
One Minute Guide to the SEND Local Area Inspection Process

Background

In 2014 the government introduced major reforms to support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) enshrined in the Children and Families Act, and accompanied by a new SEND Code of Practice. Key to the reforms was a more integrated approach across local areas and this included the replacement of statutory statements of SEND with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).

Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) were commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) in 2016 to inspect local areas and review how effectively they are fulfilling their statutory responsibilities to children and young people (from birth to age 25) with SEND.

Who is being inspected?

The inspection is a "Local Area" inspection – it covers all services provided by the local authority (LA) (including Public Health) and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) for children and young people with SEND. Inspectors will visit a range of early years, education, health providers and specialist services within the local area.

Although Ofsted Inspectors will visit early years and education settings, they are not directly inspected as individual institutions. These visits will focus on the support that

the local area provides to children and young people and input from these settings will form an essential part of the inspection.

What is being inspected?

The inspection will evaluate a local area's effectiveness in commissioning and delivering services to children and young people with SEND based on the three main aspects of the Local Area SEND Inspection Framework:

- **Identifying children and young people's SEND**
- **Meeting the needs of children and young people who have SEND**
- **Improving outcomes for children and young people who have SEND**

The inspection is based on the view that local leadership have a realistic view on how effective they are in meeting their duties and responsibilities in relation to SEND. The inspectors want to see evidence that all key staff in the local area know the strengths and weaknesses, together with the actions to address these and to improve.

Announcing the inspection

The lead inspector will formally announce the inspection by telephoning the LA and CCG and this call usually takes place on a Monday morning. Local areas are then given a notice period of five working days before inspectors arrive. During this time inspectors

will contact the Local Area Nominated Officer (LANO) and the Head of Children's Integrated Commissioning, to agree arrangements. The Chair of the Parent and Carer Forum will also be contacted to inform them of the inspection.

During the inspection

The inspection will usually last for five days and inspectors will arrive after gam on the first day of the inspection. On arrival senior leaders from the LA and CCG will deliver an introductory presentation and the local area Self-Evaluation Framework (SEF) will also be presented. Focus groups on themes identified by inspectors will be conducted throughout the inspection, and meetings with children and young people with SEND and their families will take place. The views of parents, carers, children and young people will be important to the inspectors' judgements and final report.

The inspection team will be made up of two Ofsted Inspectors and one inspector from the CQC.

Who will the inspectors want to meet with?

Inspectors will visit and discuss the area's SEND processes and experiences with a wide range of people including:

- **elected members**
- **key local area officers from health, education and social care**
- **education and health providers**
- **children and young people with SEND and their parents and carers**

What can you do now to ensure you play your part in preparing for the inspection?

Before they arrive inspectors will spend time going through each authorities Local Offer website to help them understand the provision offered to families and ensure that these processes are clearly described and understood by everyone. Services are advised to check that what they offer is accurately described and linked to in appropriate articles

on Tower Hamlet's Local Offer website.

Judgement

Ofsted and CQC will publish an inspection outcome letter outlining what they reviewed, their key findings and the extent to which the inspection findings correlate with the SEF.

These inspections do not result in a graded judgement; however, this does not mean the inspection does not carry any weight. The local area can be asked to provide a "Written Statement of Action" (WSOA) when there are significant concerns about how effectively the local area meets its duties or secures better outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

If a WSOA is required this will be outlined in the outcome letter to leaders of the LA and the CCG and must be produced within 70 working days of receiving the letter. If a WSOA is required, advisors from the DfE and NHS England carry out a minimum of four support and challenge visits to the local area over the next 18 months.

Revisits

Local areas with a WSOA will be revisited by Ofsted and the CQC, usually around 18 months after the WSOA has been approved as fit for purpose. The sole purpose of the revisit is to determine whether sufficient progress has been made in addressing the areas of significant weakness detailed by the WSOA and is not a new inspection.

If a local area is considered to have made sufficient progress, the formal support and challenge visits from the DfE and NHS England will cease.

If a local area is making insufficient progress in any of the serious weaknesses identified, it is for the DfE and NHS England to determine the next steps. This may include the Secretary of State using his powers of intervention.
