

**Meeting:** Health and Wellbeing Board  
**Date:** 6<sup>th</sup> September 2023  
**Classification:** Part 1  
**Key Decision:** No  
**Title of Report:** **SEND Area Inspection outcome and Strategic Action Plan**

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## **Executive Summary**

- 1.1 To update the Health and Well-being Board on the outcome of the SEND Area Inspection and the resulting SEND Area Strategic Action Plan

## **Recommendations**

- 2.1 **To note the Area SEND inspection outcome and resulting Area SEND strategic action plan**  
2.2 **To request an update on the area's progress in implementing the action plan in 6 months**

## **3. Background**

- 3.1 The Area Send inspection is a joint inspection, carried out by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) which looks at the local area's partnership SEND arrangements. The Inspection framework was revised in January 2023 and Southend was the 4<sup>th</sup> area to be inspected under the new framework.
- 3.2 Under the previous inspection framework local areas were either judged as providing satisfactory support or, if not, had to produce a written statement of action. Southend Area Partnership was placed under a Written Statement of Action following its October 2018 inspection which found significant areas of weakness in the local area's practice.
- 3.3 Ofsted and (CQC) revisited the area of Southend-on-Sea in May 2021 to decide whether sufficient progress has been made in addressing each of the four significant weaknesses detailed in the written statement of action issued on 5 December 2018. The revisit found that the area had made sufficient progress in addressing three of the

four significant weaknesses identified at the 2018 inspection. The area at that time had not made sufficient progress in addressing one significant weakness.

3.4 Under the revised 2023 Area SEND Inspection framework there are 3 possible outcome judgements for the SEND Inspection:

1. The local area partnership's SEND arrangements typically lead to positive experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The next Area Inspection will be within 5 years and the Area should produce its strategic action plan within 30 days of the published outcome.
2. The local area partnership's arrangements lead to inconsistent experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The next area inspection will be within 3 years and the Area should produce its strategic action plan within 30 days of the published outcome.
3. There are widespread and/or systemic failings leading to significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND.

3.5 Southend's Area SEND Inspection was carried out between 6 to 10 March 2023. Following quality assurance processes within Osted and the CQC the final report was published in June 2023. The outcome for Southend Area Partnership was judgement 2 and therefore the local Area should expect its next inspection in 3 years. This is an improving position from the Written Statement of Action which arose from the last inspection.

#### **4. Area Inspection Findings**

##### **4.1 Summary of findings**

The inspection reported on:

- a. What is it like to be a child or young person with SEND in the area and concluded that the experiences of children and young people with SEND in Southend-on-Sea are variable.
- b. What the area partnership was doing which was effective, highlighting strengths and successes in a range of areas across health, social care and education.
- c. What the area partnership needed to do better, identifying improvement needs across a range of service areas.

4.2 The inspection described the following strengths as to what is it like to be a child or young person with SEND in Southend

- There have been improvements to waiting times for access to services such as The Lighthouse Child Development Centre.
- Many children and young people are positive about the help and support they receive in school from caring and dedicated staff.
- Young people appreciate the adjustments that are made when they are taking part in examinations.
- Improved access to alternative provision placements is supporting more children and young people with SEND to engage positively in learning.

- Children and young people with disabilities and their families benefit from access to a range of services that are identified through an effective multi-agency response.
- Schools routinely consult with children and young people with SEND and with their parents and carers as part of the EHC plan review process.
- Young people appreciate the flexible pathways and support that is available when they leave school. This includes mentoring and small group sessions which help young people to develop their confidence so that they are better prepared for further study and the world of work.
- Children and young people access opportunities that are available through organisations such as Little Heroes, swimming, scouts and the youth theatre.
- Children and young people with SEND access a range of services that are available to meet their social and emotional health and well-being. This includes voluntary sector services such as online counselling, for example KOOTH
- Children and young people with SEND are benefiting from improved access to alternative provision and, where appropriate, education other than at school (EOTAS), which are carefully considered to meet their individual needs.
- Children and young people with SEND are beginning to be more involved in the wider decision-making of the area, such as the Southend Youth Council and those involved are positive about the impact of their work. They say that adults listen and act on their ideas.

#### 4.3 The inspection also identified the following weaknesses:

- More children and young people need to gain access to wider health services and support in a timely way.
- Some children and young people are waiting for long periods to access health needs assessment, especially in respect of neurodiversity and for specialist equipment.
- Too many children and young people with SEND, including those with SEND support, are not achieving as well as they could in school.
- Wider multi-agency support is often not identified in children's and young people's education, health and care (EHC) plans, including those placed in settings out of the local area.
- Children and young people with SEND do not benefit as well as they should from effective multi-agency working when reviewing EHC plans. Health and social care services are often not involved in EHC plan reviews and reviews do not reflect how agencies will coordinate support
- Preparation for adulthood needs to begin earlier
- Children and young people need to know more about the clubs and facilities that are available for them to socialise with others out of school and during the school holidays
- Children and young people have said it would be better if the needs of children and young people with SEND are more widely understood across the community in which they live.

#### 4.4 The inspection reported that the area partnership was found to be effective in the following areas:

- The local area partnership consulted widely on the local area's strategic priorities for improvement.
- The PCF is making a strong contribution to improving the experiences of children and young people with SEND and their families.
- The views of children and young people, and of parents and carers, are being captured more systematically as part of the EHC planning and review processes.
- Changes in the way that SEND caseworkers engage with schools and families have been welcomed.
- School staff appreciate the guidance and support received from the local authority SEND team.
- Access to early help is supporting families to better meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.
- Some services, such as early help and The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Service, help parents and carers to navigate the local offer and access the right support in a timely way.
- Additional capacity within the local authority inclusion team is supporting more effective partnership working between education, social care and health services for children and young people with SEND who are electively home educated, and their families.
- Effective multi-agency working between education, social care and the police helps reduce identified safeguarding risks for children and young people with SEND.
- There is strong partnership working to identify and support children and young people with SEND who are at risk of missing education or who are not engaging with education or training.
- The local area partnership has extended the opportunities available to children and young people with SEND who access education and support through alternative provision and oversight of alternative provision is robust.
- Southend local area's systems for supporting children and young people through the dynamic support register (DSR) and the use of care, education and treatment reviews (CETR) are developing well. There is evidence of better multi-agency working in Southend with a stronger focus on supporting children and young people and families at the right time
- Most children and young people with SEND who are referred to physiotherapy and occupational health services are seen within 18 weeks of referral; the triage system helps ensure that those with acute need are seen promptly.
- Primary care teams undertake individualised annual health reviews for young people with a learning disability in a timely way.
- More children and young people with disabilities are taking up the offer of short breaks and the local area partnership has acted on feedback and improved communication about these arrangements

4.5 The inspection identified the following areas which the area partnership needs to do better:

- The pace of improvement has been too slow. The implementation of the local area partnership's draft SEND strategy was delayed.
- Work to build trust with parents and carers has been undermined by weaknesses in service delivery across the local area.

- The processes of EHC planning and review are not sufficiently focused on raising the ambition of what children and young people with SEND can achieve with the right support. EHC annual reviews are not completed in a timely manner.
- Co-production to develop individual EHC plans is not carried out consistently well. In some cases, there is not sufficient contribution from health and social care to ensure a comprehensive review of a young person's needs.
- Leaders recognise that too many children and young people with SEND are not achieving well enough at school and are not well prepared for their next steps in education and/or training. Where there have been improvements to joint services, for example in the early years, this is not translating into improved educational outcomes for children with SEND
- The work to support young people to prepare for adulthood does not start early enough
- The information that services obtain through quality assurance processes is not used well enough to evaluate the effectiveness of leaders' actions and improve practice.
- The current transition processes in place for children and young people with SEND who are accessing child and adolescent mental health services does not currently support preparation and transition in a timely way.
- Current services available in the area do not meet the range of needs for adults with SEND.
- Speech and language therapists have limited capacity to provide support for children and young people with SEND who attend mainstream settings.
- Children and young people with SEND and their families continue to experience significant delay in accessing diagnostic pathways, especially for autism spectrum disorders.
- There are not enough clubs and activities available to children and young people with SEND, including during the school holidays.
- Parents and carers and professionals can experience confusion in how to access the range of services that are available from education, health and social care.

## **5. Area Inspection recommendations**

- 5.1 In summary the inspection made 5 recommendations, which are detailed below.
- 5.2 The local area partnership and stakeholders, including the council, the Integrated Care Board and wider partnership, should ensure that leaders in education, health and social care are empowered to drive forward improvements at pace so that the Southend SEND Partnership strategy impacts positively on the experiences and outcomes of all children and young and people with SEND.
- 5.3 The local area partnership should evaluate the quality and impact of services and joint working more effectively, to inform improvements that lead to better outcomes and experiences for children and young people with SEND.
- 5.4 Local area partnership leaders should improve the effectiveness of joint working to support the co-production of EHC plans and annual reviews so that at each stage the provision that is planned takes full account of children's and young people's current and changing needs.

- 5.5 Local area partnership leaders should ensure that they share accurate data across health, education and social care to support rigorous and effective self-evaluation and inform joint commissioning.
- 5.6 The local area partnership should ensure that appropriate support is in place from health services for children and young people who are awaiting health needs assessments, so that early intervention reduces the risk of any escalation of concern.
- 5.7 The local area partnership should make sure that parents and carers and professionals receive clear and reliable information about how to access the range of support and services that are available.

## 6. **Strategic Action Plan**

- 6.1 The Area partnership board in line with the inspection framework requirements had to produce a strategic action plan to address these recommendations within 30 days of the publication of the report.
- 6.2 This was approved July by the DFE and CQC and is now available on the local offer website. The Area partnership board will be working towards the delivery of this action plan.

## **Appendices**

- **Appendix 1**: Area Inspection Report
- **Appendix 2**: Strategic Action Plan