

18 October 2023

Subject:	Area Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (ASEND) Inspection Outcome and Next Steps
Presenting Officer and Organisation	Michael Jarrett – Director of Children and Education (DCS) Michael_Jarrett@sandwell.gov.uk
Purpose of Report	To provide an update on the Local Area Inspection of SEND conducted by Ofsted / CQC between 19 June and 7 July 2023.

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That Sandwell Health and Wellbeing Board comment and note the ASEND Inspection Outcome and Next Steps

2. Links to the following Board Priorities

Priority 1	We will help keep people healthier for longer
Priority 2	We will help keep people safe and support communities
Priority 3	We will work together to join up services
Priority 4	We will work closely with local people, partners and providers of services

3. Context and Key Issues

Area SEND Inspection

- Following the last inspection of the Sandwell local area partnership for SEND in 2019, the Sandwell local area partnership for SEND was inspected over a period of 3 weeks by Ofsted / CQC between 19th June and 7th July 2023, evaluated against a new Ofsted / CQC inspection framework which was launched in January 2023.
- The revised framework 'evaluated' the effectiveness and impact of local area partners and the extent to which children and young people with SEND, including those who attend Alternative Provision (AP) settings, were receiving consistently good experiences leading to consistently good outcomes.
- The inspection team found that children and young people with SEND, including those who attend AP settings, received inconsistent experiences leading to them achieving inconsistent outcomes in Sandwell. This is commonly referred to as a 'category 2' outcome for the local area partnership. A 'category 1' outcome is available to local area partnerships which can demonstrate consistent experiences leading to consistent outcomes for children and young people with SEND, including those attending AP settings. A 'category 3' outcome is given to a local area partnership where there are endemic weaknesses found in the partnership which leads to poor experiences and poor outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
- A category 2 outcomes means that the local area partnership will be submit to routine monitoring by Ofsted / CQC and supported by the DfE in making the necessary improvements and within agreed timeframes as published in the **local area inclusion plan** (action plan). Following inspection, all local areas are required to publish a local area inclusion plan by 2024. Sandwell will be publishing theirs ahead of the deadline set by the DfE.
- The inspectors were highly complementary about the renewed energy and vision shared across the partnership for children and young people with SEND, and the new SEND eco-system transformation programme launched by the local area partnership in June 2023. This gave the inspectors a very clear understanding that the local area partners,

through the self-evaluation, are accurate in their judgements and the actions they are taking to improve the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND.

- The inspection report is due to be published in early September 2023, after which the local area partnership is required to submit a **local area inclusion plan** (action plan) for improvement within 10 days of publication, and to make this publicly available to all partners, parents and carers of children and young people with SEND in Sandwell.
 - Area leaders should **strengthen multi-agency working across the partnership between education, health and social care**, so that children and young people's needs are identified and assessed in a more efficient and timely manner.
 - Area leaders should **develop co-production with children and young people with SEND at a strategic level**, so that children and young people play a key role in developing improvement strategies and plans.
 - Area leaders **should increase the number and range of short-break opportunities** to support the needs of all children and young people with SEND, including those with complex needs and post-16 young people.
- The senior leaders of the Sandwell local area partnership for SEND were pleased the inspection was both developmental and helpful and confirmed the accurate self-evaluation of the partnership.
- Since the last inspection in 2019, when the previously issued written statement of action (2017) was lifted, using a different inspection framework, the local area partnership has been working through the SEND Strategic Board and the SEND Operations Board to oversee the necessary improvements required of the local area partnership. These improvements continue to be driven and will be included in the revised action plan to be submitted to Ofsted / CQC and for publishing to partners, parents and carers.
- This is because we are not complacent in our determination to ensure all children and young people with SEND, including those who attend AP settings, in Sandwell, only receive the very best experiences leading to them securing the very best outcomes and successful transition into adulthood.

- Sandwell local area partnership for inclusion (SEND and AP) will monitor the impact and effectiveness of the local area inclusion plan, via the 8 inclusion workstream groups of the Sandwell Inclusion Eco-System Transformation Programme. Each group reports monthly to the Sandwell Inclusion Board (Operations) and provides a half termly 'highlights report' to the Sandwell Inclusion Board (Strategic).
- Both boards are attended by senior officers from across the local area partnership, including representatives from Sandwell Parents Voices United (SPVU), our parent carer forum, and children and young people. All reports are available to the Sandwell Health and Wellbeing Board which has governance oversight of SEND at a system level across Sandwell.

4. Engagement

Sandwell Local Area Partnership for Inclusion (SEND and AP)

- Local area partners have met during July to review the draft inspection report and agreed its content ahead of publication in early September 2023.
- Local area partners will meet to agree the Sandwell Local Area Inclusion Plan to be submitted to Ofsted / CQC 10 days following publication of the report and to be published to partners, parents and carers.
- The Sandwell local area inclusion plan will be delivered by the actions of the Sandwell Inclusion Eco-system and transformation programme via 8 workstreams which are co-led by the local area partners, schools, agencies, parents and carers, with children and young people with SEND fully engaged through a model of embedded co-production in re-setting and re-engineering the way we provide services to them.
- The Sandwell Inclusion Plan will operate over 3 years, between 2023 and 2026, leading up to the next inspection which should take place during the summer of 2026, and will be monitored by Ofsted / CQC and DfE colleagues during this time period.

5. Implications

Resources:	No Resources Implications directly arising from this report.
Legal and Governance:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The local area partnership is required to fulfil its statutory duties for all children and young people with SEND, including those who attend AP settings, so they receive consistently good experiences which lead to consistently good outcomes. • Any delays to statutory processes, whether this be early help, early identification and early assessment leading to statutory assessment of SEND and the issuing of an EHC plan, and ensuring such children and young people access and attend services and schools which meet their needs, allowing them to thrive in Sandwell. • The exponential rise in demand for early / diagnostic assessment of SEND needs is putting significant demand on service delivery and the meeting of statutory duties within statutory timescales, and is currently resulting in delays in the issuing of EHC plans and in completing annual reviews of current EHC plans. • The current number of children and young people with and EHC in Sandwell is 3,228 and this is predicted to rise to at least 3,500 by July 2025. This is following a 51% rise in EHCs since 2019. • Therefore, there is significant financial pressure on the high need budget and school budgets to meet the current needs of children and young people with SEND in Sandwell, and this is resulting in the local authority placing Sandwell children outside of the borough into independent and non-maintained private settings at significant cost in both SEND and AP settings until we have sufficient places within the Sandwell borough to meet the needs of our children and young people with SEND.
Risk:	No Risk Implications directly arising from this report.
Equality:	No Equality Implications directly arising from this report.
Health and Wellbeing:	No Health and Wellbeing Implications directly arising from this report.
Social Value:	No Social Value Implications directly arising from this report.
Climate Change:	No Climate Change Implications directly arising from this report.

Corporate Parenting:	No Corporate Parenting Implications directly arising from this report.
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6 Appendices

Appendix 1 – ASEND Inspection Presentation

7. Background Papers

None