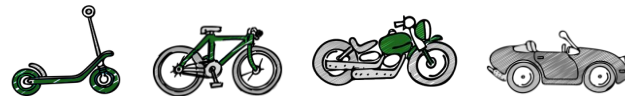
Up to 8 weeks gained - through **targeted use** of ERSA panel and an **effective gateway**



Up to 4.5 FTE unlocked - primarily from **reduction in manual preparation** for panels and **manual drafting of EHCPs**

THE MOTORBIKE

The service we should aim to build



OPPORTUNITY



Collaborative multidisciplinary input into one online solution - systemising service catalogues and feedback loops



Portal that parents, schools and relevant specialist teams can collaboratively draft EHCP, track progress and also drive the annual review process



Redefined pre-assessment process: Pre-validated ERSA straight to digital ERSA panel - Yes/No voting



Use historical data to make more informed decisions about future cases

PAIN POINTS RESOLVED

Business support / EHCCo overhead cutting and pasting, missing / wrong information finding way into plans

Parents unable to see the progression of process, add/edit details, details of child in multiple places. Ability to respond faster to changes in need

Pre-assessment process lengthens the timescale, manual case allocation, printing, scheduling physical panel

Difficulty determining milestones and deciding how challenging those are in the EHC. Holding schools to account at annual review

THE MOTORBIKE

Potential time recouped from a comprehensive digital offering



Up to 16 weeks quicker for users to get to an EHCP -
through **redefined and digital pathway to EHCA** of ERSA
panel and an **effective gateway**



More capacity in the service to help users and provide a better
quality service - from **digitising administrative tasks** such as
panel preparation and EHCP drafting, together with **digitised
communication, chasing and collaboration**