

**Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting**

Improving Lives Select Commission – 28 January 2025

**Report Title**

SEND Inspection Update

**Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?**

No

**Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Nicola Curley, Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services

**Report Author(s)**

Niall Devlin, Assistant Director Education and Inclusion  
01709 254235 or niall.devlin@rotherham.gov.uk

**Ward(s) Affected**

Borough-Wide

**Report Summary**

The October 2024 Ofsted Area SEND Inspection of Rotherham Local Area Partnership found that children and young people typically have positive experiences and outcomes. Where there was a need for further development the local area partnership was judged as taking appropriate actions. This outcome placed the Rotherham area partnership among the highest performing areas nationally. However, significant national and local challenges remain.

**Recommendations**

1. That the committee acknowledges the outcome of the SEND Area Inspection

**List of Appendices Included**

Appendix 1 Rotherham Area SEND Full inspection report – September 2024

**Background Papers**

List of previous relevant ILSC papers:

- Ofsted inspection 06.12.22
- Written Statement of Action update 12.09.2023
- External inspections, reviews, and audits update 27.07.2023.
- Scrutiny Review - Preparation for Adulthood for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) 14.10.2024.

- SEND Joint Commissioning Strategy for Rotherham 2024 – 2027 10.06.24.

**Background documents**

Area SEND Inspection: Framework and Handbook [Area SEND inspections: framework and handbook - GOV.UK](#)

**Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel**

No

**Council Approval Required**

No

**Exempt from the Press and Public**

No

## **SEND Inspection Update**

### **1. Background**

1.1 The previous Rotherham Joint Local Area SEND inspection took place in July 2021. This inspection identified 13 areas of strengths and 16 areas that requires improvement. To address the areas of development the local area was required to produce a written statement of action (WSOA) prioritising the following four areas for action:

- Quality of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)
- Communication of Local Offer
- Preparation for Adulthood
- Graduated Response

1.2 In September 2023 the Improving Lives Select Commission noted the feedback from advisors Department for Education (DfE) and NHS England and successful achievement of the required improvements in the WSOA & successful discharge of priority actions.

1.3 In January 2023, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) adopted a new inspection framework for the inspection of local area arrangements for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This new inspection would be over three weeks and have three possible inspection outcomes:

- the local area partnership's SEND arrangements typically lead to positive experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The local area partnership is taking action where improvements are needed.
- the local area partnership's arrangements lead to inconsistent experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The local area partnership must work jointly to make improvements.
- there are widespread or systemic failings leading to significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND, which the local area partnership must address urgently.

1.4 On the 16th of September 2024 the local authority was notified that there would be a local area SEND inspection. Over three weeks the inspection assessed the progress made since the last inspection, the effectiveness of the written statement of action and the how the local area is performing using the new framework. The local area SEND inspection concluded on the 4<sup>th</sup> of October 2024.

1.5 The outcome of a local Area SEND Inspection can have significant implication for a local authority as it can shape strategic direction and

identify priority areas of development and the subsequent allocation of resources.

## 2. Key Issues

2.1 The inspection found that children and young people typically have positive experiences and outcomes. Where there was a need for further development the local area partnership was judged as taking appropriate actions. It was recognised that Children and young people are valued and visible in their communities and that there was a genuine shared determination across the partnership that all children and young people with SEND are happy, successful and thrive.

2.2 Leaders in Rotherham are dedicated to supporting children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). They have a clear strategy based on four cornerstones:

1. Welcome and Care
2. Value and Include
3. Communicate
4. Work in Partnership

They regularly gather and monitor data to measure success and make necessary adjustments.

2.3 Key points include:

- **Engagement:** Leaders actively seek the views of children and young people through surveys and feedback groups like 'Guiding Voices'.
- **Co-production:** Collaboration across education, health, and social care to improve services and decision-making.
- **Parental Support:** Positive feedback from parents on the support and accessible information provided.
- **Attendance:** Focus on improving attendance for children with SEND through innovative support packages.
- **Early Intervention:** Early Help practitioners provide timely support, working with various services to assist children back into education.
- **Specialist Support:** Effective provision for children with visual and/or hearing impairments and strong support from the school nursing service.
- **Mental Health:** Good access to mental health services for young people through self-referral or referrals by parents and practitioners.

- 2.4 Overall, the partnership is committed to improving the quality of life and education for children and young people with SEND in Rotherham. However, there were still areas where the local partnership needed to do better.
- 2.5 The inspection found that the local area needed to ensure that there was consistency in the quality of Education, Health, and Care (EHC) plans. This was because the perspectives of children, young people, and their families are often not well-represented, making it difficult to understand their needs. Many EHC plans have generic outcomes without clear steps to achieve them. The inspection report also identified delays for young people across the age range to access a diagnosis of their neurodevelopmental needs, accessing occupational therapy and speech and language therapy advice and support. However, it was acknowledged that the partnership have clear oversight and action plans to mitigate these delays.
- 2.6 The local area partnership has been asked to update and publish our strategic plan based on the recommendation set out in the inspection report. The SEND and AP Strategy is currently being reviewed and will be presented at Cabinet on the 10<sup>th</sup> February 2025 for ratification.
- 3. Options considered and recommended proposal**
- 3.1 The Improving Lives Select Commission is asked to note the contents of the inspection report.
- 4. Consultation on proposal**
- 4.1 Consultation is not required as this is an update on an inspection.
- 5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**
- 5.1 Not applicable
- 6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications**
- 6.1 There are no direct financial or procurement implications with this report.
- 7. Legal Advice and Implications**
- 7.1 There are no direct Legal implications with this report.
- 8. Human Resources Advice and Implications**
- 8.1 There are no direct HR implications with this report.
- 9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults**
- 9.1 The implications for children young people and vulnerable adults are:

- **Positive Experiences and Outcomes:** The inspection found that children and young people typically have positive experiences and outcomes, indicating that the local area partnership is effectively supporting their needs.
- **Areas for Improvement:** There are still areas that require improvement, such as the consistency in the quality of Education, Health, and Care (EHC) plans and reducing delays in accessing diagnoses and therapies.
- **Support and Inclusion:** The partnership is committed to ensuring that children and young people with SEND are valued, included, and supported in their communities.

## 10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 There are broad implications for:

- **Inclusion and Accessibility:** Ensuring that all children and young people with SEND have equal access to education, health, and care services.
- **Non-Discrimination:** Upholding the rights of children and young people with SEND to be free from discrimination and to receive support tailored to their individual needs.
- **Participation:** Promoting the active participation of children, young people, and their families in decision-making processes that affect them.

## 11 Implications for CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 There are no direct implications linked to this report

## 12. Implications for Partners

12.1 The implication for partners are:

- **Co-Production:** Collaboration across education, health, and social care sectors to improve services and decision-making.
- **Engagement:** Active engagement with children, young people, and their families to gather feedback and make necessary adjustments.

**Strategic Planning:** The need for partners to update and publish a strategic plan based on the recommendations from the inspection report.

## 13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 There are three identified risks which are set out below with the suggested mitigations.

13.1.1 **1. Inconsistency in the Quality of Education, Health, and Care (EHC) Plans**

**Risk:** The inspection found that there is inconsistency in the quality of EHC plans, with many plans having generic outcomes and lacking clear steps to achieve them. This can lead to inadequate support for children and young people with SEND.

**Mitigation:**

- **Training and Development:** Provide comprehensive training for staff involved in creating EHC plans to ensure they understand how to develop specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) outcomes.
- **Quality Assurance:** continue to implement the adapted and more robust quality assurance process to regularly review and improve the quality of EHC plans.
- **Feedback Mechanism:** to build on the established feedback mechanisms for children, young people, and their families to ensure their perspectives are well-represented in the plans.

13.1.2 **2. Delays in Accessing Diagnoses and Therapies**

**Risk:** The inspection found children wait too long for neurodevelopmental assessment and therapies.

**Mitigation:**

- **Maintain investment and capacity:** to deliver the trajectory for the 5-19 neurodevelopmental assessment pathway.
- **Implement the trajectory:** embed the re-designed 0-5 neurodevelopmental pathway and secure investment to increase capacity and reduce waits in the Child Development Centre.
- **Intensify service improvements:** Review service specifications and re-define the offer for occupational therapy and speech and language therapy at a universal and targeted level to implement the graduated response and reduce waiting times.

13.1.3 **3. Maintaining Positive Outcomes Amidst Challenges**

**Risk:** Despite positive outcomes, ongoing national and local challenges may impact the ability to sustain and improve support for children and young people with SEND.

**Mitigation:**

- **Continuous Improvement:** Foster a culture of continuous improvement by regularly evaluating and enhancing services.
- **Adaptability:** Remain adaptable to changing circumstances and challenges, ensuring that strategies and actions are responsive to emerging needs.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Maintain strong engagement with all stakeholders, including children, young people, families, and partners, to ensure a unified approach to addressing challenges.

13.2 By addressing these risks with the proposed mitigations, the local area partnership can continue to improve the quality of life and education for children and young people with SEND in Rotherham.

**Accountable Officer(s)**

Niall Devlin – Assistant Director, Education & Inclusion  
Approvals obtained on behalf of:

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Date</b>
The Strategic Director with responsibility for this report	Nicola Curley	05/12/24
Consultation undertaken with the relevant Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People - Councillor Cusworth	09/12/24

Niall Devlin, Assistant Director Education and Inclusion  
01709 254235 or niall.devlin@rotherham.gov.uk

This report is published on the Council's [website](#).