

SEND Re-visit Outcome

June 2021

Message from Jacky Forster, Chair of the 0-25 SEND Partnership

Inspectors report services for Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities have been transformed



Following our recent special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) re-visit by Inspectors from Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC), we are pleased to be able to tell you that Cheshire East has made **sufficient progress in addressing the two areas of significant weaknesses identified at our previous inspection in 2018**. These were:

- the timeliness, process and quality of Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans
- establishing an effective autism spectrum disorder (ASD) pathway and in reducing waiting times

Inspectors re-visited Cheshire East local area between 24 May to the 27 May 2021, with activities carried out virtually and in person. They spoke with children and young people, parents and carers, as well as council and health professionals. They reviewed performance data and evidence and listened to the views of more than 700 parents and carers who responded to an online survey.

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Inspectors found that, since their last visit, **the timeliness, process and quality of EHC plans have been transformed**, saying that by early 2020, almost every needs assessment was completed within the 20-week deadline, compared to less than one in six in 2018. They also found that from the beginning of the process, professionals worked closely with parents, children and young people to accurately reflect their needs, stating that **'co-production is at the heart of every EHC needs assessment'**. In summary, inspectors **heard from parents, carers, children and young people about the positive impact these plans have on their lives**.

Regarding support for children and young people with autism, inspectors found that **more children are starting nursery and school with their needs understood and met**. Families have also been offered support and training, so they can better understand and support their child. In terms of waiting times, back in 2018 over 200 children and young people were waiting more than 12 weeks for their first assessment, but by March 2020, this had reduced to two.

Inspectors didn't outline any new areas of weakness but recognised the need for more effective communication with parents and carers, as many who responded to the online survey were not yet convinced of service improvements.

Councillor Kathryn Flavell, lead member for children and families at Cheshire East Council said: "I am delighted with the outcome of the re-visit by Ofsted and CQC and the progress that has been made since 2018."

"Our vision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities is the same as for all children and young people - that they achieve well in their early years, at school and in college, and lead happy and fulfilled lives."

"Inspectors have recognised the significant investment and improvements since the last inspection which they say cannot be underestimated and have made a huge impact to the lives of children, young people and their families across Cheshire East."

"We are not complacent, and we have much more work to do. However, we must recognise and celebrate all the hard work and effort of staff across all education, health and care services, education settings, health providers and the Cheshire East Parent Carer Forum. I'd personally like to thank them for their energy, commitment and dedication in achieving these significant improvements, changing the lives of children and young people with SEND across the borough."

Clare Watson, accountable officer of NHS Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group, said: "We are pleased that Ofsted and CQC inspectors found significant improvements since 2018 – including improvements to the development of education, health and care plans and the introduction of an autistic spectrum disorder pathway for children aged 0-4.

"We will not rest on our laurels, though, as every improvement we make has a positive impact on

the lives of young people in Cheshire East.”

The Ofsted/CQC letter is attached to this briefing. It can also be viewed online at www.cheshireeast.gov.uk , www.cheshireccg.nhs.uk and www.cepcf.org

Thank You

Thank you to all parents and carers, along with staff from across the 0-25 SEND Partnership who took the time to contribute to the inspection. The successful outcome of the re-visit is a testament to the hard work and determination of everyone involved to transform our services and improve the experiences of families who have children and young people with SEND in Cheshire East.

Kind Regards

Jacky

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