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Official Statistics

Main findings: area SEND inspections and outcomes in England as at 31 March 2021

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Contents

Summary
Impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus)
Main findings
Introduction
Area SEND inspection outcomes as at 31 March 2021
Area SEND re-visits and outcomes as at 31 March 2021
Glossary
Further information

Print this page

Summary

This is the main findings report for the area special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) inspections and outcomes in England 2021 release. The following are also available:

- underlying data
- pre-release access list

This release contains:

- the number of inspections and outcomes for area SEND inspections carried out between May 2016 and March 2021
- the number of re-visits and re-visits to area SEND re-visits carried out between December 2019 and March 2021
- the number of area SEND interim visits carried out between October 2020 and March 2021

Impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus)

From 23 March 2020, all routine Ofsted inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, we suspended area SEND inspections and re-visits to local areas. We did carry out some area SEND re-visits in the autumn term 2020. We have included all reports published by 31 March 2021 in this report.

Between October 2020 and March 2021, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) carried out a series of interim area SEND visits, visiting 10 local areas across the country. Participating local areas were remain anonymous, but learning has been shared in several thematic national reports.

Main findings

Since 2016, Ofsted and the CQC have carried out joint inspections of SEND arrangements in 116 of the 152 local areas in England.

Just over half (54 out of 116) of the areas inspected have been required to produce a written statement of action. Ofsted and the CQC judge this to be an indication of significant weaknesses in the local areas' SEND arrangements.

The proportion of local areas required to produce a WSoA varies across the country. At a regional level, the proportion of local areas with a WSoA ranges from 1 in 4 in London, to less than 9 out of 10 in the East of England.

Inspection outcomes have not varied much in the last 3 years. Relatively similar proportions of local areas have been required to produce a WSoA each year, from just over half to under two thirds.

Twenty one local areas have received a re-visit. Inspectors determined that 3 local areas were making sufficient progress in addressing all the significant weaknesses identified during their initial inspection.

Introduction

Children and young people with SEND often receive many different services. From the moment they are born, or from when a disability or condition is first noticed, to the education, specialist therapists, and/or professionals in education, health and social care.

In January 2020, there were 303,000 children and young people aged up to 25 with an education, health and care (EHC) plan. There were also over 1 million pupils receiving SEN support in schools. Overall, more than 15% of children and young people in school have some kind of SEND.

Under the Children and Families Act 2014, the government placed new duties on the local health, social and education services that provide for these children and young people. The statutory special educational needs code of practice was updated to reflect these new duties.

We carry out inspections under section 20 of the Children Act 2004. Under the local area SEND inspection framework, inspectors look for evidence of how well children and young people (from birth to age 25) with SEND are identified, how their needs are assessed, how services are planned and how children and young people are kept safe in education. The world of work and wider preparation for adulthood is included, but only at the way in which local areas are meeting their duties under the Equality Act 2010.

The local area in the geographical area of the local authority, working with local care, authority, clinical commissioning groups, public health, NHS England for specialised services, schools, colleges, early years providers, and others, have the shared responsibility of the local area for children and young people who have SEND, extends to those who are residents of the local area but attend educational establishments or receive services outside the local area, including schools.

Ofsted and the CQC inspect the services in the inspection area, with judgements in narrative form rather than a 4-point grading scale. The same judgments areas of strength and key priorities for improvement.

Where HTCI has determined that a WSoA is required, local area leaders must set out how they intend to address the identified weaknesses. The local area must submit a joint area publication improvement plan. The improvement plan must be agreed by leaders within the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and NHS England when relevant, with the local authority and clinical commissioning group (CCG) responsible for the area with a WSoA. the local area is required to be meeting its statutory duties in relation to children and young people with SEND. However, this does not mean that the local area cannot do more. Inspectors outline areas for improvement in the inspection letter.

Area SEND inspection outcomes as at 31 March 2021

Ofsted and the CQC have carried out joint inspections of area SEND arrangements in 116 of the 152 local areas in England. Of the 116 local areas, 54 (46.5%) have had a WSoA. A total of 79 inspections had been given.[footnote 1] This leaves 24 local areas in the initial 5-year inspection programme.

In a small number of cases, more than 1 inspection, inspectors had significant concerns about how effectively the local area was meeting its duties or securing better outcomes for children and young people who have SEND. In these 20 areas, the HTCI deemed that a WSoA was required.

Figure 1: Area SEND inspection outcomes as at 31 March 2021

Download as file with the underlying data in xlsx format.

Inspection outcomes by year

The selection of local areas inspected in a given year aimed to ensure as even a spread across the country as possible. It also took into account the timing of other Ofsted and CQC inspection activity to avoid inspections being planned too close to each other.

Inspections during the first year (2016–17) had the highest proportion of local areas with a WSoA (59%). Inspections in the last year (2020–21) had the lowest proportion of local areas inspected. However, all subsequent years had much lower proportions than year 1, ranging from 46% in year 2 to 48% in year 4. The proportion in year 3 (2018–19) is lower than 2 of 3 other years, at 44%.

Figure 2: Area SEND inspection outcomes by year as at 31 March 2021

1. Number of local areas inspected in brackets.
2. Percentage of local areas with a written statement of action.
3. Percentage of local areas with a WSoA in brackets.
4. Percentage reflects the number of inspections for each region and exclude local areas that have not inspected yet.

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Inspection outcomes by local authority type

One type of local authority, London boroughs, have a significantly lower proportion of local areas with a WSoA compared to all other types of local authority, which are similar to each other. This has been consistent over time. with London boroughs having the lowest proportion requiring a WSoA each year.

Whilst London there was some variation, inner London had a small minority 3 out of 10 local areas with a WSoA, while outer London had 7 out of 10 local areas.

Figure 4: Area SEND inspection outcomes by local authority type as at 31 March 2021

1. Number of local areas by local authority type in brackets.
2. Percentage reflects number of inspections for each local authority type and exclude local areas that have not inspected yet.

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Inspection outcomes by deprivation and population

Local areas in the most deprived quintile of deprivation and the most rural areas tend to require a WSoA, with statistical tests showing a statistical link between these and the WSoA. There is some variability across the other deprivation bands. however, with the second quintile (more deprived) having a lower proportion requiring a WSoA than the 3 other bands. Population and the IMD quintile (most deprived) being equally split. It is not clear if this is an indication of a relationship between the level of deprivation and the inspection outcome.

Table 1: Area SEND inspection outcomes by level of deprivation as at 31 March 2021

Deprivation	No written statement of action	Written statement of action required
Most deprived	8	12
More deprived	13	8
Average deprivation	13	11
Less deprived	11	10
Least deprived	10	13

1. Deprivation quintiles based on 2019 income deprivation affecting children index (IDAC) rank of average rank.
2. Numbers represent local areas inspected.

Inspection outcomes do not seem to be adversely affected by the size of the local area's population. Analysis shows a reasonably consistent split, whether it is for those inspections with a written statement within the scope of more inspections (both to age 25), or residents of all ages.

Local areas not inspected yet by region

There are 36 local areas that have not been inspected yet. Over half of these are from 2 regions, London (20) and North East. Yorkshire and Humber (9). All local areas in the East of England have been inspected.

Figure 5: Local areas not inspected yet by region as at 31 March 2021

1. Number of local areas per region in brackets.
2. Percentage reflects number of local areas not inspected yet within each region.

Download as file with the underlying data in xlsx format.

Area SEND re-visits and outcomes as at 31 March 2021

Ofsted and the CQC do not carry out routine monitoring inspections of local areas with a WSoA. The purpose of re-visits is to provide a formal assessment of how well the local area is addressing the weaknesses in its SEND arrangements. Between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2021, when area SEND inspections were suspended, our intention is to re-visit the local area within 18 months of the WSoA being declared fit for purpose and, if necessary, to continue to monitor the local area's progress in addressing the WSoA.

The first re-visit was in December 2019. By March 2020, when inspections and re-visits were suspended due to COVID-19, we had carried out a total of 21 re-visits, or just over a third of the 59 local areas with a WSoA so far.[footnote 2]

Re-visit outcomes

Inspectors found that most local areas were making at least some progress in addressing significant weaknesses. They established that just under half of local areas were making sufficient progress in addressing all the significant weaknesses. They found just over half of local areas (57%) had made progress in addressing some, but not all, significant weaknesses. Just over one local area had made no or limited progress in addressing any significant weaknesses.

As at 31 March 2021, there are 38 local areas that have been required to produce a WSoA and are yet to receive a re-visit to assess their progress.

It is worth noting that a higher number of significant weaknesses risk mean that they are more likely to be assessed being given a lower number, because some weaknesses may be more significant than others or complex than others.

Table 2: Area SEND re-visit outcomes as at 31 March 2021

Local area	Sufficient progress in addressing all significant weaknesses identified at inspection	Sufficient progress in addressing most significant weaknesses identified at inspection	Number of significant weaknesses where sufficient progress made	Number of significant weaknesses where no or limited progress made
Bedford	Yes	5	5	0
Bexley	Yes	5	5	0
Bury	Some	5	5	0
Durham	Yes	4	4	0
Hartlepool	Some	4	4	0
Hillingdon	Some	4	4	0
Kingston upon Hull, City of	Yes	4	4	0
Knowsley	Some	5	5	0
Medway	Some	6	5	1
Middlesbrough	No	3	3	0
Oldham	Some	5	5	0
Oxfordshire	Some	5	5	0
Rochdale	No	5	5	0
Sandwell	No	5	5	0
Sefton	No	5	5	0
South Gloucestershire	Some	6	6	0
Suffolk	Some	4	4	0
Surrey	Some	4	4	0
Sutton	No	3	3	0
Wakefield	No	5	5	0
Waltham Forest	No	5	5	0
Windsor and Maidenhead	Some	4	4	0

In only 38% the DHS issued an improvement notice to Sefton. In response sanctions for children and young people with SEND. In March 2020, the DfE issued a statutory direction to Sefton and appointed Cheshire West and Chester Council to provide children services and coach of progress in addressing weaknesses in SEND service provision.

Glossary

Definitions of terms are in the statistical glossary.

Further information

Local government structural changes

Local government structural changes have taken place in several areas over recent years. As at the date of this publication, we have inspected only one area (Cheshire) where these changes have taken place.

We inspected Cheshire in January 2017 and received a WSoA. Ofsted's next local area in February 2019, where sufficient progress had been made against some but not all the significant weaknesses identified at the inspection. Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (Ofsted) strongly, as it was constituted at the point that we inspected it is now historical. As a result of the boundary change, the inspection and re-visit are not included in these statistics.

Contacts

If you are a member of the public and have any comments or feedback on this statistical release please email us at SEND.STATS@ofsted.gov.uk.

Press enquiries should be sent to our press team via: press@ofsted.gov.uk.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Richard Fisher for his contribution to this statistical release.

1. Ofsted was inspected before local government boundary changes in April 2019 and is not included in these figures. It inspected Bury. ↑
2. Ofsted received a re-visit before local government boundary changes in April 2019 and is not included in these figures. It was deemed to be making sufficient progress in addressing some but not all significant weaknesses. ↑

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