

## **Briefing: outcome of the local area special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) inspection: 20-24 September 2021**

In May 2016, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) began a programme of joint inspection, to hold local areas to account about how local areas were implementing the SEND reforms of 2014 and what difference this was making to support children and young people with SEND, aged 0 to 25. The joint inspections are outlined in the local area inspection framework and handbook and describe how inspection teams review how local areas have met their responsibilities for children and young people (aged 0-25) who have SEND since the reforms.

Barnsley's local area SEND inspection took place from the 20 to 24 September 2021. The inspection was led by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors from Ofsted, with a team of people including an Ofsted inspector and a children's services inspector from the CQC. During the week the inspection team spoke with children, young people parents and carers, partners and stakeholders including managers and leaders from the Barnsley's education, health and social care services.

The purpose was to review how well Barnsley meets its responsibilities for children and young people (aged 0-25) who have SEND. The inspection team looked at evidence for how well children and young people with SEND are supported through three distinct areas:

1. How well we identify the needs of children and young people.
2. How well we assess and meet needs of children and young people.
3. How successful we are at getting the best outcomes for children and young people.

During the week before the inspection and throughout the week-long inspection period, the inspectors were provided with information about Barnsley's children and young people with SEND, as well as the available services on offer to support them and their families. Inspectors looked at case files, data, reports and other information that is published online or internal to Barnsley services.

Over 30 focus groups and meetings were held with a wide range of participants and the inspectors also visited several settings, including primary and secondary schools, special schools, our further education college and early years settings. This equated to up to two hundred people being involved during the inspection.

A letter outlining the findings from the inspectors has now been provided and this has been published on the Ofsted and CQC website as well as on the Barnsley's local offer website

### **The main findings of the report are:**

#### **Strengths**

- The area's improvement plans clearly explain the work to be done in Barnsley. The priorities in the improvement plans fit well with the reforms in the Children and Families Act (2014). Since 2019, area leaders have worked on their priority areas with a true sense of purpose and commitment to the children and young people and their families in Barnsley.
- The voice of children and young people with SEND is strong in Barnsley. Recommendations from the specialist youth forum have a clear route to the area's decision makers.
- Outcomes for children and young people who have EHC plans are positive. Their placements are ambitious and meet their needs.
- Area leaders have taken advice from external advisers and reviewed waiting lists

for services. This has led to changes in how services are organised. At local authority level, for example, the arrangements for managing requests for statutory assessment and the EHC plan process have changed.

- In the early years of a child's life, health and children's services work together well. Staff from health, early years settings and family centres work in close partnership to offer effective support to parents and carers.
- The number of young people with SEND who progress into education or employment is strong. Area leaders ensure young people have targeted careers advice, guidance and support. Once a young person with SEND reaches Year 9, they are allocated a transition, individual advice and guidance (TIAG) team worker who supports them personally with their next steps post 16.
- The post-16 education and training offer is effective. Young people with SEND and their parents and carers are happy with the support and learning available at this point. Young people's studies broaden their awareness of themselves and help them to find employment.

### **Areas of concern**

- Area leaders were slow to implement the 2014 reforms. This has led to high levels of dissatisfaction amongst parents and carers. Over the past two years, work has been done to start to mend what, leaders recognise, was a broken SEND system
- Parents and carers have too little say in strategic decision making about the area's services. Many parents and carers report dissatisfaction with their experience of the SEND system in Barnsley. The special educational needs and disabilities information advice and support service (SENDIASS) plays a significant role in supporting families and is effective.
- Parents and carers are not aware of ongoing improvement work or how to access support while waiting. They do not know about the significant improvement in waiting times for autism spectrum disorder assessments.
- Over time, many parents and carers have had to battle to get the provision and support their child needed. This is changing. In most cases, the voice of parents and carers is now listened to by practitioners. More and more individual plans are being co-produced with parents and carers.
- The attainment, attendance and level of exclusions for pupils at SEND support are weak. The support provided to many pupils at SEND support does not meet their needs well. Area leaders have developed training and monitoring systems to improve the help given to pupils at the SEND support stage. This work is not yet embedded.

### **Next steps**

While there are many positive things reported in the inspection report, the inspectors found our partnership is not yet delivering the requirements of the Children and Families Act 2014 with as much progress as possible for the two areas of concern. This means that we need to produce a written statement of action (WSOA) to evidence our commitment to improving in these areas.

We will co-produce the WSoA with Barnsley's education, health and social care partners to determine how the areas of concern will be addressed. Once the WSoA has been approved by Ofsted and CQC, we will work to implement the actions.

For more information and advice on services and support available as part of our 'local offer' please visit our [local offer website](#).