

Area SEND inspection of Rutland Local Area Partnership

Inspection dates: 15 to 19 May 2023

Date of previous inspection: 10 to 14 July 2017

Inspection outcome

The local area partnership's arrangements typically lead to positive experiences and outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The local area partnership is taking action where improvements are needed.

The next full Area SEND inspection will be within approximately 5 years.

Ofsted and CQC ask that the local area partnership updates and publishes its strategic plan based on the recommendations set out in this report.

Information about the local area partnership

Rutland County Council and Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Integrated Care Board (ICB) are jointly responsible for the planning and commissioning of services for children and young people with SEND in Rutland. This is a small local authority, and many of the acute health services and further education providers are located outside of Rutland.

There have been changes to the local area SEND leadership since the last inspection. A new director of children's services has been appointed. The commissioning of health services changed across England in 2022. On 1 July 2022, Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland ICB became responsible for the commissioning of health services in Rutland.

The local authority commissions full-time alternative provision for children and young people through its inclusion team. The provision includes a combination of one-to-one tuition and part-time placements in unregistered alternative provision. The local authority maintains suitable oversight of these placements. This offer provides support for some pupils whose health needs have led to extensive periods of non-attendance at mainstream secondary schools. Additionally resourced provision in mainstream primary and secondary schools provides support for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs as well as those with communication and interaction needs.

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

Children's and young people's voices are heard and acted on. Groups such as the Rutland disabled youth forum have contributed significantly to the review of the 'local offer'. The local authority's pledge to parents and carers to improve communication has led to more parents feeling that their voice is heard. The voice of the child and young person as well as their parents comes across strongly in most education, health and care (EHC) plans.

Most children and young people in Rutland benefit from an early and effective identification of their additional needs. Health visitors consistently deliver the five mandated developmental checks as part of the healthy child programme. This provides for the effective identification of any unmet needs. High-quality inclusion support for practitioners in the early years provides them with the confidence to identify and assess children's needs. Those families who require support through early help are typically identified in a timely way. Social workers provide welcome support and information for parents about how to manage and provide for the emerging needs of their children.

Children and young people benefit from an effective school support programme. There has been a significant improvement in the identification and assessment of the needs of children and young people in mainstream schools. For example, pupils who require it benefit from access to speech and language therapy within a few weeks. The anxiety related non-attendance project has led to the accurate identification and coherent support of children's and young people's mental health needs.

Children and young people are well supported by targeted coaching through the local area's 'thriving through change' approach. This is helping children and young people with SEND understand and prepare for changes in their education, including when moving to alternative provision or post-16 settings. This helps to provide a settled start to their new education provision.

Effective and timely preparation for adult life equips children and young people with the skills and knowledge they need for their next steps in education or employment. Where young people with SEND need support from adult social care, teams work closely together to ensure that they experience a smooth transition to their next social worker. This was highlighted by parents expressing views that their children are 'thriving' and 'living their best possible life' due to the support they receive.

Children and young people with SEND achieve typically positive outcomes across education, health and care. Many achieve excellent educational results. Their placements are ambitious and meet their needs. The number of those who progress into further education or employment is high.

Many more children and young people now access their education close to where they live. This allows them to participate in community activities. 'Aiming higher' programmes and personal assistants enable young people to enjoy activities with their friends.

However, due to long waiting times, there is limited access to overnight short break activities, which leads to some children, young people and families' needs not being met.

Some children and young people with SEND are waiting too long for some specialist health assessments, according to national guidance, including those waiting on the neurodevelopmental pathway and child and adolescent mental health services.

What is the area partnership doing that is effective?

- Leaders are ambitious for children and young people with SEND. They have a vision to remove barriers to opportunity, to improve equality of access and to enable children and young people to achieve their maximum potential. The introduction of the targeted school support programme is an example of how leaders are realising this vision.
- All partners are committed to improving local services to meet individual needs. They listen to key stakeholders and make changes based on their input, such as redesigning the local offer website to make it more accessible. School leaders have a shared ambition for an inclusive approach to SEND provision across schools in Rutland, which allows more pupils to access education locally.
- Education and social care leaders know the families they support well and understand the issues they face. They are able to respond quickly to the changing needs of families. Leaders have improved their response to parents' requests for EHC plan assessments. All assessments are completed within statutory timescales. Leaders have ensured that additional training for staff on the SEND panel has led to more accurate assessments and to less parents having to challenge the decisions they make.
- Leaders from across the partnership have high aspirations for looked after children who have SEND. Their knowledge of these children and their commitment to them help to ensure that the needs of this vulnerable group remain a high priority. Relationships between social workers and families are strong. Children and young people known to social care benefit from regular multi-agency meetings, in which their plans are reviewed and amended where required.
- Leaders have provided training to practitioners to ensure that EHC plans more accurately represent children's and young people's needs and aspirations. The quality of these plans has improved as a result. Social workers and health professionals work closely with children and young people, including those who do not use words to communicate, to ensure that plans reflect their needs and wishes. Practitioners make sure that most plans are regularly updated with accurate information and their current targets.
- Leaders have introduced the school support programme across all primary and secondary schools. This programme has transformed the provision for pupils at the SEND support level. Pupils now have timely assessments and early interventions from health professionals, which means they can continue to access and benefit from their school placement.

- The dynamic support register (DSR) has been mapped against the minimum standards. The team's responsiveness in arranging care, education and treatment reviews is a strength. Leaders have ensured that the DSR is underpinned by an effective risk management process. The risk ratings give clear indications of needs and suggested actions for practitioners working with the children and young people. This support means that more of the needs of children and young people can be met without admission to hospital.
- The members of the teen health team carry out effective, bespoke packages of care and support during their one-to-one sessions with young people. The sessions follow evidenced-based practice to ensure that young people's individual needs are met, for example advice and support for healthy eating, exercise, relationships, drugs and alcohol, emotional well-being and happiness. Young people receiving this support comment positively about the progress they are making as a result of these sessions.
- Leaders have successfully commissioned effective alternative provision as well as additionally resourced provision in mainstream schools. Pupils accessing these provisions speak positively about the tailored support they receive and how it leads to the achievement of their targets and successful preparation for their next steps. Leaders regularly check the quality of the alternative provision they commission to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of all young people. Leaders have developed strong working relationships with key providers, which ensures effective sharing of information.
- Partnership leaders are starting to work more closely together to evaluate provision. Their recent joint review, with the parent carer forum, of a large number of EHC plans led to some of the more recent improvements in the quality of these documents.

What does the area partnership need to do better?

- Due to neuro-developmental and mental health assessments not taking place in a timely manner, some children and young people are not getting the right support at the right time. Although families do have access to a range of neuro-developmental workshops and resources while they wait, this provision is not mirrored for mental health support.
- ICB leaders' oversight and strategic planning for 'service children' with SEND living on military bases, and children and young people supported by a general practitioner outside of Rutland, are not fully implemented. This has led to a gap in support for these families. The plans leaders have in place to address this have not yet had an impact for children and young people and their families.
- ICB leaders' use of health information and data to establish, advance and monitor priorities and outcomes is underdeveloped. Leaders are aware of these issues and have started to refine their data for the local area.

- Historically, the local area partnership’s strategic approach has not always included all partners equally. This is reinforced by the partnership’s self-evaluation, which has a strong education focus. While planning is effective at a local level, strategic plans do not always demonstrate how partners are effectively working together to commission services. More recently, there is evidence that joint strategic working has strengthened and is starting to have a positive impact on the outcomes of children and young people with SEND.
- Outcomes for children and young people are typically positive across education, health and care. However, complex oversight and accountability systems mean leaders cannot easily assure themselves of this.

Areas for improvement

ICB leaders should ensure that they set measurable targets to reduce waiting times and provide effective support for children and young people awaiting neuro-developmental and mental health assessments.
ICB leaders should ensure that specialist health needs for ‘service children’ and those who access a general practice outside of Rutland are assessed and met.
Leaders across the partnership must ensure that they work together to further improve their joint planning and oversight arrangements using robust data.

Local area partnership details

Local Authority	Integrated Care Board
Rutland County Council	Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland Integrated Care Board
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Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out at the request of the Secretary of State for Education under section 20(1)(a) of the Children Act 2004.

The inspection was led by one of His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) from Ofsted, with a team of inspectors, including two HM'I/Ofsted Inspectors from education and social care, a lead Children's Services Inspector from Care Quality Commission (CQC), and another Children's Services Inspector from the CQC.

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