

Area SEND inspection of Brighton and Hove Local Area Partnership

Inspection dates: 27 March 2023 to 31 March 2023

Date of previous inspection: 16 May 2016

Inspection outcome

The local area partnership's arrangements typically lead to positive experiences and outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (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 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

Brighton and Hove City Council and NHS Sussex Integrated Care Board are jointly responsible for the planning and commissioning of services for children and young people with SEND in Brighton and Hove. Communication between partner agencies is strong. This includes with the parent carers' council, known as PaCC, and voluntary organisations such as Amaze, which hosts the local SEND information advice and support service (SENDIASS).

The local authority commissions some alternative provision through the Central Hub Brighton. This consists of pupil referral units for primary and secondary-aged children and young people, and The Connected Hub, which is a Year 11 alternative provision. Schools also commission their own alternative provision.

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

Children and young people are at the heart of Brighton and Hove's strategy for SEND. The partnership's vision of 'better outcomes, better lives' sits at the centre of its plans for further development. These have been co-produced with Brighton and Hove's children and young people with SEND. The city is rightly proud of its culture of inclusivity.

Most children and young people's needs are identified accurately and assessed in a timely and effective way right from the start. Health visitors and school nurses work effectively in order to identify and respond to emerging needs in babies, children and young people. And although there are long waits for neuro-developmental assessments and access to child adolescent and mental health services, children and young people can access bespoke help while waiting for a diagnosis. Children and young people, their families and schools especially value the help and support provided by Brighton and Hove Inclusion Support Service (BHISS). For example, the school's well-being service gives advice to parents, carers and schools about how to meet the mental health needs of children and young people.

Children and young people typically get the right help at the right time. For example, early help packages are closely matched to children and young people's needs and focus strongly on improving children and young people's outcomes. In schools, staff are increasingly well trained to understand the different needs of children and young people with SEND. This is helping to significantly reduce incidents of suspension and is improving the attendance of children and young people. However, a lack of appropriate alternative provision in Brighton and Hove means that some children and young people are not able to get the right help quickly enough.

Children and young people are supported to share their voices and opinions. Their voices are particularly well reflected across all education, health and care (EHC) plans. Organisations such as Amaze connect with children and young people well. Children and young people who are part of neuro-developmental assessments have a child-focused conversation to inform planning. Because they are part of the process and are listened to, children and young people are able to participate and be heard, and typically feel included in the Brighton and Hove community.

Children and young people are well supported as they move between schools. Transition between the early years and primary school is especially thorough. All health partners are key to the well-timed transition planning at this age. Social workers act as useful advocates to get the children and young people they work with the help and support they need, including at points of transition into adult social care. There are a variety of education, employment and training options available to young people post-16. Young people value the provision offered by further education colleges and special schools that supports them to access training post-19. However, transitions from child to adult health services are not currently smooth enough for some young people.

Several charities and other groups help children and young people enjoy life in the community of Brighton and Hove. For example, the 'Compass Card' is valued by children and young people in supporting them to access leisure activities. Several young people told inspectors how much they valued the peer support activity groups. However, as they get older and leave school, young people would like more opportunities to engage in accessible activities. Furthermore, a lack of sufficient short break placements and personal assistants means that some children and young people and their families have limited access to these activities.

What is the area partnership doing that is effective?

- Frontline practitioners, managers and leaders are ambitious for Brighton and Hove's children and young people with SEND. Staff work together with a genuine sense of dedication. Their sharp focus on finding the most effective solution for each individual means that children and young people get the right help. Partnership working in the early years is particularly strong.
- Leaders have an accurate, shared understanding of the needs of children and young people. This is promoted through the SEND strategy and across education, health and care and demonstrated through the creation of roles to coordinate services and promote inclusion. For example, the Hidden Children Officer draws connections between services, schools and families to ensure children and young people with emerging needs are supported to attend school and be a visible part of the community.
- Co-production (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) is a strength across Brighton and Hove. It is embedded in the local culture and is based on a relationship of trust and respect. The voices of parents, carers, children and young people influence strategic development and the commissioning of services. Parent voice is well represented in various panels across the city when considering access to services for individual families. There are many examples of strategic and operational co-production that are working well, for example the Social Communication Resources across primary and secondary school, the school transport policy, and the strategic plan for SEND. All resources that are being developed for the Dynamic Support Register (DSR) have been co-produced with PaCC.
- Some of the forums that support children and young people have been recently adapted to work even better. They include complex care panels, complex neuro-developmental clinics and support from BHISS and the DSR. As a result, children and young people who have complex needs experience a timely multi-agency response from the partnership. Social workers know the children they support well and work effectively in order to form relationships with them and their families. This ensures that social workers understand children and young people's wishes and lived experiences well.
- The services that leaders commission are increasingly meeting the needs and aspirations of children and young people. Leaders have changed the culture of

how they work in early help to match provision to children and young people's needs, rather than the other way round. Leaders have carefully considered how to support different communities within Brighton and Hove so that children and young people can access the right help to succeed. The youth employability service provides personalised help to young people who find themselves without a place in education, employment or training post-16. The help and advice provided by SENDIASS is also highly valued. All this helps ensure that children and young people get bespoke support from the right professional at the right time.

- Through routine and effective communication, the access to education team link with partners across education, health and care to promote the inclusion agenda. For example, help to analyse behaviour data, alongside training from BHISS in understanding the behaviour of pupils with SEND, is helping school leaders to significantly reduce suspension and improve attendance across the city.
- Leaders have secure plans to increase the number of special school places to meet the rise in children and young people with EHC plans for autism spectrum disorder or social, emotional and mental health concerns. A special school satellite and some additional specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND in mainstream schools will open in September 2023, with more places planned to open in the following year.

What does the area partnership need to do better?

- The partnership approach to helping children and young people prepare for adulthood is underdeveloped. Early identification of young people who are at risk of not being in education, employment or training is not well coordinated. Information, advice and guidance about future careers and independence are not considered early enough. In addition, there is not enough strategic planning involvement from health and social care. For example, there is a gap in provision for young people who need a clinical speech and language therapy service that is not linked to an education need. Similarly, there are not enough personal assistants to support young people to be independent.
- Leaders have not monitored the quality of EHC plans well enough. Some plans are written in a generalised way and do not adequately reflect the individual at the heart of the plan, particularly when considering the support they need to succeed. Social care and health needs are less well represented than education. An exception to this is where children are placed in a specialist provision.
- A small minority of children and young people who require alternative provision do not receive education placements that are well enough tailored to their special educational needs (SEN). The local authority has consulted with schools to increase the supply of appropriate alternative provision and specialist school places. New ideas are focusing on a more inclusive approach. For example, some additional places are attached to schools, which helps pupils to maintain their links with the teachers and pupils they know well, so maintaining a strong sense of belonging in their community. A new post to coordinate the commissioning and to check the quality of alternative provision has been agreed. However, the pace of

change is not yet fast enough.

- Some children and young people wait too long to find a specialist school place. While they wait, some are placed in alternative provision or on part-time timetables. Families who responded to Ofsted’s survey told us about how this can have a negative impact on children and young people’s learning and well-being. The local authority has secure plans to increase the number of specialist school places from September 2023.
- The role of the designated medical officer/designated clinical officer for SEND is under-resourced. Frequent changes in commissioner mean that the role has not been developed as needed in order to be able to support the partnership. For example, currently, there is insufficient time available to the holder of this role to adequately support the changes that the local area partnership leaders have identified that they want to make to EHC plan processes. It has also taken some time for partnership leaders to fully understand the impact of some commissioning arrangements. This means that some health planning and practice for children and young people with SEND have not improved in a timely enough manner and some families experience drift and delay in getting access to the services they need.
- The partnership’s approach to monitoring the impact of the SEND strategy is in its infancy. In addition, leaders have not communicated effectively or regularly enough with children, families and wider partners about the improvements they are making and the impact of their work. The lack of clarity about the pace of change across the partnership leads to unnecessary worry for families, children and young people.

Areas for improvement

Leaders should improve their strategic approach to preparation for adulthood, so that all young people receive the right help and support they need to lead successful lives.
Leaders must continue to develop their oversight and commissioning arrangements of suitable alternative provision so that there is sufficient provision that meets children and young people’s SEN.
Leaders across the partnership should identify the steps that they will take to collectively monitor and measure the impact of their strategy and actions. These plans should be made clear to children, young people and their families with SEND in Brighton and Hove.

Local area partnership details

Local Authority	Integrated Care Board
Brighton and Hove City Council	NHS Sussex
Deb Austin, Executive Director, Families, Children and Learning	Dinesh Sinha, Executive lead for SEND
www.brighton-hove.gov.uk	www.sussex.ics.nhs.uk
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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: three HMI/Ofsted Inspectors from education and social care; a lead Children's Services Inspector from the CQC; and another Children's Services Inspector from CQC.

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