

Schools Forum
11 OCTOBER 2022

SEND WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ACTION

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To update forum on the Ofsted/CQC Inspection on the provision of Special Educational Needs (SEND) support in Darlington and the subsequent development of a Written Statement of Action (WSOA).

Background

2. Between January 2022 and 1 February 2022, the local area of Darlington was inspected by Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) and CQC (Care Quality Commission). The inspection was to see how well the area had put in place the changes across all services that the Children and Families Act 2014 requires for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families.
3. In particular, it assessed how well Darlington Borough Council, Schools, Academy Trusts and all parts of the Health Service identify and meet the needs of children and young people with SEND, as well as the outcomes they achieve.
4. This inspection is not graded, but a detailed letter is produced. Whilst the inspection identified a number of strengths in the local area, there were also two areas of significant weakness identified across Darlington.
5. The significant weaknesses identified were:
 - (a) The ineffectiveness of meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND and the impact of this on their outcomes.
 - (b) Poor preparation for adulthood and post-19 opportunities for children and young people with SEND.
6. Some 80% of local areas inspected over the past year by Ofsted/CQC have had similar outcomes in their letters, requiring them to produce a Written Statement of Action (WSOA), implementation of which is monitored quarterly by the DfE and NHS England prior to a full reinspection by Ofsted/CQC. All other Tees Valley LAs were required to produce a WSoA following their Local Area Inspection. Together with Health, DBC is required to produce a WSoA to address the issues set out above.
7. Whilst many of the issues are common to most local authorities (reflecting some of the challenges arising from the Children and Families Act 2014), it is recognised that there are

actions which local leaders will need to deliver. We were already undertaking changes prior to the inspection. The report has highlighted the need for us to accelerate these changes and implement the required improvements.

Darlington Action Plan

8. The immediate action taken in response to the inspection outcome was that the SEND Assurance Executive and SEND Implementation Group coordinated a response by education, health and social care to the Ofsted/CQC inspection.
9. The WSoA has been created by the local area partnership and has involved a number of co-production approaches. We have surveyed across the partnership receiving 74 responses from Parent/Carers, Children and Young People, Health, Education and Social Care professionals. We also hosted a co-production event with good participation from Parent/Carers, Health, Education and Social Care professionals.
10. All actions have clear dates and a named lead in the WSoA to ensure that delivery can be clearly monitored through the described governance arrangements with monthly, quarterly and annual check points. The governance will monitor not only actions but the detailed outcome measurements so that as a local area we are clearly aware of the impact of the actions taken.
11. The SEND Assurance Executive will have strategic overview of the WSoA and the implementation of the agreed actions to improve the outcomes for children with SEND in Darlington. The overarching aim is to ensure a joint responsibility for addressing the significant weaknesses highlighted by Ofsted/CQC. The executive will also ensure there is pace to the implementation of improvements and sustainable impact for children and young people with SEND.

Monitoring

12. The WSoA was approved as being fit for purpose by Ofsted on 9 September 2022. The delivery of the WSoA will be subject to quarterly monitoring by DfE/NHS England and a full re-inspection will be undertaken by Ofsted/CQC around 18 months after the WSoA has been approved.

Recommendation

13. It is recommended that forum note the written statement of action.

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