

Report to:

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Relevant Officer:

Paul Turner, Assistant Director – Education, SEND and Early Years.

Meeting:

22 June 2023

SEND OFSTED INSPECTION AND WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ACTION UPDATE

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- Inform Scrutiny of the progress made since the recent Ofsted and CQC SEND inspection.
- Raise awareness of the cross-cutting nature of the SEND policy agenda and its links to other key improvement programs within the Council.
- Seek assurance from Scrutiny 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.
- Inform Scrutiny of developments in relation to the SEND Strategy.

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 SEND Strategy 2022-25 (appendix 8(a)).

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 As a result of the findings of the inspection, the outcome in 2022 was that a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) was 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 – now ICB (Integrated Care Board)) were jointly responsible for submitting the written statement to Ofsted.

3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.3 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

- The economy: Maximising growth and opportunity across Blackpool
- 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 [here](#). (Search Ofsted inspection reports, Blackpool Council)

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 has required 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. This is now underway.

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 **Monitoring and re-inspection**

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 the new framework, introduced in 2023.

6.8 **Key progress**

Highlights since the last report are -

1. Agreed £3.8 million of funding to eradicate the school funding deficit and High Needs Block deficit (from the Department of Education safety-valve programme).
2. Agreed £6.2 million of funding to build new school sites in Blackpool at Highfurlong Special School, Educational Diversity and Park school.
3. A new post-19 offer at The Oracle, through Valley College.
4. Enhanced Assessment provision at Revoe Primary Academy.
5. A new SEMH Free School for 56 pupils has been approved by the Department for Education.
6. An Alternative Provision Academy bid has been submitted to the Department for Education for children with medical needs that prevent them from attending school.

6.9 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 **List of Appendices:**

7.1 Appendix 8(a): 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 SEND Strategy 2022-25 was undertaken in the form of an online survey and a number of focus groups with young people and parents.

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 None.