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[Home](#) > [Local area SEND inspections: information for families](#)

Care Quality
Commission

Ofsted

Guidance

Joint inspections of local area special educational needs or disabilities (or both) provision

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Contents

- [1. Background](#)
- [2. Inspection teams](#)
- [3. How will services and users be told about an inspection?](#)
- [4. The inspection process](#)
- [5. What do inspectors look for?](#)
- [6. What can't inspectors do?](#)
- [7. How will inspectors report the findings?](#)

In May 2016, the two inspectorates, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC), started a new type of joint inspection. The aim is to hold local areas to account and champion the rights of children and young people.

Under the [Local area special educational needs and disabilities inspection framework](#), inspectors review how local areas meet their responsibilities to children and young people (from birth to age 25) who have special educational needs or disabilities (or both).

1. Background

Children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities (or both) often receive a number of different services. These could be provided by nurseries, schools or colleges and specialist therapists, as well as professionals in education, health and social care.

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 [Special Educational Needs Code of Practice](#) was updated to reflect these new duties.

In particular, the local area health, social and education services need to work together to:

- publish a 'local offer' setting out the support and provision in the area for children and young adults with special educational needs or disabilities (or both)
- provide accessible information to children and young people, as well as parents and carers, about the services and support available in the local area
- work with children and young people, their parents and carers, and service providers to make sure that any special needs or disabilities (or both) are identified as early as possible
- assess (in co-operation with children and young people and their parents and carers) the needs of children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities (or both) who may need an education, health and social care plan (EHCP)
- produce an EHCP for all children and young people who are assessed as needing one (all relevant agencies should cooperate to do this and involve the children and young people and their parents and carers)
- provide children and young people with the support agreed in their EHCP, and regularly review their plans

2. Inspection teams

The inspection teams will include:

- a Her Majesty's Inspector with enhanced specialism in special educational needs and disabilities
- a CQC specialist children's services inspector
- an Ofsted inspector (usually a serving practitioner in another local authority) specially recruited and trained in special educational needs and disabilities issues

All inspectors have been trained fully for these inspections.

3. How will services and users be told about an inspection?

Five working days before an inspection, we will tell the director of children's

services from the local authority and the CQC will contact the chief executives of the clinical commissioning groups to give notice of the inspection.

The local area will publicise details of meetings that the inspection team will hold with anyone affected by the inspection.

You are welcome to come to one of these meetings to share your views about your experience of support for special educational needs or disabilities (or both) in the local area.

4. The inspection process

Over the course of the 5-day inspection, inspectors will meet managers and leaders from the area's education, health and social care services and look at young people's case files.

They will review the support provided by the local area for some individual children and young people to better understand how well the local area meets its responsibilities overall.

They will also visit early years settings, schools, further education providers and specialist services.

During these visits, inspectors will also spend time speaking to children, young people and their parents or carers.

5. What do inspectors look for?

Inspectors will look for evidence of how children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities (or both) are identified, how their needs are assessed and met, and how they are supported to move on to their next stage of education, the world of work and wider preparation for adulthood.

The inspections will be carried out in line with the [inspection framework](#) and [handbook](#).

The inspections are carried out under section 20 of the [Children Act 2004](#). The inspectors will also look at the way in which local areas are meeting their duties under the [Equality Act 2010](#).

6. What can't inspectors do?

Inspectors will not carry out inspections of individual education, social care or health services or providers.

They will not make any judgements on the decision-making or the quality of support provided to individual children or young adults.

Inspectors will also not investigate complaints about the support received by individual children or young people or their families. They do not have the power to change or overrule decisions about assessment or support that have been made by agencies and service providers in the local area.

7. How will inspectors report the findings?

At the end of the inspection, the inspection team will evaluate all the evidence gathered.

We and the CQC will write a joint inspection outcome letter. The letter will explain the main findings and make recommendations for improvement.

It will also highlight any strengths that inspectors identify to help other services and areas develop and improve.

These letters will be published on the [Ofsted website](#) and on the [CQC website](#).

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