



Dear stakeholder

Joint local area SEND inspection in Lancashire

I am writing to inform you that in November 2017, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC), conducted a joint inspection of the local area of Lancashire, to judge how effectively we have implemented the special educational needs and disability (SEND) reforms, set out in the Children and Families Act 2014.

The inspection took place between 13 and 17 November 2017 and involved five inspectors undertaking a range of activity from reviewing documentation, observing frontline practice and face to face meetings with a range of service users. They spoke to staff at all levels, to SEND service providers, to children and young people with SEND, their parents and carers, governors, and leaders from the local area for health, social care and education.

The finding of the inspection is that the local authority and the area's clinical commissioning groups (CCG's), have been asked to submit a joint written statement of action to Ofsted, because of identified areas of weakness in the local area's practice.

As you would expect, this is of significant concern to us as a local area and we will now apply the same rigour and disciplined approach that has supported us in delivering improvement following previous inspections. The local area strategic partnership, including school leaders, will be working with Ofsted, CQC and the Department for Education (DfE) to deliver a SEND action plan to address the issues identified by the inspectors.

This was the local area's first inspection since the disability and special educational needs reforms were set out in the Children and Families Act in 2014. It focused on how effectively the reforms have been implemented, and the experiences and progress of children and young people who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, and the experience of their parents and carers, in Lancashire. This included 16,500 children with SEN support and 6,500 with an Education Health and Care Plan.

Despite the overall outcome we think it is important to also mention here that the inspectors' recent findings included positive feedback about a number of aspects of service delivery and practice. These included recognition that the culture and focus in Lancashire has begun to change in recent months and that professionals can see the benefits of finding joint solutions to common challenges and the inspectors saw emerging signs of improvement. Also, the considerable efforts of our staff, in all partner agencies must be recognised here.

Some of the specific aspects that were praised are:

- POWAR (Lancashire's participation council group for children and young people who have SEND) have recently produced impressive resources around child sexual exploitation and healthy relationships for children and young people who have SEN and/or disabilities. These young people are a force for good in the local area.
- The portage service is highly valued by families and practitioners. This service is responsive and effective in helping to remove the challenges that face young children and their families.
- Children and young people who have SEND can access effective speech and language therapy (SaLT), and occupational therapy in a timely manner across Lancashire. Joint working between therapists increases the number of children who are able to benefit from these services.
- Parents and children are benefitting from SaLT drop in sessions offered across the north and south of Lancashire, giving children and young people the help that they require.
- Young children and their families' access effective child development centres in some localities, and multi-agency assessment and care planning is strong.
- A joint health and education provision is based in the east of the area, supports the health and education needs of those children and young people who are unable to access mainstream education because of their mental health difficulties.
- Parents consider information, advice and support (IAS) to be a well-run and well-used service with evidence showing that when IAS has been involved to support families, dispute resolution has worked.
- Children and young people who have SEN support and those who have an EHC plan or statement, have high attendance rates in comparison to the national averages.
- The Youth Offending Team (YOT) and SEN services work together to deliver good quality, safe and sustainable restorative services. This improves the life chances of these children and young people.

Work has already begun on addressing the issues found by the inspectors and we have identified and started to implement a number of actions in response to Ofsted's findings.

The main issues we will be working on are as follows:

- Ensuring children and families are at the heart of what we do
- Robust and comprehensive assessments of children who have SEND are carried out in a timely way
- Strategic oversight of SEND across the local area
- The appointment of designated clinical officers to fulfil the designated medical officer function
- Developing a shared understanding of co-production with children, young people, families and other partners
- Refreshing and publicising the Lancashire local offer
- The further development of pathways for Autistic Spectrum Disorder including diagnoses across the local area
- Collaboration with school leaders to reduce the exclusion of pupils with SEND

To help achieve these improvements, we have taken a number of actions since the end of the inspection last month. These have included:

- Setting up a SEND partnership board that includes representatives from parents and young people
- Changes to the Local Offer
- Advertising Designated Clinical Officer posts
- Sending questionnaires to all families with children with an EHCP in order to elicit their views and experience in greater detail
- Arranging to meet school leaders to deliver ways to reduce exclusions as a matter of urgency

The development and delivery of an improvement plan will be closely monitored by the DfE and Lancashire's improvement and accountability board. The effective implementation of the improvement plan will be critical to achieving an improved outcome when Ofsted undertakes a further, shorter inspection of these services in due course.

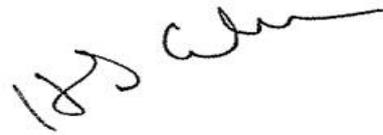
I have written to you today because I wanted to let you know as soon as possible about Ofsted's findings and the actions the county council and the area's clinical commissioning groups are taking to address them. This work will not be straightforward but I know you will agree that it is essential we get it right. Therefore we will continue to communicate with you throughout this period of improvement, to regularly update you on progress. If in the meantime you have any specific questions or concerns I would encourage you to contact me

You can view the full report here ([link to report](#)).

Yours sincerely



Amanda Hatton
Director of Children's Services



Hilary Fordham
Chief Operating Officer
Morecambe Bay Clinical Commissioning
Group