

Area SEND inspection of Richmond upon Thames Local Area Partnership

Inspection dates: 2 to 6 October 2023

Date of previous inspection: 14 to 18 June 2021

Inspection outcome

The local area partnership's special educational needs and/or disability (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 next full area SEND inspection will be within approximately 5 years.

Ofsted and CQC ask that the local area partnership updates and publishes its strategic plan based on the recommendations set out in this report.

Information about the local area partnership

In 2014, the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames created a community interest company called Achieving for Children (AfC). AfC provides education and children's social care services on behalf of the local authority and works closely with adult social care services and the NHS South West London Integrated Care Board. There are two other local areas that are part of the AfC group. Within Richmond, there are approximately 4,700 children and young people with SEND. Of these, 1,759 have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).

Since the last inspection, there have been changes across England in how the commissioning of health services operates. On 1 July 2022, the NHS South West London Integrated Care Board (ICB), the local authority and AfC became jointly responsible for the planning and commissioning of provision and services for children and young people with SEND within Richmond.

There are four providers within Richmond who offer alternative provision to children and

young people who are of statutory school age. This includes a new post-16 provision attached to the Pupil Referral Unit, which began its support in September 2022. Of the four providers, two are run by AfC. These settings provide an alternative approach to mainstream education for some children and young people with SEND.

What is it like to be a child or young person with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in this area?

Children and young people with SEND are typically at the centre of professionals' decision-making. Children and young people told inspectors they felt included and listened to in meetings where adults talk about their futures. They feel empowered and able to shape their futures. This includes those who are educated other than at school, children in need and those who are looked after. Professionals make sure that individual packages of care, therapy plans and educational attainment reflect children and young people's views and aspirations.

Most children and young people with SEND have their needs identified accurately and assessed in a timely and effective way, particularly where a child or young person has complex needs. Health visitors make sure that most young children with SEND have their needs identified well. Area leaders have ensured that practitioners in settings such as nurseries and schools have the skills and resources needed to identify additional needs and make appropriate referrals.

Children and young people with SEND benefit from professionals who get to know them very well. EHC plan case workers, social workers, therapists and education staff take time to understand the needs of children and young people and consider how best to support them and their family. This includes when children move to adult social care services. Young people meet their new social worker in good time before they turn 18 years old. This helps with transition to a new service. As a result, children and young people with SEND typically receive the right help and support in a timely way.

Children and young people with SEND, including those placed in alternative provision, achieve well. Most children and young people attend education settings that suit their individual needs. They receive excellent support and help from education staff. The local area provides extensive training for education staff so they have suitable knowledge and skills to support children and young people with SEND very well. Early years services provide training for nursery settings so they are able to effectively support children with SEND.

Children and young people with SEND are well prepared for their next steps. This is because professionals work collaboratively to make sure transition is smooth for children and young people with SEND. For example, the speech and language therapy service co-produce (a way of working where children, families and those that provide the services work together to create a decision or a service that works for them all) with young people a 'transition profile' for those moving to post-16 education. This sets out the young person's experiences and any concerns the young person may have. The profiles are shared with professionals in the new provision.

Children and young people with SEND have a variety of opportunities to participate in activities within their communities. This includes packages of support developed by

professionals for residential short breaks and tailored community activities. For example, the 'TAG Youth Club' provides an inclusive and supportive environment enabling children and young people with SEND to develop their talents and interests and to improve social engagement and participation opportunities. Staff at the youth club adapt activities such as parkour and karate so children and young people with a physical disability and SEND can participate.

What is the area partnership doing that is effective?

- Since the last inspection, leaders have made substantial improvements to the quality of support children and young people with SEND receive. Leaders have high ambition for children and young people. They work strategically with a variety of partners to develop robust systems, policies and opportunities for children, young people and their families. Leaders have a comprehensive multi-agency 'SEND Futures Plan'. This plan has been pivotal to the significant improvements made in the area.
- Leaders gather information to inform their understanding of children and young people's needs. This means that leaders can creatively respond to changing need. For example, leaders identified a steady increase of children and young people with orthotic needs. Additional clinics were swiftly put in place, ensuring timely assessment and provision of orthoses for those children and young people who need them.
- Leaders of the ICB have good oversight of those children and young people with SEND who are at risk of an inpatient admission. Inspectors saw examples of good multi-agency support and interventions which prevent the escalation of challenging situations and ensure that children and young people get the right support at the right time.
- Leaders have greatly improved the engagement and participation of children, young people, parents and carers in the design and delivery of services. This includes the involvement of the Richmond Parent Carer Forum (PCF). The Richmond PCF and other parent group representatives hold area leaders to account for their work. This has led to improved services and outcomes. For example, following feedback from children and young people that not all professionals could communicate effectively with them, a communication profile was co-produced. The profiles help professionals better understand how to communicate with children and young people, particularly those who communicate using sounds, body language or gestures.
- Early help practitioners work very well with families to develop children and young people's social and emotional skills. There is no waiting list. Families are contacted by a practitioner and visited in line with the urgency of the need. Social workers and early help practitioners are knowledgeable about other services and understand how and when to refer families to them.
- Therapists provide timely assessments and innovative approaches to make sure that those caring for or working with children and young people with SEND receive the support and guidance they need. For example, the speech and language

therapy (SALT) team offer training and advice to both education settings and parents and carers. The well-used SALT telephone advice line provides immediate support for professionals and parents. Therapists offer face-to-face support sessions if the strategies are unsuccessful.

- Children and young people with SEND who experience mental health issues receive compassionate help from a range of professionals. There is strong support for these children and young people in schools because education practitioners have direct access to the 'Mental Health in Schools' team for advice and guidance.
- Young people with SEND who are in young offenders' institutions or prisons receive sensitive and caring support from their personal advisers during court proceedings and after sentencing. Personal advisers maintain regular contact with young people. They visit young people to prepare them for what to expect in a courtroom and to choose appropriate clothing to wear during trials. They also visit them in prison post-sentencing. This support continues until young people are 25 years old.
- Leaders have close oversight of the progress of children and young people who attend alternative provision and specialist settings outside the borough. They monitor attendance, educational achievement and EHC plan outcomes. They visit settings and track the impact that each provision has on each child or young person with SEND, taking suitable action where necessary. As a result, children and young people who attend alternative provision and out-of-borough specialist settings achieve well.
- Most young people are prepared well for adulthood. They receive helpful careers advice and guidance about the options available to them, including apprenticeships and supported internships. Health and care practitioners work closely with adult services to ensure young people with SEND transition well through comprehensive handovers. Young people leaving secondary school benefit from helpful taster days to help them adjust to their new post-16 setting.

What does the area partnership need to do better?

- Expectant parents do not consistently receive an antenatal contact from the health visitor. This means that many do not have a holistic assessment of their health needs prior to having their baby. This is a missed opportunity to identify need and potential support.
- Some children and young people with possible autism or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder wait too long to receive a diagnosis. However, there is a range of services that provide support and advice to children, young people and their families while they wait. For example, parents and carers are invited to join workshops to help support play, communication and parenting strategies.
- Children and young people's EHC plans are not consistently updated. There is variability in how well EHC plans capture the current needs of the child or young person and have appropriate outcomes. In some instances, this is due to a lack of contributions from the range of professionals involved with the child or young

person with SEND. This can impact negatively at key transition points for some children and young people with SEND as their EHC plan is out of date and contains inaccurate information.

- Some children and young people with SEND wait a long time for essential specialist equipment. The process for assessment, and then authorising and purchasing equipment, is lengthy. This prevents children and young people from receiving important equipment within a reasonable timeframe. Leaders are aware of this and are taking demonstrable steps to resolve this issue.
- Sometimes, parents and carers are not invited to share their views with occupational therapists when their child has an initial occupational therapy assessment in mainstream school. Therapists contact parents and carers after the initial assessment has been completed and the outcome has been communicated to the school. This means parents and carers are last to be involved in the assessment process and their views and key knowledge of their child's experiences are not taken into account.

Areas for improvement

Areas for improvement
Leaders at NHS South West London ICB should ensure that there are robust oversight and improvement plans to reduce the lengthy waits for children and young people waiting for an autism or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder diagnosis.
Leaders in the local partnership should ensure that all expectant parents are able to access an antenatal contact from a health visitor. This is a mandated contact and part of the healthy child programme.
The local area partnership should improve the quality of information in EHC plans so they reflect the current needs and outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

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Local area partnership details

Local authority	Integrated care board
London Borough of Richmond upon Thames	NHS South West London ICB
Ian Dodds, Director of Children's Services	Sarah Blow, Chief Executive Officer
www.richmond.gov.uk	www.icb.nhs.uk
Civic Centre 44 York Street Twickenham TW1 3BZ	NHS South West London 3rd Floor 120 The Broadway London SW19 1RH

Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out at the request of the Secretary of State for Education under section 20(1)(a) of the Children Act 2004.

The inspection was led by one of His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) from Ofsted, with a team of inspectors, including: two HMI/Ofsted Inspectors from education and social care; a lead Children's Services Inspector from Care Quality Commission (CQC); and another Children's Services Inspector from CQC.

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