

SEND – Findings from Inspections and Key Challenges

John Johnson – Director of Children’s Services, Wandsworth Borough
Council

Inspection Context

- Currently 3 years into the 5 year inspection programme – May 2016 to May 2021
- Inspection focuses on three questions:
 - how effectively does the local area identify children and young people who have special educational needs and / or disabilities (SEND)?
 - how effectively does the local area assess and meet the needs of children and young people who have SEND?
 - how effectively does the local area improve outcomes for children and young people who have SEND?
- A useful overview of the inspection process can be found in this blog from Ofsted – [What happens on a joint local area SEND inspection](#)

Findings from SEND Inspections

- 91 (out of 152) local areas inspected so far (85 reports published of which **49% have been required to produce a written statement of action**)
- 8 re-visits since December 2018 (4 reports published of which 3 had not made sufficient progress)
- 17 of the 32 London boroughs have been inspected, plus the City of London (17 reports published to date of which **25% have been required to produce a WSOA**)



Findings from SEND Inspections

- **Local Area SEND Inspections: One Year On (Ofsted, October 2017)**
 - Children and young people identified as needing SEND support had not benefited from the implementation of the Code of Practice well enough.
 - Children and young people who have SEND were found to be **excluded, absent or missing from school** much more frequently than other pupils nationally
 - School leaders had used unofficial exclusions too readily to cope with children and young people who have SEND
 - **Access to therapy services** was a weakness in half of the local areas inspected.
 - **Access to child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS)** was poor in over a third of local areas.
 - There had not been enough progress in implementing a **coordinated 0–25 service** for children and young people who have SEND
 - Many local area leaders were unaware of the depth of **frustration among local parents** and what their concerns were about
 - A large proportion of parents in the local areas inspected lacked confidence in the ability of mainstream schools to meet their child's needs.
 - **Local offers were not effective in helping parents to access information** and services in over half of the local areas inspected
 - Local area leaders have had varied success in securing the use of personal budgets

Findings from SEND Inspections

- **Ofsted Annual Report 2017/18**

- Continuing **lack of coordinated 0-25 strategies** and **poor post-19 provision**
- Continuing trend of **rising exclusions** among CYP with SEND
- The **quality of EHC plans** is far too variable
- The **gap in performance** and outcomes for children with SEND is widening **between the best and the worst local areas**
- **Mental health needs** are not being supported sufficiently
- **Identification of SEND is weak** and those who do not quite meet the threshold for an EHC plan have poor outcomes
- Outcomes for young people with SEND are often poor by age 16
- Pupils with SEN support are **five times more likely to have a permanent exclusion** than pupils with no SEND

Findings from SEND Inspections

Common Key Lines of Enquiry:

- Leadership and governance
- Co-production with parents/carers and CYP
- Identification – early years pathways, CAMHS waiting times, ASD pathway
- Education outcomes
- Absence and exclusions
- Preparing for adulthood – transitions, pathways to employment, independent living
- EHC plans – social care and health contributions, quality of plans, timeliness of plans
- Joint commissioning
- Use of personal budgets
- Use of data – measuring impact, informing strategic plans
- Vulnerable groups – CME, CLA, YOS, families from ethnic minorities or deprived areas
- Local Offer

Key Issues – Links with Health

Challenges:

- 80% of the Local Areas required to provide a Written Statement of Action in year 3 of the inspection cycle are required to address significant concerns relating to health arrangements.
- Commonly the areas of concern relate to **weak or ineffective joint commissioning** arrangements
- This area of weakness is commonly linked to **poor strategic oversight by health and local authority leaders**
- **Access to health services** is a further key area of concern – particularly relating to long waiting time or inequity of access within a local area
- Where a local area does not have a **DMO or DCO** in post this has been highlighted as a key failing
- The ongoing structural changes within the NHS are providing both opportunity and challenge to building meaningful relationships

Areas of good practice:

- Of the local areas that were commended on their approach to joint commissioning and delivering effective health services, common features in these local areas included:
 - The **DMO/DCO having a secure overview of SEND** (e.g. through establishing strong partnerships with other designated professionals and key strategic leaders in the local area)
 - **Strong working relationships** between health visitors, midwives, GPs and early years services to support early identification (including through co-location)
 - Practitioners from different teams holding **joint assessments and clinics**
 - **Effective use of technology** and data to support strategic planning
 - **Consistent understanding** of main weaknesses in the local area and clear plans to address these

Key Issues - Parental Engagement

Challenges:

- 71% of the local areas that were required to provide a WSOA in the third year of the inspection cycle, were required to address significant concerns relating to parental engagement.
- Local areas were asked to address lacking or **poor communication with parents and families**
- **Limited co-production** was noted at both a strategic and individual case level
- Parents reported being unable to access **information and support services**
- Parents reported finding it **difficult or confusing to access services**
- An issue in a number of local areas relates to the myth that EHCP is a **'golden ticket'**
- **Inconsistency of knowledge and experience** was also common, with some parents feeling engaged and listened to, and others not knowing how to be heard, or how to get information

Areas of good practice:

- Some local areas were commended on their approach to parental engagement, common features in these local areas included:
 - A **SEND strategy that had been co-produced** with parents/carers and CYP
 - **Frequent consultation with parents and carer to develop services** – this was often facilitated by parent-carer forum (e.g. parents involved in procurement process for new hospital beds, members of PCF involved in checking quality of EHC plans and setting focus of audits)
 - Opportunities for **parents to meet other parents** (e.g. annual parent and carer conference, annual SEND information day)
 - **Use of technology** to facilitate information sharing
 - **Training** for parents (e.g. to help learn about their child's needs while they are waiting for diagnosis)
 - **Strong IASS** and good use of **mediation** prior to tribunal

Key Issues - High Needs Block Overspend

Challenges:

- National picture of **growth in need** (34% increase in EHCPs in London between 2014 and 2018, with considerable variation between local authorities)
- Schools being less **inclusive**
- High cost of independent/non-maintained schools
- **Parental expectations**

Areas for development:

- Strengthening local capacity through reviewing the focus and funding of local specialist provision and developing creative local solutions
- Focus on 16-25 age group and ensuring that coherent local pathways are in place
- Combine HNB management agenda with SEND strategies
- Ensure good use of management information
- Support inclusive practices within mainstream schools

The DfE has announced a [call for evidence](#) on the funding arrangements for young people with SEND and those who need alternative provision (closing 31st July 2019).