

Report to:	CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Paul Turner – Assistant Director – Education, SEND and Early Years.
Meeting	30 June 2022

SEND OFSTED INSPECTION OUTCOME AND NEXT STEPS

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To receive a report informing the Committee of the recent Ofsted and CQC SEND inspection outcome, implications and next steps.
- 1.2 The report also highlights the cross-cutting nature of the SEND policy agenda and its links to other key improvement programs within the Council.
- 1.3 Assurance is also sought from the Committee that there is shared ownership and commitment to delivering aspects of the improvement plan to improve the health, care, education, leisure and employment outcomes for children and young people (0-25) with SEND.
- 1.4 To consider the draft SEND Strategy 2022-2025.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

- 2.1 To secure commitment from members to ensure that children and young people with SEND are given the same opportunities to access meaningful employment including apprenticeships, suitable housing, and accessible leisure facilities.
- 2.2 To note the draft SEND Strategy 2022-25 (Appendix 10(a)).

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

- 3.1 As a result of the findings of the inspection, the outcome is that a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) is required because of significant areas of weakness in the area's practice. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) has also determined that the local authority and the area's clinical commissioning group (CCG) are jointly responsible for submitting the written statement to Ofsted.
- 3.2 To ensure scrutiny of the drat SEND Strategy 2022-2025
- 3.3 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.4 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

4.1 There is no alternative. The SEND Partnership must carry out the improvements to local area SEND provision as a requirement of the Children and Families Act 2014 and SEND Code of Practice.

5.0 Council priority:

5.1 The relevant Council priority is: "Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience"

6.0 Background information

6.1 Between 28 February 2022 and 4 March 2022, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) conducted a joint inspection of the local area of Blackpool to judge the effectiveness of the area in implementing the special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND) reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014.

6.2 This inspection provides an independent, external evaluation of how well a local area carries out its statutory duties for children and young people with SEND between the ages of 0-25 years. The local area includes the local authority, clinical commissioning groups (CCGs), public health, NHS England (for specialist services), early year's settings, schools and further education providers.

6.3 The official findings letter was published and made publically available on 26 May 2022. A link to the report can be viewed at:

<https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/44/80431>

6.4 Findings and outcome of the report

The outcome of the inspection, though hugely disappointing, was anticipated by senior officers. The inspection feedback recognised that Blackpool's leaders have an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses across the area and that these are accurately reflected in the self-evaluation provided to Ofsted prior to inspection.

The inspectorates' findings are detailed as strengths and areas for development against each of the key lines of enquiry. The report identifies 15 areas of strength and 18 areas for development.

6.5 Areas of strength

The inspectors did note the following areas of strength:

- Some parents and carers spoke highly of leaders' efforts to maintain services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools remained open to vulnerable children and young people throughout local and national restrictions. Health services adapted their ways of working so they could continue to identify and meet children and young people's needs. Parents and carers appreciated the emotional and practical support that they received from front-line professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Parents and carers are quick to sing the praises of many front-line staff who make a positive difference. There are staff who go the extra mile every day to give children, young people and their families the help and support that they need. These individual professionals are a 'lifeline' for the families that they work with.
- The area's well regarded special schools provide an effective service for children, young people and their families. Many mainstream settings also meet the needs of children and young people well.

6.6 Significant areas of weakness

The inspectors identified four areas of weakness that the Written Statement of Action (WSOA) must address.

- The lack of specificity, ownership and accountability in the areas' improvement strategy for SEND.
- The duties around preparing children and young people for adulthood, not being fulfilled.
- The poor communication with parents and carers across the area – model of co-production
- The long waiting time for some therapies.

Addressing these four areas of weakness will require significant cross-organisation working between Blackpool Council and Blackpool CCG together with a wide range of stakeholders including:

- Children, young people and their families.
- Parent carer forum, other parental children and young people groups
- Information and Advice Services for education, social care and health.
- Education providers – Early Years, schools and colleges.
- Employers, housing and leisure providers.

The SEND Code of Practice 2015, sets out that children, young people together with their parents and carers must be involved in planning, commissioning and reviewing services; and in decision making about individual support and local provision/services.

The expectation is that this involvement is undertaken through a model of co-production.

Co-production is a way of working where providers and users of a service work together to reach a collective outcome. The intention is to use the Headstart Blackpool model of participation and co-production to develop the WSOA improvement plan.

Involvement and engagement of the local area as a whole will be most important in developing the preparation for adulthood pathways.

The aim is to give everyone equal life chances as they move into adulthood. Preparation for adulthood should begin from the earliest years to ensure that children and young people with SEND receive the right support and services to:

- Secure paid employment.
- Live independently.
- Develop friendships and relationships.
- Enjoy good health.
- Access leisure and community activities where they can feel safe and confident.

6.7 Timescales to produce a Written Statement of Action

We have 70 working days to produce a WSOA detailing how we will address the significant concerns identified in the report. The responsibility for its production sits jointly with Blackpool local authority and Blackpool clinical commissioning group. The deadline for submission of the WSOA to Ofsted is 30 August 2022.

6.8 Reporting progress to the Dept. for Education and NHS England

On 24 May 2022, senior officers representing the local authority, Blackpool CCG, Blackpool Teaching Hospital and NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria, met with Department for Education and NHS England. The purpose was to discuss the inspection findings and seek reassurances from us about the actions we are taking to bring about the necessary improvements. Vicky Gent stressed that SEND is a key priority for the Council and that we are committed to improving services and support across education, social care and health to improve the lived experiences of children and their families. The following actions were highlighted as the initial steps of our improvement journey:

- A new SEND strategy is in development and consulted on with all stakeholders.
- Strengthened governance structure with clear roles and accountabilities.
- Placing SEND at the heart of major initiatives including Levelling Up, Priority Education Investment Areas, and the Safety Valve program.
- Outline improvement plan based on four strands is in development:
 1. Leadership and management.

2. Preparation for Adulthood.
3. Co-production, communication and engagement.
4. Inclusive access to services.

6.9 **Next Steps**

Work has begun on the draft improvement plan in response to the WSOA. Senior officers from the Council and CCG are being identified to take on lead responsibility for the development of each of the four strands.

6.10 **Monitoring and re-inspection**

Once the improvement plan has been approved by Ofsted progress monitoring and evaluation will be undertaken by the Dept. for Education and NHS England on a quarterly basis.

The local area will be re-inspected by Ofsted and the CQC to decide whether sufficient progress has been made in addressing each of the areas of significant weakness identified. The timescale for re-inspection is eighteen months after publication of the initial inspection. This will be conducted under a new framework expected to be introduced in 2023.

6.11 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 **List of Appendices:**

7.1 Appendix 10(a): Draft SEND Strategy 2022-25

8.0 **Financial considerations:**

8.1 Some additional resource to support the improvement program has been provided by the CCG, and additional capacity will be created within existing budgets and funding streams.

9.0 **Legal considerations:**

9.1 This is an evaluation of the Council's ability to meet the legislative requirements set out in the Children and Families Act 2014, s20 of the Children's Act 2004, and Equalities Act 2010

10.0 **Risk management considerations:**

10.1 These are published documents so there is risk to the Council's reputation if we do not fulfil our statutory duties.

11.0 **Equalities considerations:**

11.1 The purpose of the improvement plans is to ensure that Blackpool has fully inclusive services

for all children and young people 0-25.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

12.1 None.

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

13.1 Consultation on the draft SEND Strategy 2022-25 has been undertaken in the form of an online survey and a number of focus groups with young people and parents. A report is being produced to summarises the main findings, which will shape the final version.

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 None.

**ONLY APPLICABLE FOR REPORTS WHICH WILL EVENTUALLY BE CONSIDERED BY THE
EXECUTIVE/CABINET MEMBER**

15.0 Key decision information:

15.1 Is this a key decision? Yes/ No

15.2 If so, Forward Plan reference number:

15.3 If a key decision, is the decision required in less than five days? Yes/ No

15.4 If **yes**, please describe the reason for urgency:

(NOTE: This reason must be a sustainable one and not just because it was late and missed the agenda dispatch. Delete this message prior to submission of this report).

16.0 Call-in information:

16.1 Are there any grounds for urgency, which would cause this decision to be exempt from the call-in process? Yes/ No

16.2 If **yes**, please give reason:

(NOTE: This reason must be a sustainable one and not just because it was late and missed the agenda dispatch. Delete this message prior to submission of this report).

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

17.0 Scrutiny Committee Chairman (where appropriate):

Date informed:

Date approved:

18.0 Declarations of interest (if applicable):

18.1

19.0 Executive decision:

19.1

20.0 Date of Decision:

20.1

21.0 Reason(s) for decision:

21.1

22.0 Date Decision published:

22.1

23.0 Executive Members in attendance:

23.1

24.0 Call-in:

24.1

25.0 Notes:

25.1