

8 March 2022

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Director of Children's Services
The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
Town Hall
Hornton Street
W8 7NX

Janet Cree, Chief Operating Officer, North West London Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)

Steve Comber, Local Area Nominated Officer, The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

Dear Ms Newman and Ms Cree

Joint area SEND inspection in The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

Between 7 and 11 February 2022, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) conducted a joint inspection of the local area of The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea to judge the effectiveness of the area in implementing the special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014.

The inspection was led by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors from Ofsted, with a team of inspectors including one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and a children's services inspector from the CQC.

Inspectors spoke with children and young people who have SEND, parents and carers, and local authority and National Health Service (NHS) officers. They visited a range of providers and spoke to leaders, staff and governors about how they were implementing the SEND reforms. Inspectors looked at a range of information about the performance of the area, including the area's self-evaluation. Inspectors met with leaders for health, social care and education. They reviewed performance data and evidence about the local offer and joint commissioning.

In reaching their judgements, inspectors took account of the impact of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic on SEND arrangements in the area. Inspectors considered a range of information about the impact of the pandemic and explored how the area's plans and actions had been adapted as a result.

This letter outlines our findings from the inspection, including some strengths and areas for further improvement.

Main findings

- Leaders in the area have high aspirations and ambitions for children and young people with SEND to succeed in life. Leaders have expertly implemented the reforms to ensure children and young people with SEND benefit from high-quality provision across education, health and care. This has improved outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
- Leaders have an accurate and honest self-evaluation which they regularly review. As a result, they have sound oversight of the strengths and areas that need to improve. Where there are weaknesses, leaders have credible plans in place to address the issues.
- Leaders implemented a new SEND strategy in 2021 that demonstrates their ambition to ensure all children and young people with SEND have positive life outcomes. Children, young people and their families played an important role to contribute to the development of the SEND strategy. Leaders have set out an action plan that details how they will successfully implement their vision and aims.
- The role of the designated clinical officer (DCO) for SEND, North West London CCG was established in December 2014. This role is well embedded in the area and helps put children and young people with SEND at the centre of strategic and operational service delivery. The DCO influences and supports health services and contributes to the strong partnership working within multi-agency services. This, in turn, helps to improve provision for children and young people with SEND.
- Leaders have robust joint commissioning arrangements. The cohesive and collaborative working relationships between education, health and care mean that children and young people's needs are met holistically. For example, there is a strong two-way relationship between the local area's SEND team and youth justice professionals that provides effective support for children and young people. Professionals place high importance on collectively having the interests of children and young people with SEND at the centre of their work.
- The voice of children, young people and their families is important to leaders when developing services. Co-production (a way of working where children, families and those who provide the services work together to create a decision or a service that works for them all) of services is very well embedded in the area. Leaders engaged children and young people with SEND to redesign services that match their needs and those of the local community. For example, children and young people with SEND are pivotal to the design of the continued support that is offered to the community following the Grenfell tragedy.
- Most children and young people inspectors spoke with are positive about the support they are given to learn and succeed at school and college. They enjoy living in the area and feel it is a safe place to live. They describe a wide range of

activities they enjoy taking part in outside of school and college such as performing arts and judo clubs. The short breaks offer provides a wide range of opportunities for children and young people with SEND to participate in cultural, social and sporting activities.

- Leaders have developed and implemented a well-considered COVID-19 recovery plan to improve the lives of children and young people with SEND following the pandemic. Children and young people with SEND benefit from a wide range of support for emotional well-being and mental health. Learning from the pandemic has led to greater sharing of information and increased attendance from a range of professionals at meetings such as education, health and care plan (EHC plan) review meetings.
- Leaders recognise that children and young people wait too long for a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder, speech and language and occupational therapies, and wheelchair services. As a result, they have developed and are committed to robust plans to address these waiting times. In the meantime, leaders provide helpful support and interventions to support children, young people and their families while they wait.
- Professionals from different agencies work closely to ensure children and young people only have to tell their story once. Where possible, vulnerable children and young people with SEND benefit from having the same social worker, virtual schoolteacher and nurse throughout their life until they reach the age of 18.
- The parent carer forum (Full of Life) is well regarded and known by many parents, carers and professionals. It has well-established relationships with leaders in the area and plays an active role to shape and influence policy that leads to positive outcomes for children and young people with SEND. For example, the parent carer forum was actively involved with the recommissioning of the SEND transport service to ensure transport staff are trained to administer emergency medication to children and young people.

The effectiveness of the local area in identifying children and young people's special educational needs and/or disabilities

Strengths

- Collaborative working is a key strength in the area's work to identify needs. Professionals across a variety of disciplines work cohesively in a 'team-around-the-child/young person' approach to identify needs. Resources such as the communication screening toolkits are used effectively to identify and respond to emerging needs in pupils receiving SEND support. For example, whole-system approaches for speech, language and communication have led to improvements in early identification and support for children and young people with SEND and their families.
- Early identification is managed effectively in a multi-agency approach through children's centres. Leaders and professionals are ambitious to further improve

the early identification and support offered to children and families by joining together the early help and health visiting services. This will enable children aged under five to receive an improved holistic service that identifies their needs and support at the earliest stage.

- There is a wide range of effective support for children under five and their families to identify and meet needs. This includes parent and carer support; training programmes for professionals, including those in education settings; support to frontline practitioners; and direct and indirect support to children. This support is provided in a timely manner to support children and their families as early as possible.
- Children and young people with SEND arriving from another country receive prompt and compassionate identification and support to meet their education, health and care needs. Sometimes, services are delivered within hotels to ensure children and young people receive the care they need when they need it. For example, emotional well-being support services are accessed by children and young people who require additional support as a result of the trauma they have experienced.
- Health professionals offer good training programmes as well as online resources to early years providers. This means that settings are able to support all children in their development, as well as being able to identify those children that require additional support through universal, targeted and specialist offers.
- Special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) are well supported by the local area's professionals such as SEND caseworkers, therapists and educational psychologists, including health services. The area offers training courses for SENCOs and education staff so they are better able to identify and support children and young people with potential social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) or speech, language and communication (SLCN) needs.
- During COVID-19, professionals have been creative in the ways they have identified children and young people with SEND. An online pilot questionnaire for parents and carers to complete before they have their child's 12 month, or two-and-a-half-year, review has been successful. This means health visitors gather essential information which enables more timely access to support for the child and family. Feedback from families has shown that this way of managing the reviews is positive.

Areas for development

- Children and young people wait too long for a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. Leaders have implemented a plan to reduce these waits and provide support during the waiting period.

The effectiveness of the local area in meeting the needs of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities

Strengths

- Leaders have improved the quality of EHC plans over time. More recent exemplar EHC plans show that the area has models of effective practice. Children and young people with SEND who are known to social care or with health needs have well-considered outcomes included in their plans. Outcomes are worded so that children and young people can demonstrate achievement in a wide range of situations. Most parents and carers feel EHC plans are effective and help them and their child understand the progress being made towards agreed outcomes. However, there are still some children and young people who have plans that are not up to the same high standard.
- The SEND panel includes a broad range of professionals and has a well-established process to consider requests for EHC assessment. Any requests which are declined are effectively followed up with education settings and parents and carers. This means that there is typically a way forward, which is understood by parents when a request is declined.
- Inspectors learned of a number of universal and targeted training opportunities for staff in education settings. This means that education practitioners are able to support children and young people with SEND through a variety of strategies in areas such as sensory regulation and speech, language and communication.
- Children and young people have access to support for their anxiety and to build their resilience and ability to form relationships in their educational settings. In 27 out of 30 primary schools in Kensington and Chelsea, mental health practitioners offer support on a weekly basis.
- Children and young people who have neurodisability and their families receive wrap-around support in a way that is responsive to their needs pre- and post-diagnosis. Specialist health visitors support families. These health visitors, therapists and paediatricians work collaboratively to meet the needs of the child or young person who has neurodisability in a responsive and compassionate way.
- SEND transport services are held in very high regard by providers who rely on them to get children and young people with SEND to settings. Specialist providers train transport staff to understand the specific needs of children and young people, including administering emergency medication. Providers told us that area leaders are pragmatic and flexible when deciding how to offer transport to children and young people with SEND who may be at the margins of formal entitlement to this resource.
- The short breaks offer has been redesigned through co-production with families and professionals. The short breaks offer links well into EHC plans. There is clear connectivity between plan outcomes, the short breaks provision

and the opportunities children and young people have to work towards achieving the outcomes. Parents and carers are positive about the provision for their child's social and cultural development, particularly through the work of community centres for disabled children and young people.

- The school nursing team works collaboratively with all multi-agency providers. They are involved in SEND panels and general practitioner hubs to co-deliver training with public health services. This means that children and young people with SEND receive a well-rounded and inclusive approach to meet their needs. Children and young people told the inspectors about specific occasions when health practitioners had been kind and considerate to them. For example, when a practitioner explained potentially frightening procedures such as anaesthesia in a way they could understand.
- Children's centres provided an immediate and thoughtful response during the COVID-19 pandemic to children with SEND and their families. Practitioners created and sent bespoke resource packs home to children with SEND. This meant that while in lockdown, families had immediate access to tailor-made resources that were appropriate for their child.
- Children and young people with SEND who are admitted to inpatient child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) are supported by highly specialist speech and language therapists. The training that CAMHS staff receive enables them to have positive and appropriate communication with children and young people with SEND. Those children and young people who are admitted receive a comprehensive assessment that identifies SLCN difficulties that may have not been previously identified. This results in their mental health needs being managed in a holistic way.
- Children and young people with complex physical and medical needs are enabled to manage their health needs at times and in locations that they prefer. Professionals undertake medical interventions in school settings at times indicated as best by the child or young person. This means that a child or young person can direct their own care.

The SEND information and advice support service is well established in the area. Parents and carers told inspectors they value the service as they receive helpful advice and guidance.

Areas for development

- Children and young people with SEND are waiting too long for speech and language and occupational therapies. Leaders have operational plans in place to improve this.
- In some cases, children and young people with SEND who use wheelchair services wait too long for essential pieces of equipment and appointments. Leaders plan to recommission and improve the wheelchair service in June 2022.

The effectiveness of the local area in improving outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities

Strengths

- Children and young people with SEND across education settings achieve very well. Leaders in the area work in a highly effective and supportive way alongside education settings to ensure children and young people achieve good outcomes. Education setting staff spoke consistently about the highly effective communications and trusting relationships which exist with leaders in the area. This enables leaders to make prompt and effective decisions about how to use limited resources to best meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.
- Professionals in the area have developed creative ways to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND who might be at risk of disengaging with education. For example, a bespoke education programme was developed with a general further education college for a small group of 14-year-old young people with SEND. As a result, the number of young people with SEND in the area who are not in education, employment or training is low.
- Professionals across all settings and agencies work in an extremely collaborative way to improve the outcomes for children and young people with SEND. For example, professionals at The Music Hub deliver music education to children and young people with SEND to support their SEMH needs. As a result of collaborative work, children and young people with SEND who are home educated and aspire to play musical instruments have access to music lessons through the music hub service.
- Transition at key points in education is consistently well managed by professionals. Transition planning starts in good time. This enables children and young people with SEND to successfully move to their next place of education. For example, children and young people are supported with photographs and social stories to help them remember visits to their new education setting.
- Young people with SEND are prepared well for adulthood. EHC plans contain appropriate and ambitious outcomes that prepare young people for adulthood. Transition to adulthood arrangements shows joined-up processes between child and adult services. There is a variety of education settings available for young people with SEND from the age of 16 years old. Young people receive suitable advice and support that helps with the selection of courses at college. The young people that inspectors spoke with have wide-ranging ambitions and aspirations for their futures.
- The supported internship programme that the area offers is well considered and leads to positive employment outcomes for young people with SEND. Young people with SEND on the programme benefit from a rotation of different jobs. This helps them to learn about the different career pathways

available. Young people on supported internships enjoy their placements and told inspectors of the variety of work they are experiencing.

Areas for development

- As children and young people wait to receive speech and language and occupational therapeutic input, this delays their opportunities to achieve their therapy outcomes.

Yours sincerely

Joanna Walters
Her Majesty's Inspector

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Mike Sheridan Regional Director	Manir Hussain Deputy Chief Inspector, Primary Medical Services, Children Health and Justice
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Cc: Department for Education
Clinical commissioning group(s)
Director of Public Health for the area
Department of Health
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