

# Area SEND inspection of Hammersmith and Fulham Local Area Partnership

Inspection dates: 2 to 6 February 2026

Dates of previous inspection: 3 to 7 December 2018

## Inspection outcome

The local area partnership's special educational needs and/or disabilities (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 the Care Quality Commission (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

Since the previous inspection in 2018, there have been national changes to the way health services are commissioned. The government and NHS England introduced Integrated Care Systems in July 2022. The NHS North West London Integrated Care Board (ICB) and the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham local authority are jointly responsible for the planning and commissioning of health services for children and young people with SEND across the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham.

The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham commissions a local multi-academy trust on behalf of its school community to offer a range of alternative provision (AP) services for children and young people. This provision helps children and young people who are at risk of or have been permanently excluded from school.

## What is it like to be a child or young person with SEND in this area?

Children and young people with SEND in Hammersmith and Fulham are highly valued, visible and included. The local area partnership actively engages with children and young people with SEND to ensure their views inform local decisions. The partnership works very well to make sure children and young people with SEND are consistently involved in decision-making across education, health, social care and the wider community.

Children and young people with SEND are consulted and listened to by the local area partnership, including through the youth council, ambassadorial roles and various forums. Children and young people with SEND enjoy being part of making improvements for themselves and their peers. For example, they help design resources and workshops to raise awareness of mental health and make support more accessible.

Children and young people with SEND benefit from a highly skilled and thoughtful workforce across education, health and social care. Most needs are identified in a timely way, and children and young people typically receive the right help at the right time. A key strength is how effectively multi-agency practitioners work together and share information, despite some challenges with health services accessing each other's records. Interventions and support are delivered with compassion and care to children, young people and their families. Children and young people with SEND who are in care benefit from well-tailored support and oversight from the virtual school.

Children and young people with SEND have access to a wide range of support from education, health and social care services when they need it. Many have positive experiences in education, including those receiving AP services or who are care experienced. This enables them to typically achieve well and be well prepared for their next steps, including preparation for adulthood. Young people with SEND are well supported to progress into further learning, training or employment. There is dedicated support, including help with employment and community activities, and advocacy to support young people with SEND to continue building independence and skills as they enter adulthood.

Children and young people with SEND have their health needs identified well, with many benefiting from strong support from a range of practitioners who work effectively together and provide a responsive, flexible approach. Many are supported very well through clear planning, including at key transition points. They value the consistent relationships they have with practitioners who know them well. However, some children and young people with SEND experience long waits for a neurodevelopmental diagnosis and repairs to their wheelchairs. Those who wait for a neurodevelopmental diagnosis have access to a range of support, which includes helpful contact from health services.

Children and young people with SEND have positive experiences of using local facilities, such as parks and leisure centres. Specialist family and youth hubs provide a range of specialist SEND activities, after-school clubs, weekend sessions, short breaks and holiday play schemes. They offer integrated access to social care, health and education, enabling families to receive the advice and interventions they need. These hubs provide valuable opportunities for children and young people with SEND to be included in their local community and make friends.

## **What is the area partnership doing that is effective?**

- Partnership leaders have a very good understanding of the needs of the SEND

community. They take robust action to strengthen services when required. Children and young people with SEND and their families are at the centre of leaders' decisions. Leaders are ambitious for children and young people with SEND and value their views.

- Leaders across the local area partnership work very well together to develop strategy and commission services, informed by strong use of data. Multi-agency governance, accountability and reporting lines are well embedded. Actions by the partnership typically result in positive experiences for children and young people with SEND.
- The parent carer forum (PCF) strongly advocates for children and young people with SEND and their families, playing an instrumental role in shaping strategy and initiatives and providing feedback from parents and carers through working groups and forums. The PCF helps to hold leaders to account effectively, resulting in improvements across the local area partnership.
- The partnership has taken effective action to ensure that children and young people with SEND receive the right therapy support at the right time. Leaders have introduced occupational therapy and speech and language therapy transformation programmes, aiming to strengthen the therapy offer and ensure equitable access. Although at an early stage, this work is having a positive impact on children, young people and their families.
- Leaders have a well-established dynamic support register. This ensures that support is in place for children and young people with autism and/or a learning disability who have complex mental health needs and are at risk of placement breakdown or inpatient admission. Children and young people with SEND benefit from a key-worker service, which ensures that their needs and those of their families are fully understood, and that services for them are well coordinated.
- Children and young people with SEND who require a residential school placement or AP are supported through well-established systems and processes. Effective commissioning helps leaders to maintain secure oversight of each child or young person with SEND. Placements are reviewed frequently to ensure that they remain appropriate and continue to meet children and young people's needs.
- Children and young people with SEND are supported well with their emotional health and wellbeing through a range of effective mental health services. Community and specialist mental health services provide timely assessments and treatment, meaning children and young people with SEND receive appropriate interventions.
- Children and young people with SEND and their families benefit from a wide range of local services. Swift, well-planned early intervention and specialist support across education, health and social care are delivered through strong multi-agency working. Children and young people's education, health and care (EHC) plans provide a clear and individualised narrative of individual's needs, strengths, likes, dislikes and aspirations for the future, including preparation for adulthood.

## **What does the area partnership need to do better?**

- Leaders have made significant investments to improve the response to children's

needs. A neurodevelopmental diagnosis transformation project has substantially reduced the time children and young people wait for diagnosis. Leaders have enhanced pre- and post-diagnostic support for children and young people with autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Despite the strength of recovery planning and the financial investment made, the need for diagnosis and support remains high. Some children and young people with SEND continue to experience long waits for their diagnosis. Leaders across the partnership are fully aware of this and are reviewing and responding effectively.

- An increasing number of children and young people needing speech and language therapy, coupled with variability in the service offer, means that some children and young people do not have equitable access to speech and language therapy. This affects children and young people with speech, language and communication needs, particularly those in post-16 education. Leaders understand the commissioning challenges affecting these services and significant work is underway across the partnership to ensure there is an equitable offer for these children and young people.
- Some children and young people with SEND wait too long for their wheelchairs to be reviewed and repaired. This has led to some children and young people missing long periods of time from education. Leaders are aware of this and are working with the wheelchair provider to implement recovery plans so that children and young people with SEND receive suitable mobility equipment to live full lives with the equipment they need.
- Following annual reviews, EHC plans are not always amended in a timely way to reflect current and relevant information about children and young people with SEND. These plans do not include up-to-date recommendations about the provision required. Leaders are aware of this issue and have secure action plans in place to improve this.

## Areas for improvement

Areas for improvement
<p>The local area partnership should further reduce the time children and young people wait for access to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• diagnosis of a neurodevelopmental need</li> <li>• wheelchair repairs and reviews</li> </ul>
<p>The local area partnership should update children and young people's EHC plans following annual reviews in a timely way to reflect current and relevant information about the child or young person and the provision that they need.</p>

## Local area partnership details

Local authority	Integrated care board
London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham	North West London Integrated Care Board
Jacqui McShannon	Katie Fisher
<a href="http://www.lbhf.gov.uk">www.lbhf.gov.uk</a>	<a href="http://www.nwlondonicb.nhs.uk">www.nwlondonicb.nhs.uk</a>
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## 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 the Care Quality Commission (CQC); and another Children's Services Inspector from the CQC.

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