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Dr Chris Clayton, Accountable Officer and Chief Executive Officer, Derby and Derbyshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
Brigid Stacey, Chief Nurse and Quality Officer, NHS Derby and Derbyshire CCG
Lucy Herbert, Local Area Nominated Officer, Derby City Council

Dear Mr Smith and Dr Clayton

Joint area SEND revisit in Derby

Between 4 and 6 October 2021, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) revisited the area of Derby to decide whether sufficient progress has been made in addressing each of the areas of significant weakness detailed in the inspection report letter published on 19 August 2019.

As a result of the findings of the initial inspection and in accordance with the Children Act 2004 (Joint Area Reviews) Regulations 2015, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) determined that a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) was required because of significant areas of weakness in the area's practice. HMCI determined that the local authority and the area's clinical commissioning group (CCG) were jointly responsible for submitting the WSOA to Ofsted. This was declared fit for purpose on 5 December 2019.

The area has made sufficient progress in addressing all of the significant weaknesses identified at the initial inspection. This letter outlines our findings from the revisit.

The inspection was led by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) from Ofsted and a Children's Services Inspector from CQC.

The inspection was carried out on site. Most meetings were held remotely. Inspectors spoke with parents and carers of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and local authority and NHS officers. They spoke with leaders, managers and staff for education, health and social care from Derby local authority. Inspectors looked at a range of information about the

performance of the area in addressing the five significant weaknesses identified at the initial inspection, including the area's improvement plans and self-evaluation.

Inspectors reviewed a sample of education, health and care (EHC) plans. They considered 407 responses to the online survey for parents and carers.

In reaching their judgements, inspectors took account of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on SEND arrangements in the area. Inspectors considered a range of information about the impact of the pandemic and explored how the area's plans and actions had been adapted as a result.

Main findings

- At the initial inspection, inspectors found the following:

Local area leaders had failed to take the joint commissioning actions required to implement the disability and special educational needs reforms across education, health and social care.

There has been a significant change in culture since the initial area SEND inspection in June 2019. Area leaders in education, health and social care have strengthened their working relationships. Commissioners from Derby City Council (DCC) and Derby and Derbyshire Clinical Commissioning Group (DDCCG) have improved their joint working arrangements. They are committed, ambitious and willing to improve commissioning arrangements across the local area.

Health partners in both commissioning and provider organisations take equal responsibility, with education and social care partners, to identify and meet the needs of children and young people with SEND and their families.

Joint commissioning decision-making now involves parents, carers and professionals working in education, health and social care. The recommissioning of the Short Breaks service was done in collaboration with professionals and parent groups such as, but not exclusive to, Parent Carers Together (the parent carer forum). Further positive examples of joint commissioning include the Changing Lives service and mental health support teams in schools, as well as the Sensory Bus in the Park for families with children and young people with SEND who are electively home educated. This means that these children and young people and their families benefit from the availability and accessibility of services to better meet their holistic needs.

Area leaders are aware that there is work still to do to further develop joint commissioning arrangements in Derby. They now check the impact of their actions carefully. They identify potential barriers and ways to provide the support needed for families. Challenges for parents and carers in navigating the SEND system have led to the joint commissioning of SEND navigators. The navigators

are trained to provide support and guidance for families to help them to access services.

The area has made sufficient progress to improve this area of significant weakness.

- At the initial inspection, inspectors found the following:

There was no overarching co-produced strategy for improving provision for, and outcomes of children and young people with SEND.

At the time of the initial inspection, the leaders' plans to identify and meet the needs of children and young people with SEND were disjointed and poorly shared. There have since been some changes to senior leadership in the area. New recruitment to key roles has helped to strengthen governance of the SEND strategy, establish better joint working between professionals and drive improvements.

There is now a clear strategy for improving provision and outcomes for children and young people with SEND. Leaders have worked effectively with members of Parent Carers Together to co-produce the strategy. It is based on a joint strategic needs assessment of the area.

Parents and carers are now represented across different aspects of the strategy. They inform decision-making and help to shape and drive improvements. The strategy has been designed and created with children and young people with SEND. Priorities identified in the strategy are specifically targeted, with the ambition for all children and young people with SEND to 'live their best lives'. Leaders in education, health and social care now work together. They are open and realistic about the scale of improvements necessary. There is a secure system in place to track and monitor the impact of their actions. They have a strong understanding of the needs of the population of Derby. They know where there are increased levels of need in specific geographical locations within the city, including those arising as a result of the pandemic. Leaders from all services are committed to sustained improvements in the outcomes for children and young people with SEND. They are aware that the impact of improvements has yet to be felt by many families.

The SEND strategic board has comprehensive oversight of services and provision for children and young people with SEND. It closely monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the SEND strategy and the actions taken.

The area has made sufficient progress to improve this area of significant weakness.

- At the initial inspection, inspectors found the following:

There were a number of significant weaknesses in the processes, timeliness, quality and outcomes of EHC plans.

The process, timeliness and quality of EHC plans have improved, but there is still much work to do. Leaders and professionals now realise that, as one school professional put it, 'the plan is like having the child's life in your hands.' Leaders' priorities for continued improvements are appropriately planned. The need to work closely with parents, carers and professionals for education, health and social care is now well understood.

Leaders have introduced a new procedure to make sure that EHC plans are of good quality. This procedure is in the early stages. The launch of a service-wide digital tool to improve the quality and the process of writing and sharing EHC plans was delayed by the pandemic. Work is under way to introduce this tool soon.

There is a system in place to improve the number of plans that are completed within the 20-week timescale. More plans are now completed within 20 weeks, but there are still delays with the drafting and finalising of some plans. The EHC plans that inspectors sampled mostly captured the views, interests and aspirations of children and young people with SEND. Suggested support and strategies are outlined clearly. Outcomes to prepare children and young people with SEND for adulthood are beginning to be seen in some EHC plans. Although the structure of plans has improved since the initial inspection, leaders are aware that inconsistencies remain. Some plans lack analysis of the impact of strategies and additional support. There is no clear description of what a child's needs mean for their everyday life. Healthcare professionals are not routinely given the opportunity to review draft plans to ensure that their advice is accurately reflected. Social care needs are not often documented in plans. It is not clear whether social care assessments of the needs of children and young people with SEND have been offered to families.

There has been considerable investment by leaders to train school staff to understand the graduated response to meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND. This is welcomed by school leaders and is helping school staff to better meet the needs of these children and young people in school. Some special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) in schools are trained to be SEND champions. They support and provide information to school colleagues and parents and carers to better meet the needs of children and young people with SEND in school.

The area has made sufficient progress to improve this area of significant weakness.

- At the initial inspection, inspectors found the following:

There were long-standing systemic issues with waiting times to access a large number of key services.

Children, young people and their families can now access a range of services to assess and support their needs in a timely manner.

The waiting times for all health services has reduced since 2019, with many services provided within the 18-week target. The biggest concern at the time of the initial inspection was the unacceptable time children and young people with SEND had to wait for neurodevelopmental assessment by the area's psychology service. Leaders in DCC, DDCCG and the University Hospitals of Derby and Burton NHS Foundation Trust worked with the Derbyshire Community Health Service NHS Foundation Trust and Parent Carers Together to transform the neurodevelopmental pathway. Waiting times have now reduced from 52 weeks to 31 weeks.

While leaders acknowledge that these waiting times are still too long, they have clear plans in place to reduce waiting times further. Strategies focus on improving access for those children and young people with SEND who need it and embedding the graduated response. The graduated response is enhancing the opportunity for children and young people with SEND to have their needs met more quickly and without the need for a diagnosis.

The area has made sufficient progress to improve this area of significant weakness.

- At the initial inspection, inspectors found the following:

There was poor parental engagement with the plans for local area SEND provision and high levels of parental dissatisfaction.

Parents and carers are now more involved in Derby City's plans for SEND provision. They are represented and contribute to the vision and strategy to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

Relationships between Parent Carers Together, other parent representatives and all partners across the area have significantly improved since the initial inspection. Parents and carers whom inspectors spoke with told us that they felt listened to and that their voice was valued in the development of services. For example, Parent Carers Together challenged the proposed service design of Short Breaks. The development of the service was rethought and effectively co-produced by the partners involved. Parents and carers whom inspectors spoke with outside Parent Carers Together told us positively how services, including accessibility of support and information for children and young people with SEND, were unrecognisable compared with those at the time of the initial inspection.

There is ongoing work by leaders to ensure that more parents and carers understand the SEND strategy and can access the services and support they need. There remains some significant parental dissatisfaction. The online survey for parents and carers received a high number of responses. The responses were mixed in their opinions. This demonstrates that some parents and carers have yet to experience the impact of the improvements made. Leaders have appropriate plans in place to engage further with the wider community of parents and carers and to share more effectively their plans for improvement.

Leaders are more responsive to the challenges that many parents and carers face. For example, SEND navigators were recruited in response to feedback from parents and carers around the challenges of understanding and navigating the SEND system. The SEND navigators have been well received by parents and carers. Leaders are committed to continuing the funding for these posts following the evaluation and adaptation of the pilot scheme.

The area has made sufficient progress to improve this area of significant weakness.

As the area has made sufficient progress in addressing all the significant weaknesses, the formal quarterly support and challenge visits from the Department for Education (DfE) and NHS England and NHS Improvement will cease.

Yours sincerely

Stephanie Innes-Taylor
Her Majesty’s Inspector

Ofsted	Care Quality Commission
Katrina Gueli, HMI Regional Director	Mani Hussain Deputy Chief Inspector, Primary Medical Services, Children Health and Justice
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cc: Department for Education
 Clinical Commissioning Group
 Director of Public Health for the area
 Department of Health and Social Care
 NHS England