

22nd February 2021**Agenda Item: 8****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, COMMISSIONING AND RESOURCES****INTERIM VISIT TO NOTTINGHAMSHIRE BY OFSTED AND THE CARE
QUALITY COMMISSION IN OCTOBER 2020 AND UPDATE ON THE
PERFORMANCE OF THE INTEGRATED CHILDREN'S DISABILITY SERVICE****Purpose of the Report**

1. This report provides the Committee with a summary of the outcomes from the Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) Interim Visit to Nottinghamshire in October 2020, and a summary of the performance of the Integrated Children's Disability Service (ICDS) during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The interim visit to Nottinghamshire by Ofsted and the CQC

2. On 5th & 6th October 2020, Ofsted and the CQC undertook an Interim Visit to Nottinghamshire. The purpose of the visit was to support local areas to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and their families, to learn from what has happened and identify opportunities for improvement. It was one of the first of 18 planned visits nationally, to be undertaken before Spring 2021.
3. Ofsted carried out this visit under a section 118(2) request from the Department for Education. CQC provided assistance to Ofsted under paragraph 9(1) of Schedule 4 to the Health and Social Care Act 2008. The visit was carried out remotely and was not an inspection.
4. The Ofsted / CQC Inspectors explored the following three questions during the visit with local area leaders, the parents and carers of children and young people with SEND who were chosen to be part of four case studies and the education, health and care professionals who work with them:
 - how have children and young people with SEND experienced the pandemic? What has worked well in supporting them?
 - what have the challenges been and what did not work so well?
 - what are the plans for supporting these children and young people in the future?
5. The Inspection Team also surveyed parents and carers as well as children and young people with SEND over the age of 16 years prior to the visit. A total of 132 families

responded to the survey. In the feedback to local leaders at the end of the Interim Visit, the Inspection Team referred to the responses to the survey from parents and carers, but did not share a copy with the Local Area. Therefore it is not possible to quantify the points made in the summary note of the Interim Visit.

6. Following the Interim Visit, Ofsted provided the local area with a written summary note (attached as **Appendix 1**). This was not published but shared with Department for Education SEND Advisers and NHS England SEND Advisers. Ofsted also published a report in November 2020 summarising the first six Interim Visits (attached as **Appendix 2**). Ofsted's intention is to publish a final report covering all Interim Visits during Spring 2021.
7. The following points were identified in their summary note:
 - leaders at the beginning of the pandemic moved rapidly to set up systems to help professionals across education, health and care services to communicate and work remotely. This enabled support and services for children and young people with SEND and their families to be prioritised
 - the workforce experienced considerable stress and additional workload as a result of responding to the frequent changes in national guidance, and this was often at short notice
 - the vast majority of schools remained open during the pandemic, including during holiday periods. Some parents and carers advised that remote and blending learning had suited their children's needs very well
 - risk assessments were completed for all children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans, as well as those with additional needs who practitioners deemed may need extra help. However, they were not always multi-agency in content and not all parents were aware that the risk assessment had taken place
 - the provision of some health services was reduced due to the redeployment of health professionals to focus on the national response to the pandemic. Where possible, health teams devised new ways of continuing to support children and young people
 - social care professionals continued their work with families using technology to support communication. They checked regularly on those who had a designated social worker before the pandemic
 - some parents and carers felt abandoned due to the restrictions imposed on services. Parents and professionals felt that the needs of children and young people with SEND had not been correctly prioritised in national guidance. Other parents and carers described feeling like they had reached 'crisis point' before getting help and support from social care professionals
 - leaders are aware that the impact of the pandemic on parents and practitioners is ongoing. They are keen to reflect and learn from the way professionals have worked together in new and innovative ways to meet the needs of families during this difficult time.

8. The local area agreed the following emerging priorities with the Inspection Team for supporting children and young people with SEND:
 - to use the experience of the pandemic to support improvement in services in education, health and care and to inform the implementation of the area's new SEND Policy and Strategic Action Plan
 - to ensure that the needs of children and young people with SEND are prioritised by all leaders across the local area
 - to develop a collaborative, multi-agency Action Plan for any future pandemic to set out clearly what arrangements will look like for children and young people with SEND
 - to work with education, health and social care professionals to develop a 'recovery curriculum programme' to support children and young people with SEND with their personal development, wellbeing and education during and after the pandemic.
9. In January 2021, the Children and Young People's Committee approved the Nottinghamshire SEND Strategic Plan and the Nottinghamshire Integrated SEND Commissioning Strategy. The Action Plan and Strategy will support the delivery of these emerging priorities over the next two years.
10. Colleagues in the Bassetlaw Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire CCG have agreed a number of actions following the Interim Visit. This includes strengthening the representation of health providers on the Nottinghamshire SEND Accountability Board. It has been agreed that the Divisional General Manager for Nottinghamshire Healthcare Foundation Trust will join the Board from December 2020. The other actions agreed are:
 - communication between partners, stakeholders, parents and carers to continue to be built upon; to ensure that the local provision offer during future pandemics is clear and accessible
 - a recommendation to ensure SEND risk assessments are undertaken collaboratively via a multi-agency approach, senior leads to consider developing a strategic risk assessment, to obtain assurance from stakeholders/partners
 - to improve and further develop links with key health partners to obtain a collective view of the impact the pandemic has had on children and young people and their families, to support future planning and to work more innovatively
 - the profile of SEND needs to be a priority for NHS Trusts within Nottinghamshire. Commissioners to review contracts and commissioning arrangements to ensure that partners:
 - develop a SEND Policy and pathway; have clear governance routes
 - identify SEND Executive Leads to champion and lead on SEND
 - develop quality schedule frameworks

- include the voice of children and young people; for co-production to be embedded in practice.
11. During the Autumn Term, Ofsted also undertook a programme of Interim Visits to schools, including in Nottinghamshire. The purpose of these Interim Visits was ‘to reassure and inform parents, government and the public about how schools are managing the return to full education for all pupils’. Following each Interim Visit the lead Inspector provided a short letter summarising the discussions Inspectors had with leaders as well as information for parents about what leaders are doing to help pupils back into full-time education. Letters will not provide any evaluation or graded judgement. Summary briefing notes of the findings of these Interim Visits can be found on the [Ofsted website](#).

The current performance of the Integrated Children’s Disability Service (ICDS)

12. Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic all the teams within the Integrated Children’s Disability Service have continued to deliver services to children and young people with SEND and their families.
13. The ICDS Statutory Assessment Team has continued to meet its statutory requirements regarding Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). Between January and December 2020, over 97.0% of EHCPs were issued on time. The Team applied Covid timescale modifications to only two EHCPs between May and September 2020.
14. The backlog of Annual Reviews was significantly reduced during the first half of 2020. Since the Autumn, educational settings have struggled to complete Annual Reviews within the appropriate timescales. This reflects the issues that settings have faced managing Covid-19 infections and related staff absences. The ICDS Statutory Assessment Team has provided bespoke support to a number of schools to enable them to complete Reviews.
15. The ICDS Specialist Support Team has continued to provide services including personal care at home for some of Nottinghamshire’s most vulnerable children and young people. In March 2020, a Service Co-ordination meeting was established involving a range of Local Authority services and Nottinghamshire Special Schools. The purpose of this meeting was to identify families requiring crisis intervention. The Specialist Support Team provided bespoke packages of support to families referred by the Service Co-ordination meetings, to mitigate the need to take children into care. Safe socially distanced small group provision is now being offered to children and young people eligible for weekend and holiday activities at Portland College.
16. The ICDS Occupational Therapy Team has continued to assess children and young people and their environment by using technology where possible. Home visits are taking place where there is no alternative. Due to Covid-19 there has been an increase in waiting times for assessments due to seating clinics being cancelled and adaptations being put on hold.
17. The processing of applications for short breaks and reviews of existing packages have continued. The Short Breaks offer has been adjusted to enable families to apply for a sum of money, to purchase activities and equipment for children and young people where the usual short breaks provision has not been available.

18. The Physical Disability Specialist Service has continued to provide advice to mainstream schools with regard to equipment and adaptations for pupils with physical disabilities. Training sessions for school support staff have also continued, albeit with reduced numbers to ensure social distancing.

Other Options Considered

19. Due to the nature of the report no other options were considered appropriate.

Reason for Recommendation

20. Members wished to be assured that the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic for children and young people with SEND and their families was appropriate and ensured that their needs were prioritised.

Statutory and Policy Implications

21. 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

22. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Implications for Service Users

23. The priorities agreed following the Ofsted / CQC Interim Visit to Nottinghamshire will support the Local Area to improve its response to the current and future pandemics.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) That Committee considers whether there are any actions it requires in relation to the Ofsted and Care Quality Commission Interim Visits summary note, attached as **Appendix 1**, and the performance of the Integrated Children's Disability Service.

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Constitutional Comments (EP 14/01/21)

24. The Children and Young People's Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report. If Committee resolves that any actions are required it should ensure that such actions fall within its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (SAS 19/01/21)

25. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

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.

[The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategic Action Plan 2021-23 and Integrated SEND Commissioning Strategy \(Children and Young People's Committee, 18th January 2021\)](#)

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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