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Andrew Eyres, Strategic Director, Integrated Health and Care at NHS Lambeth
Sue Franklin, Local area nominated officer

Dear Ms Hudson and Mr Eyres

Joint local area SEND inspection in Lambeth

Between 20 January 2020 and 24 January 2020, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC), conducted a joint inspection of the local area of Lambeth to judge the effectiveness of the area in implementing the disability and special educational needs reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014.

The inspection was led by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors from Ofsted, with a team of inspectors, including an Ofsted Inspector and a children's services inspector from the CQC.

Inspectors spoke with children and young people with disabilities and/or special educational needs (SEND), parents and carers, local authority and National Health Service (NHS) officers. They visited a range of providers and spoke to leaders, staff and governors about how they were implementing the special educational needs reforms. Inspectors looked at a range of information about the performance of the local area, including the local area's self-evaluation. Inspectors met with leaders from the local area for health, social care and education. They reviewed performance data and evidence about the local offer and joint commissioning.

This letter outlines our findings from the inspection, including some areas of strength and areas for further improvement.

Main Findings

- Local leaders are implementing the reforms in a way which makes a positive difference to the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND in Lambeth. Leaders have taken time to understand the needs and

characteristics of the local area. Their self-evaluation is accurate. This has enabled them to recently accelerate their pace of progress in implementing the reforms. Leaders seek and use information from parents and the local community well to measure the impact of their actions and set priorities when reviewing their strategy.

- Leaders ensure that good practice in assessing and meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND is shared well. This contributes to improving and sustaining outcomes for children and young people in schools, including the large proportion of children looked after in Lambeth who have SEND.
- Leaders have succeeded in delivering an improved offer from education, health and social care partners to meet the mental health needs of children and young people with SEND.
- Parents recognise and appreciate the opportunities leaders provide for them to meet and share experiences and ideas. This builds their confidence and awareness.
- Therapists from a range of services are having a positive impact on improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND in Lambeth. They contribute well to the identification and assessment of needs.
- The independent advice service and parent carer forum in Lambeth are well established, well known and held in high regard by parents.
- Leaders are diligent in ensuring co-production (a way of working where children and young people, families and those who provide the services work together to create a decision or a service which works for them all) of services. Joint commissioning work is responsive to priorities and needs for this local area and reflects leaders' strong local knowledge. Leaders can explain the impact of good examples of co-production across education, health and social care.
- Leaders have sharpened their checks on the quality of education, health and care (EHC) plans in the last two years. Recent plans are better as a result. There is now better input and oversight from health and social care professionals. However, reviews of plans do not consistently ensure that they keep pace with the current stage of development of children and young people with SEND. The input into and oversight of EHC plans from child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) remain weak.
- The area is not far enough on in helping children and young people with SEND prepare for adulthood. As a result, some young people, particularly those not eligible for adult care services, are not fulfilling their potential. Parents of some young people over 16 do not know what is to come next for their child after college and do not know where to seek advice.

- A significant number of parents who spoke with inspectors said they are not sure how well professionals understand the needs of their child. Some are concerned about the negative impact they think this has on their child's social and emotional development.
- The efforts of leaders to improve the local offer website have had only limited success in ensuring that more parents know about it and find it useful.

The effectiveness of the local area in identifying children and young people's special educational needs and/or disabilities

Strengths

- Leaders understand the importance of helping families navigate the SEND system. They have improved opportunities for parents to provide information which helps professionals identify the needs of their child. For example, monthly drop-in sessions at children's centres help parents find and talk with professionals.
- Speech and language therapists (SALT) contribute well to the identification of the needs of children and young people with SEND. Their role in supporting services for particularly vulnerable children and young people is effective.
- An effective and ambitious school nursing service is working flexibly to meet the health needs of the school-age population. The school nurse for children and young people educated other than at school ensures that any who are not in the formal education system have their health needs assessed. Where appropriate, the school nurse involves other professionals for ongoing assessment and support.
- Parents and practitioners can contact the nursing service by telephone, text or email. Parents can text asking for health-related advice and young people can use a messaging service to get confidential advice about a range of health issues. Some schools have pupil champions, who promote the service.
- School nurses use a health questionnaire to identify health, social and emotional needs for pupils who have moved from primary to secondary school. As a result of this work, school nurses are identifying a high number of pupils experiencing emotional difficulties. This means that these pupils are now receiving help earlier to support them and prevent a deterioration in their emotional well-being.
- SALT provision in the youth offending service (YOS) has improved and is now well established; 70% of young people within the service have been identified as having previously unmet needs. Therapists are training other practitioners to provide them with the skills needed to support these young people.

- Children and young people with SEND who are at risk of criminal exploitation are supported by a local charity to prevent gang involvement. A collaborative intervention service between the police, the local area and an independent support and training provider works in police custody suites. This aims to prevent 10- to 17-year-olds from entering the criminal justice system. This is reducing the risk of them becoming a victim or perpetrator of crime.
- Health visitors are using the healthy child programme well to identify needs early. They work across the area with a range of professionals, supporting and signposting families to appropriate services.

Areas for development

- Local area leaders know that many children who are not attending an early years setting are not having their needs identified early enough. As a result, too many of these children are starting school with unidentified needs and are not ready for school. Almost one in every five children in Lambeth currently has not accessed any pre-school provision.
- Some children and young people known to the YOS, or who are looked after, have gone too long without their needs being identified.
- Staff in schools and colleges have been trained in the identification of need. However, leaders do not have a clear enough understanding of how effective this training has been.

The effectiveness of the local area in meeting the needs of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities

Strengths

- Leaders have used their checks on the quality of EHC plans to secure improvements. More recent plans include clearly worded objectives which aim to help children and young people improve their social skills as well as their educational outcomes.
- A graduated offer to meet the social, emotional and mental health needs of children and young people with SEND is effective. It has been developed through good consultation with families, children and young people. Although it is too early to measure impact in some of the newly introduced projects, early findings and feedback are positive. Recently, schools and colleges have accessed emotional resilience training, and individual mental health practitioners have been allocated to some schools. An online counselling service has been extended for young people up to the age of 25. A health and well-being programme in conjunction with a homeless charity offers sessions with a psychotherapist and access to low-cost food for 16- to 25-

year-olds. Another charity offers one-to-one support for pupils identified as being at risk of exclusion from school.

- The Lambeth independent advice service offers impartial advice and guidance. The service is well established, with staff who know the borough and local resources well. Parents praise the support they have received and trust those who provide it. Leaders have recognised the need to strengthen the provision by giving advice to young people moving into adulthood. They have just appointed a youth worker to help with this.
- Families who have had a child diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder are able to access a good range of support following the diagnosis. Many of these workshops are also available to families during the diagnostic process. This helps provide support during what can be a long wait.
- Children and young people in Lambeth have access to timely and effective SALT, occupational therapy (OT) and physiotherapy services. Practitioners across the three therapy services work flexibly and in partnership. They ensure that the care a child or young person receives is focused on the needs of the young person with SEND. 'Chattertime' play sessions during term time are open to all and provide activities promoting speech and language development. They also enable parents to access support and advice. The OT service can demonstrate how it achieves the aims it sets for itself. Physiotherapists work with children with a significant neurodisability. They have implemented the Cerebral Palsy Integrated Care Pathway. This ensures that any risk of developing contractures or hip dislocation is identified early.
- The local family nurse partnership service has extended provision beyond the age of 19 years and supports young parents with additional needs (such as learning disability) up to the age of 24 years. Parents and parents-to-be benefit from an intensive programme of visits until the child is two years old. This has improved outcomes for both the child and the parents.
- A third of children looked after in this area have SEND. Leaders make sure their health needs are promptly and accurately understood. They make sure professionals work together well to carry out health and education reviews at the best time. The input of the dedicated CAMHS team for the virtual school is particularly effective in making sure children's mental health needs are met.
- Social workers have been allocated to work in some schools. These social workers work with school staff and parents to assess and meet the needs of children and families experiencing difficulties. This has resulted in improved school attendance for some of these pupils.
- Leaders can explain the impact of co-production on helping meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. For example, the 'Black Thrive' project has used frank feedback from young people to help improve the support for their needs and interests.

- Leaders make sure that adults in the wider community are offered training to help understand and communicate better with children and young people with SEND. For example, training to raise the awareness of police custody staff in the speech and language needs of young people has been attended by over 1000 officers in eight sessions. As a result, visual supports and simpler language are being used in local police stations.

Areas for development

- The EHC plan review process is variable in its effectiveness. It does not consistently ensure that plans remain relevant to the current needs of children and young people with SEND. Community children's nurses are not providing input to the plans of the children and young people they work with. Their unique perspective of the child is not included when drawing up EHC plans.
- The role of health and social care workers in the conversion process from statements was variable. Therefore, there is now improvement needed from these professionals when EHC plans are reviewed.
- CAMHS workers are unable to easily identify children and young people in their service who have an EHC plan. As a result, their identification and oversight of these children and young people are limited.
- The online local offer is compliant with the expectations of the SEND code of practice. However, it is basic in its style of communication and accessibility. Some parents had not heard of the local offer. Some parents spoke of having to know the system to navigate round it. They told inspectors that they needed someone to help guide them through the system.
- Waiting times for autism spectrum disorder assessment are a local challenge. Leaders have an action plan, with necessary steps identified to reduce and manage the wait. However, progress is too slow. The local area is aware of the need to more closely monitor and prioritise the service improvements.
- Leaders are co-producing a strategic plan to progress their preparation for adulthood offer. However, the impact of this part of their work over time has been too limited. For example, not all students who could benefit from supported internships or apprenticeships are able to realise their potential. While there has been improvement more recently, there are still too few opportunities to meet demand. The local area has been slow to address the gap in services for adults with attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder and autism spectrum disorder. There is no transition pathway for young people with complex health needs who are receiving care from the community children's nursing team as they move to the care of primary health care teams, including the GP.

The effectiveness of the local area in improving outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities

Strengths

- Professionals have a consistent understanding of how to respond to the needs of children and young people with SEND. This is helping sustain and improve outcomes for those with EHC plans and on SEND support. Practitioners are targeting the right support at the right time as a result. Providers appreciate the ease with which they can apply for additional funding for these pupils.
- The arrangements for special needs coordinator (SENCo) meetings are effective in helping these leaders share what works well in improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND. Most children and young people with SEND attend a good or outstanding provider.
- Leaders have reduced school exclusions for pupils with SEND in recent years. They also make sure that alternative arrangements for pupils with SEND, which are put in place by providers, are suitable.
- Providers agree that school governors are kept well informed about the area's work to implement the reforms. This helps governors provide effective challenge and support for school leaders in improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
- The leaders of the virtual school ensure that children looked after with SEND do well.
- The YOS has achieved a reduction in custodial sentences for young people in the local area. Many of these young people have SEND. The YOS is now performing in line with its statistical neighbours. There has been an increase in the number of these young people in suitable education.

Areas for improvement

- Leaders are working hard to improve the offer to support young people into employment, education and training, but these outcomes remain variable. For example, the virtual school is prioritising helping children and young people with EHC plans to sustain their education after the age of 16.
- The adult social care team has a strategic plan that contributes to the online local offer. However, parents often remain uncertain about how this plan is intended to improve outcomes for their children as they move into adulthood.
- Some parents and professionals described limits to social and leisure activities that young people with complex needs could access. These include limited after-school/college and holiday clubs. The 'Liberty Card', which offers support

to access leisure activities, is valued by parents who know about it, but too many parents remain unaware of their eligibility.

- Communication with some parents has not reassured them that enough is being done to help children and young people who are excluded to develop resilience to being drawn into anti-social or criminal activity.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Wright
Her Majesty's Inspector

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