

13 October 2025

Agenda Item: 5

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AND THE DIRECTOR OF NURSING, NOTTINGHAM AND NOTTINGHAMSHIRE INTEGRATED CARE BOARD**PROGRESS IN IMPROVING THE EXPERIENCES AND OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES – UPDATE****Purpose of the Report**

1. To inform Select Committee of the findings of the joint Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) local area Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) monitoring inspection, undertaken in July 2025.
2. To update the Select Committee on activity underway by the local area SEND Partnership to respond to, and address, the findings of the monitoring inspection and ensure improvement activity is embedded across the Partnership.

Information

3. In January / February 2023, Ofsted/Care Quality Commission (CQC) undertook a local area [inspection](#) of the Nottinghamshire SEND Partnership; inspectors had determined that there were '*widespread and/or systemic failings*' and '*significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND*' which needed to be addressed urgently.
4. Inspectors identified two Areas for Priority Action (APA) which required urgent attention by the local area Partnership. These Areas for Priority Action were underpinned by additional requirements for the Partnership to ensure there was a stronger focus on embedding data, quality assurance, co-production and shared leadership and governance across all SEND improvement activity.
5. The local area SEND Partnership brings together the organisations from across education, health, social care and the voluntary sector, which provide services to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND in Nottinghamshire. The two leading partners are the County Council and the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board (ICB). Following the 2023 inspection, a SEND Improvement Programme was launched across the local area SEND Partnership.

6. In line with the [Area SEND Inspection Framework](#), which was revised and updated in June 2025, Ofsted and CQC undertake monitoring inspections in local areas that are found, at a full inspection, to have widespread and/or systemic failings; these monitoring inspections should be undertaken around 18 months from the date of the local area's final report following full inspection. However, in December 2024, Ofsted paused inspection activity in order to develop and consult on an enhanced inspection framework, thus resulting in a delay to the commencement of Nottinghamshire's monitoring inspection.
7. The purpose of the monitoring inspection is to assess the extent to which the local area partnership is taking effective action to address the Areas for Priority Action set out in the inspection report. If inspectors identify any new, widespread and/or systemic failings during the monitoring inspection, these will be raised to the local area partnership and referenced in the monitoring inspection outcome letter.
8. Ofsted and CQC undertook Nottinghamshire's Area SEND monitoring inspection between 14 July and 22 July 2025. Inspection activity included: discussions with local area leaders, parents and carers of children and young people with SEND, and education, health and social care professionals; meetings with representatives of the parent carer forum (PCF), the DfE and regional NHS England (NHSE); and the examination of relevant documents and correspondence about the performance of the area in addressing the areas for priority action identified at the initial inspection, including the area's priority action plan and self-evaluation.
9. The inspection report was published on 3 September 2025 and can be found in **Appendix 1**. Ofsted and CQC inspectors found that "*the local area has taken effective action as it has taken reasonable steps to address all the areas for priority action identified at the initial inspection*".
10. Per the inspection framework, effective action does not mean that the area for priority action is no longer a concern or that the local area can stop taking action to address it, as inspections are a point-in-time evaluation. Areas for Priority Action that receive an effective action outcome may still be identified as areas for priority action in future inspections if the local area does not continue to act and/or the action does not continue to have a positive impact on the experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
11. The key inspection findings are outlined below:

Area for Priority Action 1 (APA1): To urgently identify, assess, and provide for the needs of children and young people with SEND. This includes assessment of needs, timely issuing of Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans and holistic oversight of these plans through annual reviews.

Inspection Finding: effective action taken

- a. The PCF feel listened to and valued, including active participation in workstreams as part of the SEND Improvement Programme;
- b. The revised governance arrangements have enhanced the way in which leaders are held to account;

- c. The partnership uses a range of data and performance information effectively, feeding into governance structures to enable effective oversight and allowing professionals to develop a better understanding of children and young people's needs;
- d. Improvements to the structures and ways of working of the Integrated Children's Disability Service (ICDS), as well as the 'grow your own' model to recruit and retain educational psychologists, has helped to increase the proportion of EHC plans completed within the 20-week statutory timescale; at the time of inspection, 47.3% of EHC needs assessments were completed within statutory timescales, compared to 28.01% in 2023.
- e. The new multi-agency quality assurance process provides useful learning to help improve the quality of EHC plans, with newer plans being typically better quality;
- f. The partnership's vision is increasingly well understood by education, social care and health partners;
- g. Areas for ongoing development and improvement:
 - i. The variable quality of children and young people's EHC plans, particularly the advice provided by education, health and social care professionals about children and young people's needs that should inform their EHC plan;
 - ii. The annual reviews of EHC plans for most children and young people are not timely, with some of the EHC plans sampled having not been updated for a significant length of time despite children and young people's needs, educational placements or living arrangements changing. Improvement activity in this area is underway as part of the ICDS review;
 - iii. Variable experiences of parents, carers and professionals in relation to the online platform that was introduced to support EHC plan processes, with some issues reported in relation to the platform and associated user guidance;
 - iv. Improvement actions and progress towards milestones are not communicated to professionals, parents and carers consistently well, meaning some do not know about the successes and planned next steps in relation to the partnership's improvement work;
 - v. Variable experiences from parents and carers in relating to the communication from dedicated professionals in ICDS, with both positive feedback and continued frustration reported.

Area for Priority Action 2 (APA2): To identify and address the delays and gaps in access to some health services, particularly speech and language therapy, neurodevelopmental pathways, and equipment services. They should also ensure that they use available performance data to identify where gaps exist and whether actions taken to address these are effective.

Inspection Finding: effective action taken

- a. Revised governance structures and workstreams have enabled the partnership to better identify and address gaps in health services across Nottinghamshire, with improved access to data and information enabling health leaders and key stakeholders, including the PCF, to identify joint commissioning priorities;
- b. Health leaders and partners have established an offer of support for children and young people waiting for their neurodevelopmental (ND) assessment, including a

range of online resources, workshops and face-to-face support sessions in district family hubs. A monthly newsletter outlines current wait times as well as signposting families to further support, alongside prompt notifications to parents and carers when their child has been placed on the waiting list;

- c. Improved cataloguing of equipment used by children and young people in the community, and refreshed protocols, help to ensure that children and young people get the equipment that they need;
- d. Areas for ongoing development and improvement:
 - i. Children and young people continue to wait too long for their ND assessment. This is being addressed by the Partnership through the redesign of the ND service;
 - ii. There has been a slow pace of action to improve waiting times for speech and language therapy (SLT) services, with some parents, carers and professionals still unclear about how to refer to and access SLT. While there has been some upskilling of staff to support children and young people with eating and drinking difficulties, some children and young people wait well over the national standard of 18 weeks for assessment and support. Although a pilot project has been underway to test an advice line and drop-in service for children and young people who are awaiting assessment, this is yet to be fully evaluated.

Next Steps

12. The Nottinghamshire local area SEND partnership remains committed to improving the experiences and outcomes of children and families and ensuring that the positive progress made is maintained and built upon following inspection. New and ongoing improvement activity is underway to address the findings of the inspection report and ensure that improvements are embedded across services. The outcomes of children, young people and their families continue to be monitored in order to inform practice.
13. Improvement work will continue to be overseen by the independently chaired SEND Partnership Improvement Board, while the local area Partnership seeks further advice and guidance from the DfE and NHSE regarding transitions to business-as-usual governance and assurance arrangements, with the aim of ensuring that such arrangements continue to drive forward improvements, monitor outcomes and continue to hold the Partnership to account.
14. In line with the Area SEND Inspection Framework, the Nottinghamshire SEND Partnership can expect a full SEND inspection in 18 months' time.

Reason for Recommendation/s

15. The local area Partnership is committed to improving the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND and will continue to focus on implementing the improvement plan and wider improvement arrangements moving forwards.

Statutory and Policy Implications

16. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability, and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

17. Local authority costs associated with the improvement programme and associated partnership governance arrangements have been subject to the relevant approvals in line with financial regulations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Children and Families Select Committee:

- 1) considers and comments on the feedback from the Ofsted and Care Quality Commission local area SEND monitoring inspection;
- 2) agrees to receive a further progress report on SEND improvement at the December meeting.

Anne Coyle
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Rosa Waddingham
Director of Nursing, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

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Constitutional Comments (GMG 09/09/25)

18. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. This reports fall within the remit of the Children and Families Select Committee under Section 6, Part 1, paragraph 4(a) on p.88 of the Council's Constitution.

Financial Comments (SS 16/09/25)

19. Local authority costs associated with the improvement programme and associated partnership governance arrangements have been subject to the relevant approvals in line with financial regulations. There are no identified increase or decrease in costs and the current cost are within the scope of the budget. The Education and Special Needs &

Disabilities (SEND) Portfolio budget (as at August 2025) is £17.462m for 2025/26. The High Needs allocation from the Department for Education (DfE) to support the improvement of outcomes is £130.2m for 2025/26 as at August 2025.

20. There are no Local Government Reorganisation implications from this decision.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

[Improving the experiences and outcomes for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities](#) - report to Cabinet on 25 May 2023

[Progress in Improving the Experiences and Outcomes for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities](#) – report to Cabinet on 22 June 2023

[Partnership Progress In Improving The Experiences And Outcomes For Children And Young People With Special Educational Needs And Disabilities](#) – Report to Children and Families Select Committee on 16 October 2023

[Partnership Progress in Improving the Experiences and Outcomes for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities](#) – Report to Children and Families Select Committee on 5 February 2024

[Partnership Progress in Improving the Experiences and Outcomes for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities](#) – Report to Children and Families Select Committee on 15 April 2024

[Partnership Progress in Improving the Experiences and Outcomes for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities](#) – Report to Children and Families Select Committee on 15 July 2024

[Partnership Progress in Improving the Experiences and Outcomes for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities](#)– Report to Children and Families Select Committee on 07 October 2024

[Partnership Progress in Improving the Experiences and Outcomes for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities](#) – Report to Children and Families Select Committee on 02 December 2024

[Partnership Progress in Improving the Experiences and Outcomes for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities](#) – Report to Children and Families Select Committee on 17 March 2025

[Partnership Progress in Improving the Experiences and Outcomes for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities](#) – Report to Children and Families Select Committee on 14 July 2025

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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