



**Sarah Wilkins**

**Director for Education, Early Years and Children with Disabilities**

Email: [swilkins@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk](mailto:swilkins@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk)

Our Ref: SW/KW

Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2022

Dear Parent/Carer,

You will be aware that there are some staffing changes in SEND. I understand it can be unsettling for everyone when we hear about staff changes without the next steps included so whilst I would have chosen to update you formally at a time when we could give a fuller picture, I have become aware that bits of information are being shared with individuals and via social media, so I felt it useful to give you some details. I hope this provides some clarity and assurances.

**Gabrielle Stacey** gave notice in December 2021. Gabrielle has shared a preference to focus on the specialist area of her professional expertise i.e. educational psychology as opposed to working within a wider remit that would be required as we develop the All Age Disability service. We have been grateful to all that Gabrielle has done to manage our SEND services and to progress the SEND action plan and we wish her well in her future. Gabrielle will be leaving WCF in the near future and we are pleased to have made interim managerial arrangements in the appointment of Stephen Mason. Stephen was appointed to the post due to his breadth and depth of knowledge and experience in SEND and Disabled Children and Adults services. Stephen has been working with WCF/WCC over the past 13 months leading the All Age Disability Change and Transformation programme so knows our services and staff well. Stephen will be taking a fixed term position to provide leadership for SEND services during this phase.

The advertisement and applications for the Director for All Age Disability job is now open <https://www.wmjobs.co.uk/job/113882/director-of-all-age-disability-0-25-service/>. We look forward to recruiting to this position and will be including parent carers and children and young people in the appointment process.

Following the departure of **Zulkifl Ahmed** in December, **Joanna Lawson** was appointed on an interim basis to secure a timely interim arrangement pending permanent appointment. Joanna's role is Group Manager for SEND case work services and she has been with us since the start of January. I am pleased to report that Joanna is enjoying her work with Worcestershire, has met with some parents and stakeholders and from her own depth of experience she is bringing a fresh reflection and challenge to us in these services.

Joanna will be taking an active lead in the quality improvements of education health and care plans as part of our Accelerated Action Plan.

**Nurinder Shergill** Group Manager for post 16 will be leaving WCF in April. Nurinder has worked for Worcestershire since 2017 and we respect her personal and professional decision to extend her experience further in other areas. As an interim arrangement we will be offering our existing SEND Team Managers the opportunity to act up pending permanent appointment to this post. At WCF we believe in supporting internal development where this is possible and we know an internal acting position will bring valuable experience of the history of SEND, the improvement journey to date into the new management team.

We will be recruiting permanently to both Group Manager positions as both are permanent posts re-created in the new All Age Disability structure.

**Tina Partridge** Group Manager for SEND Support Services has worked with WCF since 2020, having transferred in from the previous Babcock commissioned service. Since transfer SEND support services have developed and increased the Educational Psychology team and have very successful teams for sensory impairment, autism and learning support. Tina has made a decision to pursue her leadership career in an education setting, and we respect this decision although we are disappointed in the timing as she will leave WCF in April. We are looking at interim cover arrangements currently. This post is also a re-confirmed post in the new All Age Disability Service and we will act to recruit to the post permanently as soon as possible.

We have a highly experienced and well established group of **Team Managers** who work with our case work team and support staff around this. Nationally there is an acknowledged shortage of **SEND Case Workers**. As part of our SEND development in 2019 – 2020 we increased our case worker capacity from 6FTE to 17FTE. In summer 2021 we experienced the departure of some caseworkers, but I am pleased to report these have all been permanently recruited to and are in post. We currently have 2 permanent vacancies that are being recruited to and in addition we currently have 3 agency staff in post with additional business support to implement our recovery work on our back log of updates to EHCP's as a result of reviews.

**Tina Russell** as Director of Children's Services with the new management team will be overseeing and ensuring the delivery of focus and pace of the SEND accelerated action plan and the safe transition of the All Age Disability Service.

My own post will become **Director of Education, Early Years : inclusion, improvement and planning** and I will lead on the Integrated Care Services (ICS) development alongside health partners. I will continue to work closely with Tina, Stephen and the newly appointed AAD Director as part of the WCF Executive Leadership Team. My role with schools and education settings will of course play a huge part in the progress against our accelerated action plan, particularly on inclusion and work with Health partners on ICS.

I hope this provides assurance that we whilst we have some staffing changes, we think this model will provide us with the very best organisational structure on which to achieve against our actions plans and business plans in WCF. We will be posting this letter on the Local Offer also and sharing with our other partners.

Yours sincerely



Sarah Wilkins  
Director for Education, Early Years and Children with Disabilities

