

BRIEFING ON PUBLICATION OF SEND LOCAL AREA INSPECTION REPORT and NEXT STEPS for Scrutiny

Education, Participation and Skills



1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Plymouth had a local area SEND (Special Educational Need and Disabilities) inspection led by Ofsted and CQC (Care Quality Commission) in late June 2023. The outcome of the inspection was that there were serious weaknesses identified with five priority areas that need to be addressed through a Local Area Action Plan.
- 1.2 The inspection endorsed the Council's long term plans and direction of travel for the Local Area Partnership's multi-agency work. Areas of positive work are recognised in the report. However, concerns were raised about the provision and outcomes for children with SEND including those who need multiagency support and those most vulnerable. The detail is set out in the report.
- 1.3 The report was published on the Ofsted website on 22 August 2023 and is attached. It is also accessible here: [50226534 \(ofsted.gov.uk\)](https://www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspections/50226534).
- 1.4 A meeting for senior officers with the DFE is scheduled for 11 September 2023 where it is expected that the Local Area Partnership will be asked to set up an External Improvement Board.

2. Context for local area SEND inspections

- 2.1 Every local authority area has local area SEND inspections. The framework for these are laid out in [Area SEND inspections: framework and handbook - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/area-send-inspections-framework-and-handbook). The purpose of the two week inspection (with one week prior notice) is to:
- provide an independent, external evaluation of the effectiveness of the local area partnership's arrangements for children and young people with SEND
 - where appropriate, recommend what the local area partnership should do to improve the arrangements.
- 2.2 Plymouth was last inspected in 2016 under a previous SEND inspection framework. Plymouth is one of the first Local Authorities to be inspected under the new inspection framework introduced in January 2023.
- 2.3 During the inspection, which is a joint Ofsted and CQC inspection, the inspectors carry out a parent/carer survey, examine documents and data, talk to children and families, carry out field work, do thorough tracking sessions to follow the chronology of a selection of individual children and talk to professionals.
- 2.4 The following extract from the Inspection Framework gives a sense of focus:

31. *Inspectors will evaluate the impact of the local area partnership's SEND arrangements on the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND, including the extent to which:*

- *children and young people's needs are identified accurately and assessed in a timely and effective way*
- *children, young people and their families participate in decision-making about their individual plans and support*
- *children and young people receive the right help at the right time*
- *children and young people are well prepared for their next steps, and achieve strong outcomes*
- *children and young people are valued, visible and included in their communities*

32. *Inspectors will evaluate how the local area partners work together to plan, evaluate and develop the SEND system, including the extent to which:*

- *leaders are ambitious for children and young people with SEND*
- *leaders actively engage and work with children, young people and families*
- *leaders have an accurate, shared understanding of the needs of children and young people in their local area*
- *leaders commission services and provision to meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people, including commissioning arrangements for children and young people in alternative provision*
- *leaders evaluate services and make improvements*
- *leaders create an environment in which effective practice and multi-agency working can flourish*

2.5 It is important to note, and probably something we were not sufficiently aware of in the run up to the inspection because it is a new framework, that the focus is on **the partnership**: how education (the LA and schools/colleges/EY settings), social care and health work together, in supporting children with SEND, at all levels.

2.6 There are three possible outcomes from the local area SEND inspection. These are in Para 20 of the framework extracted below:

Inspection outcome	Subsequent meetings and inspection activities
The local area partnership's SEND arrangements typically lead to positive experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The local area partnership is taking action where improvements are needed.	Engagement meetings Full inspection usually within 5 years
The local area partnership's arrangements lead to inconsistent experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The local area partnership must work jointly to make improvements.	Engagement meetings Full inspection usually within 3 years
There are widespread and/or systemic failings leading to significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND, which the local area partnership must address urgently.	Engagement meetings Submission of priority action plan (area SEND) Monitoring inspection usually within 18

	months of the publication of the full inspection report Full re inspection usually within 3 years
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3. Areas noted as effective, those for priority action and recommendations

3.1 Areas noted as effective in the Plymouth report

A number of areas were noted as being effective. In summary these included:

- Leaders across the partnership sharing a commitment to improve the way they work together in the future.
- Leaders strengthening the support for young children with language and communication difficulties.
- Children and young people with SEND benefitting from the a range of services to meet their social and emotional needs.
- Local leaders working together to reduce the high number of young people with SEND who are not in employment, education and training.
- Effective identification and support for children and young people who are autistic or have a learning disability at times of crises to prevent hospital admission.
- In some schools, pupils with SEND are assessed in a timely way and get the help they need to do well.

3.2 Areas for priority action

The following are the areas for priority action, with an inspection due in 18 months' time (Feb 2025) to assess progress.

Responsible body	Areas for priority action
Plymouth City Council, NHS Devon Integrated Care Board, school and college leaders.	Leaders, including Plymouth City Council, Devon Integrated Care Board, and school and college leaders, must put children and young people with SEND at the centre of all improvement plans by ensuring that those plans contain clear oversight and tracking in order to measure the direct impact on children, young people and their families.
Plymouth City Council, NHS Devon Integrated Care Board, school and college leaders.	Leaders, including Plymouth City Council, Devon Integrated Care Board, and school and college leaders, should work together and share information to enable the earlier identification of children and young people with SEND who are at risk of increased vulnerability and negative outcomes.
Plymouth City Council, school and college leaders	Leaders, including Plymouth City Council and school and college leaders, should work together to reduce the likelihood of exclusion for pupils with an EHCP.
NHS Devon Integrated Care Board	Devon Integrated Care Board should work with partners to risk assess children on waiting lists,

	ensuring that those with multiple needs get the earliest support possible.
Plymouth County Council	<p>Plymouth County Council leaders should ensure that children and young people with SEND who also have social care needs get the care and support they need, particularly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ vulnerable children living in residential special schools and children's homes at a distance; and ▪ children receiving short breaks without effective oversight and review, including reassessment when needs escalate.

3.3 Areas for improvement

The following are the recommendations: which would usually be assessed in three years' time i.e. July or September 2026. Progress will be checked in the earlier monitoring visit.

<p>Leaders across health, social care and education should improve the consistency of the support offered to children and young people with SEND by ensuring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ all children receive the mandated checks in line with the Healthy Child Programme; and ▪ all children and young people benefit from a consistently applied graduated response.
<p>Leaders across the partnership should continue to address long waiting times for children and young people requesting support from health services.</p>
<p>Leaders must ensure that all social care, health and education practitioners have the training they need to provide consistent identification, care and support for children and young people with SEND.</p>
<p>Leaders should use the information available to them to plan ahead, ensuring the right services and support are in place to meet the future needs of children and young people with SEND in Plymouth</p>

4. Actions, opportunities and risks

4.1. Some urgent action has been taken by Plymouth City Council around the fifth priority action area: *Plymouth County Council leaders should ensure that children and young people with SEND who also have social care needs get the care and support they need, particularly:*

- *vulnerable children living in residential special schools and children's homes at a distance; and*
- *children receiving short breaks without effective oversight and review, including reassessment when needs escalate.*

Since the end of the inspection on 30 June, when this action was fed back verbally, the Children with Disabilities Team have assessed and reviewed all children in the first group (currently eight children) and used a triaged approach for the second group, with all those receiving or entitled to overnight care having been reviewed (twenty one children). There are a number of other children who receive non-residential short breaks, or for whom non-residential short breaks have been requested, whose

cases are being reviewed over the coming two months: these will be completed by October 31st 2023.

4.2 There has been partnership action to feed back on the draft report; this has resulted in a number of our proposed amendments being accepted into the final version.

4.3 Planning is well underway to produce the action plan needed by the end of September. There are a wide range of stakeholders to involve so the workshop planned to take this forward on 20 September is an important milestone in the partnership response.

4.4 Engagement at senior officer level between health and PCC, and with the DfE and NHS colleagues is strong and work has taken place, including shaping the governance and monitoring arrangements. a.

4.5 Health and PCC officers are meeting with the parent/carer voice group, PPCV, to ensure the outcomes of the plan deliver the required improvements and are shaped by the views and experiences of children, young people and parents.

4.6 Action has been taken to secure for a longer period, interim expertise in SEND for PCC, which had been secured in the run up to the inspection.

4.7 Discussions about options for professional development and support for all partners have taken place with the LGA and with the DfE and a partnership learning and development programme will be put in place.

4.8 There are **opportunities** to take as we look ahead. The clarity and urgency of the report's priority actions will galvanise the joint work of all partners, including schools and colleges, to provide a more inclusive, joined up network of support for our children with SEND and vulnerabilities. The focus on putting children at the heart of what we do is essential. The emphasis on plans and their implementation showing impact and improving outcomes which is overseen by senior leaders, is crucial.

4.9 There are also **risks**. There is a risk to morale: early positive communication and engagement is important so that colleagues and parents/carers and children see that there is purpose and drive to deliver improvement. There is a risk of overload of change and monitoring so, streamlining, prioritising and having tight but manageable timelines is crucial. There is a risk in terms of capacity to implement change well and as the plan is shaped we will be able to determine and manage it.

5. Brief overview of timeline following Area SEND inspection 2023

Dates	Event/activity	Progress update
26-30 June 2023	Onsite inspection	Completed
6 July 2023	SSLB (Safeguarding Strategic Leadership Board) confirmed that an inspection follow up working group should be set up.	Set up – 4 meetings have occurred and this group meets weekly.
20 July 2023	Draft inspection report received	Report received.
24 July 2023	First meeting of working group. ToR affirmed.	Completed
By 1 August	Response to draft inspection report will be completed and sent.	Completed and sent.
Around 11 August	Local area receives final report.	Received 11 August

By 16 August	Local area can complain about report	No complaint made at this stage
Around 18/21 August <i>Confirmed 22 August</i>	Report published if no complaint submitted	Report published 22 August
Around 21-23 August Confirmed 22 August	Communications to : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Councillors ▪ External stakeholders ▪ Internal staff ▪ Boards 	Communications out to stakeholders 22 August
By 31 August <i>Date 11 September</i>	Liaison with DfE and LGA re follow up including possible board.	Ongoing
Ongoing August and September	Implementation of urgent actions re short breaks and those in residential care	See paragraph 4.1 above. Immediate actions taken; ongoing work to ensure this is set as a standard with strong oversight.
Ongoing August and September	Development of plan by working group. NB Urgent involvement of school and college leaders in September. Focussed stakeholder meetings to engage with plan development. Workshop involving stakeholders – date confirmed 20 September – invitations being distributed.	Working group is set up. Awaiting nominations of school and college leaders as of 1-9-23. NB School and college leaders named as well as PCC and NHS ICB.
29 September	Action plan to be published.	
September onwards	Plan cohered with current strategy and action plans. Ongoing senior level monitoring of plan.	