

# Area SEND inspections: framework and handbook

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The framework and handbook for inspecting local area arrangements for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities in England, under section 20 of the Children Act 2004.

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**Published:** June 2022

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## Introduction

1. This document sets out the framework and handbook for inspecting local area arrangements for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It was devised jointly by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) for use from 2023, and will be periodically reviewed and amended.
2. The document has 2 parts:
  - **The area SEND inspection framework** – the framework sets out the purposes and principles of inspection and the statutory basis, along with the inspection approach, model, frequency and timing
  - **The area SEND inspection handbook** – the handbook sets out the evaluation criteria that inspectors use to make judgements, and examples of the kinds of evidence they gather and activities they carry out to evaluate the local area's arrangements for children and young people with SEND. It includes information about the inspection process before, during and after the inspection
3. These inspections are carried out jointly by Ofsted and the CQC. Inspectors who specialise in education, health and social care will work as a single inspection team.

## Collecting and processing personal information

4. During an inspection, inspectors will gather personal data and information that are necessary to help them evaluate local SEND arrangements. [Ofsted's privacy notice](#) and the [CQC's privacy statement](#) set out what data we collect, what we do with it, how long we keep it and people's rights under data protection legislation.

## The area SEND inspection framework

5. This framework sets out the purposes and principles of inspection and the statutory basis, along with the inspection approach, model, frequency and timing.

## Principles and purpose of inspection

6. The purpose of inspection is to:
  - provide an independent, external evaluation of the effectiveness of the local area partnership's arrangements for children and young people with SEND
  - where appropriate, recommend what the local area partnership should do to improve the arrangements

7. Inspectors will evaluate a range of evidence against the evaluation schedule. They will follow Ofsted and the CQC's published policies and relevant legislation in areas such as safeguarding and equality.
8. Our inspections of local areas:
  - lead to judgements about the impact of the local area partnership's arrangements for children and young people with SEND. This includes an evaluation of the local authority's commissioning and oversight arrangements for all children and young people in alternative provision
  - provide information to help local area partnerships improve their arrangements for children and young people with SEND, and to support improvement of the SEND system as a whole
  - ensure that information on the effectiveness of the local area partnership's SEND arrangements is available to children and young people with SEND and their families, so they can make informed decisions about their education, health and care
  - provide information for the Secretary of State for Education, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, and Parliament about the effectiveness of the local area partnership's SEND arrangements, to enable the government to act, if necessary. This information includes whether local area partnerships are working effectively to improve the experience and outcomes of children and young people with SEND

## **Statutory basis for area SEND inspections**

9. Ofsted and the CQC carry out joint inspections of local areas at the request of the Secretary of State for Education under section 20(1)(a) of the Children Act 2004.<sup>1</sup> At their discretion, they may also carry out monitoring inspections of local areas using the power in section 20(2) of the Children Act 2004.

### **Local area partnership duties**

10. Inspectors assess the extent to which the local area partners are complying with relevant legal duties relating to arrangements for children and young people with SEND, specifically the Children and Families Act 2014 and including the duties set out in the Equality Act 2010 (and where relevant, the Public Sector Equality Duty) and in the Human Rights Act 1998.

## **Overarching approach to inspection**

11. Inspections evaluate how well members of a local area partnership work together to improve the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND.

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<sup>1</sup> Children Act 2004, section 20; <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/section/20>.

12. 'Local area partnership' refers to those responsible for the strategic planning, commissioning, management, delivery and evaluation of arrangements for children and young people with SEND. When evaluating the local area partnership, inspectors focus mainly on how effectively the local authority and clinical commissioning group (CCG) jointly plan, evaluate, and develop services for children and young people with SEND.<sup>2</sup> However, they also consider the duties of other area partners as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014 and described in the SEND code of practice.
13. Inspections evaluate arrangements for all children and young people with SEND aged 0 to 25 covered by the SEND code of practice, including those who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan and those who receive special educational needs (SEN) support. The scope of the inspection covers children and young people who live in the local authority area but attend education settings or receive services outside of the local authority's geographical boundaries.
14. The inspection will consider whether local authorities' approach to commissioning and overseeing alternative provision arrangements for children and young people in the local authority area meets their duties as set out in statutory guidance.<sup>3</sup>

## Inspection model

15. The area SEND framework has been devised to set out the principles for these inspections. Under this framework, we use inspection outcomes, as well as other information that we have, to inform our decisions about the timing and type of inspection.
16. The area SEND inspection system includes:
  - full inspections, which evaluate and report on the impact of the local area partnership's arrangements for children and young people with SEND; we ask all areas to update and publish their strategic plans after a full inspection, and where we have identified areas for priority action we will require publication of a priority action plan (area SEND), in line with Regulations 3 and 4 of the Children Act 2004 (Joint Area Reviews) Regulations 2015
  - monitoring inspections, which evaluate and report on progress in areas where Ofsted and the CQC have identified systemic weaknesses at a full inspection; monitoring inspections may also be carried out at the discretion of Ofsted and the CQC where serious concerns have been identified

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<sup>2</sup> On 1 July 2022, integrated care boards (ICBs) will be legally established, as provided by The Health and Care Act 2022. The framework and handbook will be revised following consultation, to account for the introduction of ICBs.

<sup>3</sup> 'Alternative provision: statutory guidance for local authorities', Department for Education, January 2013; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/alternative-provision>

- annual engagement meetings between Ofsted and the CQC’s representatives and representatives of the local area partnership to review the partnership’s self-evaluation and action plan and discuss what is happening in the area, including any challenges and how leaders are addressing them
  - SEND thematic visits to a sample of areas; these visits aim to investigate a particular aspect of the SEND system in depth, to aggregate insights and share learning nationally
17. Following a full inspection, inspectors will report on the effectiveness of the local area partnership’s arrangements for children and young people with SEND. The report will include:
- the inspection outcome
  - what it is like to be a child or young person with SEND in the local area
  - what the local area partnership is doing well and what needs to be improved
  - recommendations for improvements that the local area partnership should act on
  - whether any areas for priority action have been identified
  - the likely type and timing of the next inspection activity

### Frequency and type of area SEND inspections

18. The frequency and type of inspection activity for areas are based on inspection outcomes. All local areas will receive a full inspection at least once during a 5-year period. However, the frequency and type of inspection activity in any individual local area will be based on previous inspection outcomes and any relevant additional information received by Ofsted and the CQC.
19. We use the intelligence and information we have to inform decisions about how best to inspect each local area partnership. There will be times when concerns arise about a local area partnership. The Ofsted regional director will decide whether to carry out an inspection. The information that informs our scheduling process includes regional conversations between inspectors and the local area partnership, and performance analysis.
20. There are 3 possible full inspection outcomes, leading to different subsequent inspection activity:

<b>Inspection outcome</b>	<b>Subsequent meetings and inspection activities</b>
Local area partnership’s SEND arrangements <b>typically lead to positive experiences and outcomes</b> for children and young people with SEND	Annual engagement conversations Full inspection usually within 5 years

<p>Local area partnership's arrangements <b>lead to inconsistent experiences and outcomes</b> for children and young people with SEND</p>	<p>Annual engagement conversations Full inspection usually within 3 years</p>
<p>There are <b>widespread and/or systemic failings</b> leading to significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND</p>	<p>Annual engagement conversations Submission of priority action plan (area SEND) Monitoring inspection usually within 18 months of the publication of the full inspection report Full reinspection usually within 3 years</p>

21. If we become aware of information that suggests a significant deterioration in performance or a serious concern, Ofsted and the CQC may carry out a monitoring inspection or bring forward an area's full inspection to take place sooner than originally planned.
22. If the local authority in the local area is also receiving monitoring visits under the ['Inspecting local authority children's services' framework](#), there will usually be no more than 3 monitoring visits in total to any local area within a 12-month period.
23. Under the previous area SEND inspection framework, His Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) required local areas identified as having significant weaknesses to produce a written statement of action (WSOA). Local areas with a WSOA that were not revisited under the previous framework will have a full inspection within the first 3 years of the new inspection cycle.
24. New local areas will have a full inspection within 3 years of coming into existence. Any monitoring inspections that were planned for the previous local area or areas will not be carried out.
25. There are other Ofsted and CQC inspections that will involve local area partners. As far as possible, we will take the timing of all these inspections into account when planning the overall inspection schedule.

## The area SEND inspection handbook

26. This handbook sets out how inspectors gather evidence and judge a local area partnership's arrangements for children and young people with SEND. This handbook is primarily a guide for inspectors on how to carry out area SEND inspections. However, we have made it publicly available so that children and young people with SEND, their parents and carers, local area leaders and practitioners, and other organisations, are informed about the processes and procedures of inspection.



27. The handbook balances the need for consistency in inspections with the flexibility required to respond to the individual circumstances of each local area. It should not be regarded as a set of inflexible rules, but as a broad account of inspection procedures.
28. During the inspection, inspectors will visit providers such as early years settings, schools, alternative provision, colleges and specialist services to gather evidence.<sup>4</sup> These providers will not be under inspection; they will remain subject to separate inspection arrangements in line with Ofsted and the CQC's statutory and regulatory duties and powers.
29. This handbook has 4 parts:
- Part 1: The evaluation schedule – the evaluation criteria inspectors use to make their judgements
  - Part 2: How local area partnerships will be inspected – information about the processes before, during and after an inspection
  - Part 3: Monitoring inspections – the purpose and details of monitoring inspections
  - Part 4: Annual engagement meetings – the purpose and details of annual engagement meetings.

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<sup>4</sup> Health services for children and young people with SEND are provided through acute and community services, and Mental Health Trusts and other non-NHS providers. The majority of services are termed as community services. These include speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy, orthotics, community and specialist nursing, and medical care and interventions. Children and young people with SEND also use children and young people's mental health services (community and inpatient) and may access health and justice services and secure estates. Children and young people with SEND may also need access to specialist equipment, wheelchairs, continence supplies and assistive technology.

## Part 1: The evaluation schedule – how we will judge local areas

30. Ofsted and the CQC have identified the features of effective local SEND arrangements from research, inspection evidence and consultation with children, young people, families, leaders and practitioners. We have used these features to create the evaluation criteria. Inspectors will use the evaluation criteria to judge the effectiveness of the local area partnership's SEND arrangements and their impact on the experiences and outcomes of children and young people.
31. Inspectors will evaluate the impact of the local area partnership's SEND arrangements on the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND, including the extent to which:
- children and young people's needs are identified accurately and assessed in a timely and effective way
  - children, young people and their families participate in decision-making about their individual plans and support
  - children and young people receive the right help at the right time
  - children and young people are well prepared for their next steps, and achieve strong outcomes
  - children and young people are valued, visible and included in their communities.
32. Inspectors will evaluate how the local area partners work together to plan, evaluate and develop the SEND system, including the extent to which:
- leaders are ambitious for children and young people with SEND
  - leaders actively engage and work with children, young people and families
  - leaders have an accurate, shared understanding of the needs of children and young people in their local area
  - leaders commission services and provision to meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people, including commissioning arrangements for children and young people in alternative provision
  - leaders evaluate services and make improvements
  - leaders create an environment in which effective practice and multi-agency working can flourish
33. The evaluation schedule is not exhaustive. In applying it, inspectors will use their professional judgement, together with the instructions and guidance in [part 2](#).

34. The evaluation schedule is a guide for inspectors. It can also support the local area partnership in its self-evaluation and ongoing improvement activities.

## Approach to judgements

35. Following a full inspection, inspectors will make an overall summary judgement about the local area partnership. This judgement reflects the inspectors' evaluation of the impact of the local area partnership's arrangements on the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND.
36. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to decide how much evidence they need to gather against each of the evaluation criteria, following lines of enquiry as they emerge, to reach the final inspection outcome.

## Inspection outcomes

37. There are 3 inspection outcomes:

- - The local area partnership's arrangements **typically lead to positive experiences and outcomes** for children and young people with SEND.
  - The next area SEND inspection will be within approximately 5 years.
  - Ofsted and the CQC ask that the local area partnership updates and publishes its strategic plan based on the recommendations set out in this report.
- 2
  - The local area partnership's arrangements **lead to inconsistent experiences and outcomes** for children and young people with SEND. The local area partnership must work jointly to make improvements.
  - The next area SEND inspection will be within approximately 3 years.
  - Ofsted and the CQC ask that the local area partnership updates and publishes its strategic plan based on the recommendations set out in this report.
- 3
  - There are **widespread and/or systemic failings** leading to significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND, which the local area partnership must address urgently.

38. A monitoring inspection will be carried out within approximately 18 months. The next full inspection will be within approximately 3 years.

39. HMCI requires the local area partnership to prepare and submit a priority action plan (area SEND) to address the identified areas for priority action.

*Reaching a judgement that the local area partnership's arrangements typically lead to positive experiences and outcomes*

40. Inspectors will make this judgement if, having gathered and evaluated evidence using the evaluation criteria, they find that typically:
- children and young people are achieving strong outcomes, and
  - children and young people's experiences of their education, health and care are positive

*Reaching a judgement that the local area partnership's arrangements lead to inconsistent experiences and outcomes*

41. Inspectors will make this judgement if:
- either of the points in relation to the experiences and outcomes of children and young people in paragraph 40 are generally not met, and
  - there are no areas for priority action.

*Reaching a judgement that there are widespread and/or systemic concerns*

42. Inspectors will make this judgement when:
- they have identified one or more areas for priority action. Areas for priority action will be identified when there are significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people. Priority actions may result from particular or localised failings that have a significant impact on the experiences and outcomes of children and young people, or from widespread or systemic failings or deficits.

## **Experiences and outcomes**

43. The evaluation criteria describe the features of effective SEND arrangements. Inspectors will judge the impact of the local area partnership's SEND arrangements through the experiences and outcomes of children and young people. The criteria include children and young people with EHC plans and those who have SEN support.
44. Inspectors will evaluate outcomes as described in the SEND code of practice, including the individual outcomes that children and young people with SEND have told us are important to them. Inspectors will assess whether outcomes are sufficiently ambitious and reflect high expectations. This includes whether children and young people with SEND:
- have developed the knowledge, skills and behaviours to gain employment or meaningful occupation, move on to further or higher education, and live as healthily and as independently as possible
  - have developed their self-esteem and resilience

- have made friends, and feel safe, valued and visible in their local communities
45. Inspectors will evaluate individual outcomes and strategic outcomes across the local area. Strategic outcomes are those outcomes that partnership leaders want to see for all children and young people in their local area. These will be different depending on children and young people's needs and aspirations in each local area. However, themes are likely to include health and well-being, communication, independence, positive relationships, community participation and moving into further and higher education and employment.
46. When evaluating experiences, inspectors will assess whether children and young people's experiences of education, health and care in their local area are positive, and why. They will evaluate whether children and young people with SEND:
- have gained from stable, supportive relationships and environments
  - have had the opportunity to participate in community activities to widen their understanding of the opportunities available to them now and in their future
  - have participated in decision-making about their own plans and support
  - have had support provided when they have needed it, and feel supported and believe that adults understand and advocate for them.
47. Inspectors will also seek to understand how children and young people have been supported through any adverse experiences they may have had.
48. Inspectors will not emphasise one type of evidence above others. Inspectors will gather evidence that is balanced and connected, to form a picture of the typical experiences and outcomes of children and young people and how the local area partnership's SEND arrangements have led to these.

## The evaluation criteria

49. This section provides detail about what inspectors will consider when evaluating against each criterion.
50. The evaluation criteria apply across education, health and care, and to all children and young people with SEND aged 0 to 25 covered by the SEND code of practice, including those receiving SEN support and those with EHC plans.
51. Inspectors will evaluate the local authority's commissioning and oversight of alternative provision for all children and young people who attend, not only those with SEND.

## **Children and young people's needs are identified accurately and assessed in a timely and effective way**

52. Inspectors will take account of the extent to which:

- children and young people are accurately identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities
- children and young people's needs are identified in a timely way, so as to prevent needs from escalating
- practitioners assess the strengths and determine the aspirations of the child or young person alongside their individual needs
- the criteria for carrying out assessments of need and for accessing services and support are understood, and the application of these criteria improves outcomes
- timely referrals are made to other services and agencies, where necessary.

## **Children, young people and their families participate in decision-making about their individual plans and support**

53. Inspectors will take account of the extent to which:

- children and young people access impartial information, advice and support that enable them to make informed choices about their future
- children, young people and families are supported to understand their rights, make choices and contribute to decision-making about their plans and support
- children and young people understand their plans and support, including intended outcomes, and why some changes are not possible.

## **Children and young people receive the right help and support at the right time**

54. Inspectors will take account of the extent to which:

- plans are developed and support is provided in a timely way, and meet children and young people's needs
- children and young people receive support based on their identified needs when they are awaiting assessment
- plans and support are coordinated within and, where necessary, across providers and services, and are based on a shared understanding of the child or young person.
- plans and support are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect changes in children and young people's skills, independence, understanding and other factors in their lives, including reduced support in line with reduced need where appropriate

- the wider needs of the child or young person's family are considered, and barriers to learning and participation are addressed.

### **Children and young people are well prepared for their next steps and achieve strong outcomes**

55. Inspectors will take account of the extent to which:

- the outcomes that are the most important to children, young people and their parents and carers are understood and planned for
- support and plans reflect children and young people's ambitions, and extend beyond required levels of support (such as the number of hours of support from a particular service) to focus on the planned outcome
- children and young people are supported before and during any point of transition, including when they will no longer be eligible for a service
- from an early age, children and young people develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours necessary to prepare for greater independence and adulthood, including in the areas of further and higher education, employment, more independent living, good health, positive relationships and participation in society.

### **Children and young people with SEND are valued, visible and included in their communities**

56. Inspectors will take account of the extent to which:

- children and young people and parents and carers understand what community activities are available, and have the right support to take part
- children and young people are supported to participate, where appropriate, in activities, and to make friends and develop positive relationships
- children and young people are supported to develop their confidence, resilience and knowledge, so that they can participate in universal and specialist activities as appropriate.

### **Leaders are ambitious for children and young people with SEND**

57. Inspectors will take account of the extent to which:

- leaders have an ambitious strategy that defines the shared outcomes they will work collectively to achieve for all children and young people with SEND, and they embed an aspirational culture of high expectations and quality across services and provision.
- leaders understand their responsibilities and accountabilities, including their statutory duties and their individual responsibilities in the wider area strategy

- delegated responsibilities are made in line with leaders' statutory duties and there is clear oversight of these activities
- processes for making decisions are structured so that the leaders responsible can swiftly agree to the changes that are required to improve services
- leaders challenge themselves and each other to improve experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND

### **Leaders actively engage and work with children, young people and families**

58. Inspectors will take account of the extent to which:

- leaders consider the specific needs of groups of children and young people with SEND, and how best to engage them in co-production
- leaders ensure that decisions relating to services are appropriately shaped by children and young people's needs, experiences, ambitions and outcomes
- leaders give feedback to children, young people and parents on changes they have made to their area's services, and explain where change is not possible and why.

### **Leaders have an accurate, shared understanding of the needs of children and young people in their local area**

59. Inspectors will take account of the extent to which:

- leaders gather accurate, timely information about children and young people with SEND in their local area and monitor the changing needs of the population, including using the perspectives of children, young people and families
- leaders understand the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND in their area; their backgrounds and identities, including any barriers to them accessing support; and their needs and strengths
- leaders share information across education, care and health services so they can learn from different perspectives and approaches

### **Leaders commission services and provision to meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people**

60. Inspectors will take account of the extent to which:

- services and systems have been designed around the needs of children and young people, and are informed by evidence of what works in achieving good outcomes



- joint commissioning arrangements enable partners to make best use of all the resources available to improve outcomes for children and young people in the most efficient, effective, equitable and sustainable way
- joint commissioning arrangements meet the local area's statutory responsibilities for identifying, assessing and meeting needs
- leaders understand that children and young people with SEND may be more vulnerable to abuse, and ensure that this is carefully considered when commissioning and evaluating services
- the local authority identifies children and young people's needs accurately and arranges suitable full-time educational provision to meet the needs of children or young people who require alternative provision as early as possible, for example, ensuring that full-time education for children and young people who have been excluded begins no later than the sixth day of the exclusion
- the local authority ensures that there are intervention plans for each child and young person in alternative provision, including clear objectives and plans for their next steps, such as returning to mainstream education

### **Leaders evaluate services and make improvements**

61. Inspectors will take account of the extent to which:

- leaders jointly evaluate whether their services and provision are improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND, not only whether children and young people have received the services
- leaders monitor whether there are sufficient services and provision to meet the needs and aspirations of the children and young people in their area and take appropriate action as a result
- leaders use information from a range of sources in their evaluation, including feedback from representative groups, children and young people using services and data relating to outcomes to improve their services and provision
- leaders have established clear processes to enable services and providers to evaluate and improve their provision regularly
- the local authority evaluates whether its commissioned alternative provisions are improving outcomes for children and young people, and takes appropriate action
- the local authority maintains robust oversight arrangements for alternative provision it commissions, including oversight of each alternative provision's safety and suitability, and in particular oversight of alternative providers that are not registered as schools

## **Leaders create an environment for effective practice and multi-agency working to flourish**

62. Inspectors will take account of the extent to which:

- processes and systems are set up to support practitioners to work together and share appropriate information in a timely manner, including robust systems for identifying and responding to risks to children and young people with SEND
- leaders ensure that practitioners are clear on their individual roles and how they can best work together to improve outcomes for children and young people
- leaders ensure that practitioners have the appropriate skills to understand children and young people's needs and aspirations, and to create an inclusive environment
- leaders encourage practitioners working together to focus on the child or young person, identifying alternative solutions when existing options do not meet needs and aspirations effectively
- leaders ensure that practitioners working with children and young people with SEND have the right knowledge and skills to reduce the risk of harm, and understand that children and young people with SEND may be more vulnerable to abuse, neglect and exploitation

### **Alternative provision**

63. Section 19 of the Education Act 1996 places a duty on local authorities to arrange alternative educational provision in school or elsewhere 'for pupils who, because of exclusion, illness or other reasons, would not otherwise receive suitable education'.<sup>5</sup> The education provided in alternative provision under section 19 should be full time (unless medical needs make this impossible) and suitable for the child, taking account of their age, ability and any special educational needs they may have.

64. When evaluating the local authority's commissioning and oversight of alternative provision, inspectors will:

- meet with local authority leaders to understand their strategy for the commissioning and oversight of alternative provision
- review information about the local authority's arrangements for alternative provision held by Ofsted and provided by the local authority
- consider whether the local authority's use of unregistered and online provision is lawful and appropriate to children and young people's needs.

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<sup>5</sup> 'Alternative provision: statutory guidance for local authorities', Department for Education, January 2013; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/alternative-provision>

## Liberty Protection Safeguards

65. The government is consulting on changes to the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and implementation of the Liberty Protection Safeguards until 7 July 2022.<sup>6</sup> Following the outcome of the consultation, the area SEND inspection framework and handbook may be updated to include an approach to monitoring and reporting on Liberty Protection Safeguards in area SEND inspections.

## Safeguarding

66. Safeguarding is not a specific judgement area, but inspectors will always consider it as part of any inspection activity. Inspectors will look at how well children and young people are helped and protected so that they are kept safe. Inspectors will follow established procedures if they receive information during the inspection that raises concerns about the safeguarding of children or young people. This includes following up concerns with the appropriate leaders in the local area.
67. 'Inspecting safeguarding in early years, education and skills settings' should be read alongside this guidance. It sets out the approach inspectors should take to inspecting safeguarding. It is essential that inspectors, local area partners, and individual providers are also familiar with, and follow, statutory guidance on safeguarding:
- 'Keeping children safe in education: statutory guidance for schools and colleges'<sup>7</sup>
  - 'Working together to safeguard children 2018'.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> 'Changes to the MCA Code of Practice and implementation of the LPS', Department of Health and Social Care, Ministry of Justice, Department for Education, and Welsh Government, March 2022; <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/changes-to-the-mca-code-of-practice-and-implementation-of-the-lps>.

<sup>7</sup> 'Keeping children safe in education', Department for Education, 2015; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>.

<sup>8</sup> 'Working together to safeguard children', Department for Education, 2018; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>.

## **Part 2: How local area partnerships' provision for children and young people with SEND will be inspected**

68. This part sets out the methodology for full inspections.

### **How local areas are selected for inspection**

69. All local areas will have a full inspection at least once during a 5-year period. The type and timing of the inspection will be based on the area's previous inspection outcomes, as set out in paragraphs 18 and 20 of the framework. The selection of local areas to be inspected will, wherever possible, take account of the timing of other Ofsted and CQC inspection activity. Inspections will usually take place during school term time.
70. Where intelligence suggests that there are concerns about arrangements for children and young people with SEND in a particular local area, we may adapt the schedule and inspect that local area earlier than originally planned.

### **Composition of the inspection team**

71. The inspection team will be led by one of His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) from Ofsted, and will include Children's Services Inspectors from the CQC, and education and social care inspectors from Ofsted.
72. Ofsted and the CQC may vary the composition and size of the inspection team for a local area. We base this decision on several factors, including the complexity of the local SEND system, and the size and nature of the geographical area.
73. At times, other Ofsted and the CQC inspectors may visit on site, to shadow the work of the inspection team. This is done for training, development and quality assurance purposes only. Any activities carried out by these inspectors will not form part of the evidence gathered by the inspection team or contribute in any way to the team's judgement.

### **Overview of the inspection**

74. Area SEND full inspections will follow the structure set out below. The lead inspector will provide a detailed timeline when they notify leaders in the local area of the inspection.
75. Inspection activities are structured to enable inspectors to draw together evidence from across education, health and care services and form a connection between the different findings to reach an inspection outcome. Inspectors will use their evaluation of children and young people's experiences and outcomes to build a picture of the impact of the local area's SEND arrangements.

## Activities in week 1

- Inspectors notify the local leaders of the inspection 10 working days before the fieldwork begins. This will usually be on a Monday, but may be in the previous week if there is a bank holiday in week 1 or 2 of the inspection.
- Inspectors request information to support the inspection (this information is set out in [Annex A](#) of this guidance).
- Inspectors and local leaders hold a set-up discussion (inspectors are off site).
- The local area partnership distributes surveys for children and young people with SEND, parents and carers, and practitioners (please see paragraph 83 for additional information).
- The area partnership shares information to support the inspection.
- Inspectors select some children and young people and ask the local partnership to set up tracking meetings.
- Inspectors carry out planning and pre-inspection analysis.

## Activities in week 2

- Inspectors work with the local area partnership to agree an inspection timetable.
- Inspectors hold tracking meetings.
- Inspectors carry out pre-inspection analysis and review the information set out in [Annex A](#).
- Inspectors may meet virtually with local leaders, staff, representative groups and stakeholders.

## Activities in week 3

- On-site evidence gathering.
- Inspection findings fed back to the local area partnership.

## Pre-inspection activity

76. Ofsted and CQC inspectors will review relevant information held by the inspectorates about the local area arrangements for children and young people with SEND.

## Week 1: notification, set-up and information request

### Notification

77. On day 1 (10 working days before the fieldwork), inspectors will contact the relevant leaders in the local area to notify them of the inspection:

- Ofsted will contact the director of children’s services (DCS)
  - CQC will notify the chief executive of the CCG.<sup>9</sup>
78. Each local area will be asked to nominate a representative – a local area nominated officer (LANO) – who will act as a single point of contact on behalf of all local agencies throughout the inspection. Their role will be to liaise with the lead HMI throughout the inspection, so that inspection activities can be coordinated effectively.
79. Ofsted and the CQC will only defer the inspection of a local area in exceptional circumstances. If a local area partnership has a concern about the timing of an inspection, it may submit a deferral request in line with [Ofsted’s deferral policy](#).

### Set-up discussion

80. Once the inspection has been confirmed, the lead inspector and the CQC inspector will make an extended telephone call to the LANO. The purpose of this call is to:
- discuss the arrangements for the inspection, including the timetable of activities, arrangements for talking to children and young people and families, the key officers and representatives to involve in specific meetings, and arrangements for giving regular feedback and having discussions regarding the emerging findings of the inspection
  - discuss the arrangements for distributing the surveys for children and young people, parents and carers, and practitioners
  - discuss the information requested for the inspection ([Annex A](#))
  - ask that the key stakeholders involved in arrangements for children and young people with SEND and the commissioning of alternative provision are made aware of the inspections, including providers, services and parents and carers.

### Information request (Annex A)

81. [Annex A](#) sets out the information inspectors will request and the timeline for the local area partnership to share it. The information includes:
- information about the local area partnership’s strategy and commissioning arrangements for children and young people with SEND
  - information about the local authority’s commissioning arrangements for alternative provision.

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<sup>9</sup> On 1 July 2022, integrated care boards (ICBs) will be legally established, as provided by The Health and Care Act 2022. The framework and handbook will be revised following consultation to account for the introduction of ICBs.

- child-level data, which inspectors will use to select the children whose experiences they will evaluate
  - information about providers and services (including alternative education providers)
82. Inspectors may ask for additional information not set out in [Annex A](#), and may agree to look at additional information provided by the area partners. Any additional information must be:
- necessary for an accurate understanding of children and young people’s experiences and outcomes in relation to the scope of the inspection
  - not already available through the request in Annex A

### **Arrangements for surveys**

83. Inspectors will share 3 surveys: one for children and young people with SEND, one for parents and carers, and one for practitioners. The surveys will go live on the day the local area is notified of the inspection. The questions have been developed with Parent Carer Forums, children and young people’s groups and local area leaders and practitioners. Local area partnerships should make arrangements for surveys to be sent to all children and young people with SEND, their parents and carers, and made available to all settings and services working with children and young people with SEND.
84. The 3 surveys will remain live for 6 working days from the notification day. Inspectors will ensure that they work with the local area partnership to consider accessibility issues, including making paper copies available on request.

### **Selecting children and young people for tracking meetings**

85. During week 1, inspectors will select at least 6 children and young people to be involved in tracking meetings. These are meetings with children and young people, their parents or carers (if appropriate) and the practitioners who are directly involved with them. The meetings are for inspectors to hear directly about children and young people’s experiences and outcomes. Tracking meetings are intended to support inspectors to identify key lines of enquiry that they will then test through other inspection activities, such as cross-area surveys, meetings with stakeholders and sampling of additional children and young people’s cases across education, health and care settings.
86. When selecting the children and young people to track, inspectors will take into account any lines of enquiry, the demographic make-up of the local area, including protected characteristics defined by the Equality Act 2010, and any contextual issues specific to the local area. They will choose children and young people with a range of needs, who access a range of services, and who are at different stages in their involvement with health and social care services.

87. Inspectors will usually include at least one child or young person who is studying in alternative provision and at least 2 children who are receiving SEN support.
88. Once children and young people have been selected, the LANO will:
- arrange for a practitioner who knows the child or young person well to approach them, and their parents or carers, for their agreement to be involved
  - share information about the child or young person as outlined in [Annex A](#)
  - arrange tracking meetings with children and young people, their parents and carers
  - arrange a multi-disciplinary tracking meeting with practitioners who work with the child or young person.

## **Week 2: off-site analysis and creating an on-site timetable**

### **Off-site analysis**

89. Inspectors will review the information requested from the local area partners outlined in [Annex A](#). Any evidence submitted should be a part of the local area partners' business as usual, and not produced solely for inspection.

### **Creating the inspection timetable**

90. The Ofsted lead inspector will coordinate the creation of a timetable for gathering evidence off site in week 2, and on site in week 3. They will ask the lead inspector from the CQC to liaise with the CCG to help create the timetable. This will include arrangements for meeting with practitioners, managers and leaders to discuss their work. Inspectors will also make arrangements for keep-in-touch and feedback meetings to share inspectors' findings.
91. When creating the timetable, the Ofsted lead inspector will:
- consider which activities should be carried out in person, and which should be carried out by phone or video call
  - include enough time for inspectors to travel between appointments
  - include time for inspectors to review and analyse their evidence, individually and together
  - ensure that the timetable is flexible enough to be changed in response to emerging findings
  - work with the LANO to ensure that local leaders and practitioners are aware of the timetable and any changes to it.
92. Inspectors will meet during week 2 to discuss the plan for the inspection and any matters arising from their off-site analysis.



## **Weeks 2 and 3: discussions with children, young people, parents and carers, and tracking meetings**

93. Discussions with children and young people, and parents and carers, and tracking meetings will take place off site in week 2, and on site in week 3. The lead inspector will agree the timetable of activities with the LANO.

### **Discussions with children and young people**

94. Inspectors will meet with groups of children and young people to:
- understand their experiences and outcomes
  - identify any common themes (lines of enquiry) for the inspection
  - discuss their views on effective practice and how the local area partnership could improve its arrangements for children and young people with SEND
95. Inspectors will meet with one group of children and young people at the start of the inspection. They will also meet with children and young people as part of the tracking meetings. Inspectors may arrange to meet with additional children and young people to discuss relevant lines of enquiry, discuss their individual experiences or seek their views on a specific aspect of the local area's arrangements.

### **Discussions with parents and carers**

96. Inspectors will meet remotely with representatives from the Parent Carer Forum or other representative groups of parents and carers at the start of the inspection. This is to:
- identify any common themes (lines of enquiry) for the inspection
  - discuss their views on effective practice and how the local area partnership could improve its arrangements for children and young people with SEND
97. Inspectors will also meet with parents and carers during the inspection to:
- understand the impact on their child of the local area's SEND arrangements
  - understand the impact on the wider family
  - identify effective practice and how arrangements could be improved
  - gain more information about specific lines of enquiry.

### **Tracking meetings with children, young people, parents and carers**

98. Inspectors will use tracking meetings to gather evidence of the impact of the local area partnership's strategy and commissioning on individual children and young people with SEND. Tracking meetings enable inspectors to evaluate specific children and young people's experiences and journeys through the SEND system. Inspectors will look at the impact of the local area's SEND

arrangements on the experiences and outcomes of children and young people, including how decisions have been made, how children, young people and their families have been involved and whether they have received the right help at the right time. Tracking meetings will help inspectors to identify lines of enquiry they wish to review through the range of inspection activities.

99. Inspectors will discuss the child or young person's experiences with them. These conversations will be held either by phone or in person, in an environment and format which the child or young person feels most comfortable with. Inspectors may also discuss children and young people's experiences with their parents and/or carers, either together with or separately from their child, depending on the family's preferences.

### **Multi-agency tracking meetings with practitioners**

100. Inspectors will have a multi-agency discussion with the child or young person's health, care and education professionals, and any other practitioners involved. Where relevant, this may include providers of commissioned services (for example, practitioners working directly with the child or young person at a children's home or through children and young people's mental health services) or other services that may be relevant to understanding the child or young person's experience. The lead inspector will ask the LANO to ensure that the practitioners involved in the discussion include any staff who coordinate the child or young person's overall plan of support, or who have the greatest awareness of it.
101. Inspectors may discuss children and young people's records with practitioners, using their knowledge of the child or young person, file structure and recording systems. They may also consider any case supervision notes. Where case records are held wholly or partly electronically, the service should arrange for identified inspectors to have secure access to the electronic system.
102. Inspectors will base their findings on contemporary practice that has an impact on the child or young person's current situation. However, they will also review some historical information to understand the child or young person's journey.

### **Week 3: sampling visits**

103. Inspectors will visit a number of providers and services across education, health and care to review the experiences of a wider group of children and young people in line with their specific lines of enquiry. These lines of enquiry may have been identified from tracking meetings, meetings with parents and carers, documentation or other sources of evidence.
104. These sampling visits enable inspectors to review the impact of the local area partnership's arrangements on a larger group of children and young people with SEND. The visits enable inspectors to assess the impact of arrangements on more children and young people, but in less depth than in tracking

meetings. Inspectors will evaluate children and young people's experiences and outcomes by reviewing documents and talking to practitioners.

105. Ofsted and the CQC will select providers and services to visit, and will discuss their suitability with the LANO. The lead HMI will provide the LANO with notification letters to send to the chosen education, health and care providers. The LANO will set up the visits and arrangements for case sampling.
106. During sampling visits, inspectors will visit a specific provider or service and ask for information about individual children and young people who use that provider. These may include children and young people who have a specific need, who are receiving a specific service and/or who are at a particular point in their care or education.
107. Once inspectors have identified a cohort of children and young people, they will look at any documents relating to them and discuss their experiences with the practitioners in that provision or service. Inspectors may also consider any case supervision notes. Where case records are held wholly or partly electronically, the provider should arrange for identified inspectors to have secure access to the electronic system.
108. Inspectors sampling in education settings will include children and young people receiving SEN support. This may include meeting children and young people and, if appropriate, scrutinising files and talking to practitioners. These visits may include settings such as nurseries, schools, colleges, alternative provision and specialist services. The scope of the inspection covers children and young people who live in the local authority area. However, it does not cover those who live in other areas, but attend an education setting within the local authority's boundaries.
109. Inspectors sampling in health providers and services will gather evidence of the assessment, intervention and transition stages of health support. These visits will include universal, targeted and specialist health teams, such as speech and language therapy services and children and young people's mental health teams.
110. Inspectors sampling in social care will consider the identification, assessment, intervention and transition stages of social care support. This may include visits to services such as the disabled children's team, early intervention support and adult social care teams.
111. Findings will be based on contemporary practice, and on practice that has an impact on the child or young person's current situation. However, inspectors will read some historical information about the children and young people in the group to understand each child's journey.

### **Week 3: inspection team meetings**

112. The inspection team will meet at different points during the 5 on-site days, and remotely during the 2 working days before being on site. In particular, the team should, as far as is practicable, meet each day to discuss and record emerging findings and ensure that the lead HMI has the most recent evaluative information to feed back to the LANO.
113. The inspection team will record important points from, and the outcomes of, all team meetings. Each inspector will retain a record of a cumulative summary of evidence and analysis, which captures their key findings and evaluative summary as the inspection progresses.
114. During the final team meeting, inspectors will summarise the key evidence and make final evaluative judgements. The main points for feedback to the local area partners will be recorded as the meeting progresses, including the overall inspection outcome, and strengths and recommendations for improvement.

### **Week 3: meetings with leaders**

#### **Initial on-site meeting with leaders**

115. The lead HMI and the CQC inspector should meet with the LANO and other colleagues, as agreed by the lead HMI and the LANO, on the first day of on-site activity. This first meeting is likely to include the following people:
- the DCS and elected members with specific responsibilities for SEND
  - the CCG representative
  - representatives of the Parent Carer Forum
  - senior managers responsible for the strategic development and operational management of education, health and social care provision for children and young people with SEND
  - senior local authority managers responsible for the commissioning and oversight of alternative provision
  - representatives of the local area's education, health and care providers and services
116. At this first meeting with area leaders, the lead HMI will:
- introduce the inspection team
  - make arrangements for ongoing feedback
  - confirm the inspection arrangements
117. The lead HMI and the LANO will arrange a second meeting with leaders on the first day on site, to review the local area's strategy, self-evaluation and associated action plans.

## Keep-in-touch meetings

118. The lead HMI will establish keep-in-touch meetings at key points during the inspection. This will enable the inspection team to feed back to the DCS, the CCG representative and the LANO on any emerging lines of enquiry, identify any additional evidence required, answer any questions and make changes to the timetable if necessary.
119. The local area partnership is responsible for providing evidence of the impact of its arrangements for children and young people with SEND. This includes the local area partnership providing appropriate information and data, such as any analysis of the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND in its local area. It also includes opportunities to meet relevant managers and other local area representatives.
120. The local authority is responsible for providing evidence of its arrangements for commissioning and overseeing alternative educational provision for children in its area.
121. The lead HMI may also arrange additional meetings with leaders and/or practitioners throughout the on-site inspection. This will enable inspectors to discuss specific lines of enquiry or information that they have gathered through tracking meetings or sampling visits.

## The feedback meeting

122. The inspection concludes with a final feedback meeting attended by the LANO and representatives of the local area. The lead inspector will liaise with the DCS and the CCG representative, through the LANO, to agree who attends this meeting. However, it is likely that the attendees will include:
- the LANO
  - the DCS and elected members with responsibility for SEND from the local authority
  - the CCG representative
  - the Parent Carer Forum representatives
123. During the final feedback meeting, the lead HMI will ensure that all attendees are clear:
- on inspectors' evaluation of the local area partnership's effectiveness in improving the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND
  - about areas of significant concern that will result in further monitoring and the requirement for a priority action plan (area SEND)
  - the inspection outcome and resulting time frame for the next inspection activity

- that any safeguarding concerns identified during the inspection have already been fed back to senior leaders and/or acted on
- that all feedback remains confidential to those present at the meeting, until the report is published; that, on receiving the draft report, the local area partnership must ensure that the report remains restricted and confidential to the relevant senior personnel; and that the information it contains is not, under any circumstances, to be shared with a third party or published

## After the inspection

### Arrangements for publishing the report

124. The lead inspector is responsible for writing the inspection report and submitting the evidence to Ofsted shortly after the inspection ends. Findings and inspection outcomes are reached jointly by the inspection team. The lead inspector is responsible for writing the report, with contributions from the full inspection team across education, health and care.
125. The text of the report should explain the judgements and reflect the evidence. The findings should be consistent with the feedback given to the local area at the end of the inspection, but are likely to be a succinct account.
126. Inspection reports will be quality assured before we send a draft to the local area. In most circumstances, the local area will receive the draft report within 14 working days of the end of the inspection. The draft report is restricted and confidential to the relevant personnel, and should not be shared more widely or published.
127. The local area has 10 working days to comment on the draft report, inspection process and findings. We will consider all comments. We will respond to them when we share the final report with the local area within 30 working days of the end of the inspection.
128. If the local area wishes to make a formal complaint, it has 5 working days after we have shared the final report with it to do so. If a complaint is not submitted within 5 working days, we will normally publish the report on our [reports website](#) 3 working days later. If a complaint has been submitted, the publication of the report may be delayed.
129. Once a local area has received its final report, relevant recipients of the report are required to publish it on their organisation's website and supply a copy to a member of the public, on demand, for a reasonable charge.<sup>10</sup> The local area partnership should ensure that the Parent Carer Forum receives a copy of the report.

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<sup>10</sup> The Children Act 2004 (Joint Area Reviews) Regulations 2015;  
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/1792/regulation/3/made>.

130. As required by The Children Act 2004 (Joint Area Reviews) Regulations 2015, Ofsted and the CQC will disseminate the report to:
- the Secretary of State for Education
  - the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
  - the local authority for the area inspected
  - the principal authority, if HMCI has determined that the principal authority is different from the local authority
  - any other people or organisations HMCI considers appropriate for the nature of the inspection
131. In all cases, the inspection process should not be treated as complete until all inspection activity has been carried out and the final version of the inspection report has been sent to the local area.
132. The evidence base for the inspection must be retained in line with Ofsted's retention and disposal policy. This is normally for 6 years from when the report is published. We may decide that retaining it for longer is warranted for research purposes. The evidence base for the CQC will also be retained in line with the CQC's retention and disposal policy.
133. The local area partnership is requested to update and publish its strategic plan, which should include the actions it is taking in response to the recommendations made in the inspection report. If the local area partnership has widespread and/or systemic failings leading to significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND, then it will be expected to develop and publish a priority action plan (area SEND), which should be submitted to both Ofsted and the CQC. All strategic plans and priority action plans (area SEND) should be published in a way which ensures that they are accessible to children and young people with SEND, and their parents and carers.

## Quality assurance and complaints

### Quality assurance

134. All inspectors are responsible for the quality of their work. The lead inspector must ensure that inspections are carried out in accordance with the principles of inspection and [the Ofsted code of conduct](#).
135. We monitor the quality of inspections through a range of formal processes, and HMI/Senior HMI may be on site in some local areas, or may monitor remotely, to quality assure inspections. We may also evaluate the quality of an inspection evidence base. The lead inspector will be responsible for giving team inspectors feedback on the quality of their work and their conduct.

136. Additionally, quality assurance inspectors from the CQC will either join inspectors on site or provide off-site quality assurance of SEND inspection activity.
137. All local areas are invited to take part in a voluntary post-inspection survey in order to contribute to our ongoing improvement of our inspection work. The link to this survey is provided when the local area receives the final copy of its inspection report.

### **Handling concerns and complaints**

138. The great majority of our work is carried out smoothly and without incident. If concerns do arise during the inspection, they should be raised with the lead inspector as soon as possible in order to resolve issues before the inspection is completed. Any concerns raised, and actions taken, will be recorded in the inspection evidence.
139. If it is not possible to resolve concerns during the inspection or through submitting comments in response to the draft report, the local area partnership may wish to lodge a formal complaint on receiving the final report. The lead inspector will ensure that the local area is informed that it is able to make a formal complaint, and that [information about how to complain](#) is available on GOV.UK.

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## Part 3: Monitoring inspections

140. When a local area is given a judgement of outcome 3 and required to produce a priority action plan (area SEND) following a full inspection, Ofsted and the CQC will carry out a monitoring inspection around 18 months after the initial inspection.
141. The purpose of the monitoring inspection is to assess the extent to which the local area partners are taking effective action to address the urgent priorities for improvement set out in the inspection report.
142. Inspectors will carry out activities that are similar to those carried out during full inspections, such as discussions with leaders; sampling visits to education, healthcare and social care providers; and holding meetings with children and young people, parents and carers, and professionals. Depending on the areas of focus, this may include tracking meetings and surveys of children and young people, parents and carers, and practitioners.
143. However, inspectors will tailor their enquiries and evidence gathering to focus on the issues that the area was required to address in the priority action plan (area SEND). If inspectors identify any new significant weaknesses during the monitoring inspection, the monitoring inspection outcome letter will refer to these.
144. In monitoring progress, inspectors will take account of:
- any actions taken by leaders, since the initial inspection, to address the significant weaknesses identified
  - evidence provided by the local area that shows how leaders have assured themselves that the necessary progress is being made against each area of significant weakness
  - any up-to-date self-evaluation carried out by the local area
  - the views of children and young people and their parents and carers, gathered through surveys and other forms of engagement agreed with the area
145. Ofsted and the CQC retain the discretion to carry out a monitoring inspection in a local area if information held, or received, by Ofsted and/or the CQC raises sufficient concern about the effectiveness of arrangements for children and young people with SEND and their families. This may be carried out in a local area that was not previously required to produce a priority action plan (area SEND). In such cases, inspectors will gather evidence that is relevant to the issues that gave rise to the decision to inspect.

## Arrangements for monitoring inspections

146. The process for notifying the local area is the same as for full inspections (see paragraph 77). On the same day as the notification to the local area, the lead inspector will also notify the Parent Carer Forum or other parents' groups involved in the priority action plan (area SEND), if known. The inspector will handle any deferral requests as set out in paragraph 79.
147. Following notification, the lead inspector will contact the LANO to arrange for any relevant up-to-date information to be made available to inspectors before the on-site week.
148. The local area partnership is responsible for providing the monitoring inspection team with any relevant data/information. However, this must only be what the local area partnership produces as part of its routine practice. We do not expect the local area partnership to provide any data or information in a particular format.
149. The local area partners should provide evidence to show how they have assured themselves that they are making the necessary progress in addressing the areas of significant weakness set out in the priority action plan (area SEND).
150. Inspectors will review the uploaded evidence and arrange a telephone call with the LANO. This will be to discuss the schedule for the monitoring inspection and any other practical arrangements. The telephone discussion will enable the monitoring inspection team to focus its evaluation on the impact that the local area partnership's actions have had on the areas of significant weakness identified in the priority action plan (area SEND). The lead inspector and the CQC inspector will also hold a discussion with the advisers from the DfE and NHS England who carried out the support and challenge visits. The discussion will be about the local area partnership's progress in carrying out the identified priority actions. All discussions must be recorded in the evidence base.

## The inspection team

151. The monitoring inspection will always be led by an Ofsted HMI, accompanied by a Children's Services Inspector from the CQC.

## The on-site week

152. Typically, inspectors will spend a minimum of 2 days on site, although this may vary depending on the circumstances of the local area. Inspectors and local areas will discuss and agree on the precise timing of activities.

## Feedback to leaders

153. The inspection team will provide feedback on the final day of the monitoring inspection to inform leaders about whether sufficient progress has been made

to address the areas of significant weakness detailed in the priority action plan (area SEND). The attendees at this feedback meeting will be agreed between the lead HMI, the CQC inspector and the LANO.

## **The monitoring inspection letter**

154. The lead inspector is responsible for writing the monitoring inspection outcome letter and submitting the evidence to Ofsted shortly after the end of the monitoring inspection. The CQC inspector will contribute to the process of finalising the letter.
155. The letter will include:
- the judgement on whether the local area has taken effective actions in relation to the serious weaknesses identified at the initial inspection
  - a clear and brief summary of the effectiveness of leaders' actions against each serious weakness identified in the action plan
  - clarification that inspection findings will be communicated to the DfE and NHS England, and may be used to determine further intervention and/or support
156. In cases where Ofsted and the CQC have had reason to carry out a monitoring inspection of a local area that was not previously required to produce a priority action plan (area SEND) (see also paragraph 145), the contents of the letter will directly address the issues that gave rise to the decision to inspect. Inspectors may decide that the local area should produce a priority action plan (area SEND) and/or that the next planned full inspection should be brought forward.
157. As far as possible, and subject to the outcome of the quality assurance process, the findings in the letter will be consistent with the feedback given to the local area partners at the end of the inspection.

## **Quality assurance and publication of the monitoring inspection letter**

158. Ofsted will publish the monitoring inspection letter on the local authority SEND section of [Ofsted's reports website](#). The final report will normally be shared with the local area partnership within 30 working days of the end of the monitoring inspection.
159. The process and arrangements for quality assuring and finalising the monitoring inspection letter are the same as for inspection reports (please refer to paragraphs 124 to 127 above).
160. The process for ensuring the quality of monitoring inspections is the same as that for full inspections, as set out in paragraphs 134 to 137.

## **After the monitoring inspection**

161. Any complaints about monitoring inspections will be subject to the same arrangements as for complaints about full inspections. Information about this is set out in paragraphs 138 to 139.
162. Arrangements for securing, retaining and disposing of the evidence base for monitoring inspections are the same as for full inspections, as detailed in paragraph 132.

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## Part 4: Engagement meetings

163. Ofsted and the CQC will hold an engagement meeting with each local area partnership between inspections. These events are not inspections. They are intended to support local area partnerships as they work to improve the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND.
164. These events will help keep a spotlight on SEND. Through these annual engagement meetings, Ofsted and the CQC will seek to:
- be assured that the local area partnership understands the needs of children and young people in its area, and is working to improve its services for children and young people with SEND and their families
  - identify any issues of concern
  - remain up to date with any changes to the local SEND system

### Self-evaluation in advance of engagement meetings

165. Local area partnerships will be asked to provide a self-evaluation before the engagement meeting. This should draw on existing documentation and activity. It should reflect the local area partnership's business as usual. We do not expect local areas to carry out additional work specifically for the purpose of the meeting. We will ask the local area partnership to provide the self-evaluation early enough for us to analyse its content, but not so far in advance that the information becomes out of date by the time of the annual engagement meeting.
166. There is no prescribed format for the self-evaluation, but it should, as far as possible, be kept concise and include information about recent developments to the local SEND system. It should also include any improvements to areas of weakness identified by Ofsted and the CQC (for example, at a previous inspection) or by the local area partnership. The local area partnership's self-evaluation should:
- address the 3 questions set out below
  - make sense as a stand-alone document (appendices can be included, but should be kept to a minimum)
  - be succinct, focused and evaluative
167. The 3 questions for local area partnerships to cover in their self-evaluations are:
- What do you know about the impact of your arrangements for children and young people with SEND?
  - How do you know it?

- What are your plans for the next 12 months to improve the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND?
168. During engagement meetings, Ofsted and the CQC will explore how the local area partnership evaluates the SEND system and what evidence it has used to make its assessment, particularly in relation to the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND.
169. Ofsted and the CQC will want to understand the leaders' plans for meeting the current and future needs of children and young people with SEND and their families. This will include how the local area partnership is making changes based on its evaluation of the effectiveness of the SEND system.
170. Ofsted and the CQC will also want to explore how the local area partnership has ensured that strategic planning and decision-making are informed by the views and aspirations of children and young people and their families.

### **Arrangements for engagement meetings**

171. Engagement meetings will be planned for a mutually convenient time, and normally happen annually. A regional representative from Ofsted will chair the discussion. This could be the relevant Ofsted regional director, or Senior HMI or HMI, as determined by the Ofsted region. The regional representative will be accompanied by a Children's Services Inspector from the CQC.
172. On the part of the local area partnership, we expect that the DCS and the CCG representative will attend. It is for the DCS and the CCG representative to determine who else attends from the local authority and the health teams. For the meeting to be effective, all attendees should have a clear purpose for being there.
173. The meeting should be a transparent account of the local area's progress, and should benefit everyone involved. The intelligence gathered from the meeting will inform any plans for future inspection activity. The meeting should cover:
- the content of the self-evaluation – what leaders know about needs, practice and outcomes, and the evidence that supports this
  - the impact of the information shared – what local area leaders are doing to address weaknesses and maintain or improve good practice, including evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of their actions
  - actions taken in response to previous inspections, including what progress has been made against the local area partnership's action plan and any recommendations for improvement, or, where relevant, progress made in addressing areas of concern as set out in a WSoA from the previous framework or a priority action plan (area SEND)
  - the broader issues that affect delivery of services, for example closures of schools and early years provision

- the approximate timing of the next engagement meeting
174. Ofsted's regional director, a Children's Services Inspector from CQC, the LANO, the DCS and the CCG representative, or their delegates, will agree the agenda before the meeting. We will write to the DCS and the CCG representative within a month of the meeting. The letter will not be published and will set out:
- the date of the meeting and who attended
  - a factual summary of the agenda items discussed
  - the approximate timing of the following year's annual engagement meeting
  - any next steps

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## Annex A: information requested to support inspections

175. This annex sets out the information that inspectors request when they notify the local area partnership of an area SEND inspection. It also sets out the information that the inspectors will request to assist them in selecting children and young people’s cases for tracking, and the further information they will request about those selected. The table below sets out the high-level timeline for sharing this information.

Day/time	Activity
<b>Week 1, Monday</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Inspectors request the information set out in Annex A</li> </ul>
<b>Week 1, Tuesday, by 12 noon</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Local area partnership provides child-level data to assist inspectors in selecting children and young people to track</li> <li>■ Local area partnership provides list of providers and settings to assist inspectors in selecting which providers will have sampling visits</li> <li>■ Local area partnership provides requested information about SEND arrangements</li> </ul>
<b>Week 1, Tuesday, by 5pm</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Inspectors select children and young people’s cases to be tracked</li> </ul>
<b>Week 1, Friday, by 5pm</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Local area partnership provides additional information about children and young people selected for tracking</li> <li>■ Local area partnership provides additional information about SEND arrangements</li> </ul>

176. Inspectors will provide details for accessing an online system that the local area partnership can use to share the information.

177. Inspectors will gather personal information that is necessary to help them evaluate local arrangements for children and young people with SEND. Our [privacy notices](#) set out what data we collect, what we do with it, how long we keep it for and people’s rights under the Data Protection Act 2018.

### Week 1: information about the local area partnership’s SEND arrangements

178. In the first week of inspection, the local area partnership should provide the information set out below.

179. The local area partnership should not provide all of the information that it holds on each subject. The inspectors will want only the local area partnership’s best



and most recent information that relates to the scope of the inspection. Inspectors will not review information that they deem to fall outside the scope of the inspection.

### Information to be provided by the local area partnership following notification

Number	Item	Description
1.1	Local area partnership structure	The education, health and care organisations involved in the local area partnership and the governance arrangements, decision-making structures and who is responsible for delivering what
1.2	Assessment of needs	The local area partnership's assessment of the needs of children and young people with SEND in the local area; this will include the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and any further assessment of needs
1.3	Self-evaluation	The local area partnership's self-evaluation of its effectiveness in improving the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND
1.4	Strategic planning	The local area partnership's strategic planning for children and young people with SEND; this may include parts of the joint health and well-being strategy
1.5	Representative and support groups	Contact information for established representative and/or support groups for children and young people with SEND, and parents and carers

### Additional information to be provided by the local area partnership at the end of week 1

Number	Item	Description
2.1	Engagement plans and impact	Information about the local area partnership's strategy and approach for engaging with children, young people and their families in planning and evaluating SEND arrangements;; information on the impact this engagement has had on local SEND arrangements
2.2	Approach to EHC plans	The local area partnership's approach to the development, oversight and quality assurance of EHC plans, including the services involved
2.3	Personal budgets	Data on personal budget application and acceptance numbers
2.4	Tribunals and single route of redress	Data on appeals to the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability), including cases resolved before tribunal hearing; data about appeals through the single route of redress

<b>Number</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>2.5</b>	The numbers of children and young people who are:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ not attending an education setting, including those who receive home education</li> <li>■ children in need</li> <li>■ children who have a child protection plan</li> <li>■ looked after and care leavers</li> <li>■ attending alternative provision</li> <li>■ known to youth justice services</li> <li>■ eligible to receive adult care services</li> <li>■ receiving SEN support in out-of-area placements</li> </ul>

### **Information about education at the end of week 1**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>3.1</b>	Education system overview	The structure of the local education system
<b>3.2</b>	Residential special schools	Information about commissioning and oversight of placements of children and young people in residential special schools
<b>3.3</b>	Out-of-area placements	Information about the commissioning and oversight of education settings outside the local area that provide education for the area's children and young people with EHC plans
<b>3.4</b>	Destinations	Data about destinations after leaving school, including about young people not in education, employment and training
<b>3.5</b>	Part-time education timetables	Data about children and young people who have EHC plans, or are in alternative provision on part-time timetables; to include the numbers of children and the timescales
<b>3.6</b>	Home-to-school transport	Information about the strategy for home-to-school transport, and any consultation outcomes. Data on the numbers supported, and who has requested support.

### **Information about care at the end of week 1**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>4.1</b>	Care services overview	The structure of local care services, provision and teams, including details of any services in the area that have been commissioned from the community or

Number	Item	Description
		voluntary sector for children and young people with SEND
<b>4.2</b>	Short breaks	The local authority short-break statement, and information on the current provision and uptake
<b>4.3</b>	Thresholds, assessments and provision	Information about thresholds, assessments and provision for children and young people with SEND, including early help and services for disabled children

### Information about health at the end of week 1

Number	Item	Description
<b>5.1</b>	Health system overview and commissioning arrangements	The structure of the local health services, which includes who commissions the service and who provides the service (CQC will provide a template at notification); and information on commissioning specifications for local health services, including for young people aged 16–25 years; this also includes any significant changes planned for the services and/or services where there are recovery plans needed
<b>5.2</b>	Performance data	Performance data (including current waiting times) on delivery of: the healthy child programme, spanning early years and school-age children (previous 12 months); children and young people’s mental health services 0–25 years; speech and language therapy; occupational therapy; and physiotherapy
<b>5.3</b>	Pathways	Pathways for referrals to health services for assessment and outcomes information or data as related to those pathways, including children and young people’s mental health, therapies and child development centres

### Information from the local authority about alternative provision at the end of week 1

Number	Item	Description
<b>6.1</b>	Strategy and commissioning arrangements	Information about the local authority’s strategy and commissioning arrangements for alternative provision
<b>6.2</b>	Needs of children and young people	Information about the needs of the children and young people in the area who are in alternative provision; information about how the local authority monitors likely future need for placements and maintains sufficient provision
<b>6.3</b>	Settings and attendees	Information about the alternative provision settings used by the local authority and the children or young

Number	Item	Description
		people attending, including where these are part-time placements; this should include a record of all individual intervention plans for children and young people
<b>6.4</b>	Monitoring and oversight information	The most recent information about the quality and performance of alternative provision settings, including outcomes for children and young people such as destinations following alternative provision; information on how the local authority quality assures alternative provision, including relevant frameworks

### **Week 1: selecting children and young people's cases to track**

180. During the initial set-up call, the lead inspector will ask the LANO for a list of children and young people with SEND in the area, and provide a template to be completed.

### **Week 1: selecting providers and settings for sampling visits**

181. The lead inspector will ask the LANO to identify a list of providers and services where inspectors can sample the records of individual children and young people. The inspection team will then select the providers and services where it will carry out sampling, and will ask the LANO to inform the providers and services.

### **Week 1: additional information about children and young people selected for tracking**

182. The lead inspector will ask the LANO to coordinate the sharing of information with the inspection team about the children and young people who are being tracked. This information will include:

- a chronology of significant events in the 2 years before the inspection
- a pen portrait of the child or young person, including information about their needs, aspirations and support
- a multi-agency summary of the child or young person's programme and support, including an evaluation of the impact of plans and support, and learning for the providers and services involved

183. Inspectors also ask for further information, including:

- the most recent assessments, including an early help assessment, if applicable
- the most recent plans including an EHC plan, personal education plan or care plan, where relevant
- notes of any multi-agency discussions or equivalent

- the current commissioning agreement, when the child or young person is in alternative provision.

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