
One Minute Guide to the Written Statement of Action

What is a local area inspection?

Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) provide an independent external evaluation of how effectively a local area carries out its statutory duties in relation to children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or a Disability (SEND) in order to support their development.

The local area includes the local authority, the NHS North-East London Integrated Commissioning Group (ICG), public health and local education settings. Educational establishments, including schools and colleges, are not directly inspected as individual institutions, but their input forms an essential part of inspections.

In June 2021, The Tower Hamlets local area was inspected by Ofsted and the CQC in relation to the support and services provided to children and young people with (SEND).

What was the outcome of the inspection?

The inspection found that much of this support is of good quality and that area leaders are aware of what works and what doesn't. The report also highlighted four "significant areas of weakness":

- The poor quality and oversight of Education, Health and Care Plans including the annual review process.

- The lengthy waiting times for an assessment and diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder.
- Fragmentation in the provision of speech and language therapy which means that too many children and young people do not get the specialist help and support they need.
- Weaknesses in communication between area leaders and parents leading to misunderstandings. Many families are not aware of services that they could access and have no knowledge of area's plans to improve.

As a result, the local area was required to produce a "Written Statement of Action" (WSOA) to address these key areas. More information can be found in our Inspection letter.

What is a Written Statement of Action?

This is an action plan setting out activities to address the four "significant areas of weakness", including lead officers and deadlines for completion. Our WSOA was developed following engagement with parents through Let's Talk SEND sessions during November 2021 and was then approved by Ofsted.

View our Written Statement of Action.
View the Ofsted response letter.

How are we communicating our progress?

We have been sharing updates on progress across different channels, including the Local Offer website, the Family Matters magazine and through termly Let's Talk SEND events with local area leaders and the Let's Talk SEND newsletter. The SEND Independent Parent Carer Forum which is represented on the SEND Improvement Board also helps to keep parents/carers informed on a regular basis.

How is progress being tracked?

The local area receives quarterly support and challenge visits where progress and evidence of impact is monitored. These visits are led by representatives from the Department for Education (DfE) and NHS England.

Work to deliver on our WSoA is being led by a focused monthly WSoA leads group, which reports regularly to the SEND Improvement Board where progress is tracked by local area partners.

Next Steps

Ofsted and the CQC usually formally re-visit a local area within 18 months of the WSoA being declared fit for purpose. The purpose of the re-visit is to determine whether the local area has made sufficient progress in addressing the areas of significant weakness detailed in the WSoA.

If a local area has made sufficient progress in addressing all of the areas of significant weakness, the DfE and NHS England will stop making their formal quarterly support and challenge visits.

If a local area is making insufficient progress in addressing any of the areas of significant weakness, it is for the DfE and NHS England to determine the next steps. This may include the Secretary of State using their powers of intervention. Ofsted and the CQC will not carry out any further re-visits unless directed to do so by the Secretary of State