

Briefing Note

Title: Wolverhampton SEND Self-Evaluation **Date:** 11 November 2020

Prepared by: Rob Hart

Job Title: Head of Inclusion & Empowerment

Intended Audience: Internal Partner organisation Public Confidential

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To inform Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel about Wolverhampton's self-evaluation of services for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Since 2016 the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) have been responsible for undertaking inspections of all effectiveness of local areas in England in identifying and meeting the needs of children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- 2.2 It is important to note that these inspections will evaluate how effectively the local area meets its responsibilities, and not just the local authority. The local area includes the local authority, clinical commissioning groups (CCGs), public health, NHS England for specialist services, early year's settings, schools and further education providers.
- 2.3 Wolverhampton is one of only two areas within the West Midlands region that has not yet had a SEND inspection. Due to the COVID-19 situation, OFSTED has suspended much of its formal inspection activity, but has said that it expects to resume this in 2021. It is very likely that Wolverhampton will have its SEND inspection in 2021.

3.0 SEND Self Evaluation

- 3.1 As part of Wolverhampton's process of continuous improvement and preparation for inspection, we undertake a self-evaluation to identify our areas of strength and areas for development. This is updated and reviewed on a regular basis.
- 3.2 The current self-evaluation was signed off by SEND Partnership board in August 2020, following an extensive review, to shorten the format and provide a clearer, more accessible account of the area's strengths and areas for development. It has been informed by work that has been undertaken to develop Wolverhampton's new SEND Strategy, including the 2019 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, feedback from Voice 4 Parents, the Spotlight on SEND event, as well as published and service performance data.

3.3 The self-evaluation focuses on the three key areas that are the focus of the OFSTED/CQC inspection, namely:

- the effectiveness of the local area in identifying children and young people who have SEND;
- the effectiveness of the local area in assessing and meeting the needs of children and young people who have SEND; and,
- the effectiveness of the local area in improving outcomes for children and young people who have SEND.

3.4 The SEND Partnership Board has agreed that going forwards the SEND Self-Evaluation will be updated and signed-off every six months, in January and July of each year.

4.0 Next steps

4.1 Following completion of the self-evaluation and publication of the 2020-23 SEND Strategy, an action plan is being developed which will ensure that actions are in place to respond to all identified areas for development. The SEND Partnership Board is responsible for signing-off this action plan and monitoring progress in delivering it.

4.2 In order to ensure that we are rigorous in both our self-evaluation and inspection preparation for SEND, the Council has commissioned, through the Local Government Association (LGA), a peer challenge to focus on SEND which will take place between 23 November and 2 December 2020.

4.3 The peer challenge is not an inspection. Rather, it is a supportive but challenging “critical friend” approach to assist councils and their partners in celebrating their strengths and identifying their own areas for improvement. The key purpose of the peer challenge is to stimulate local discussion about how the council and its partners can become more effective in delivering improved outcomes for children.

4.4 The peer challenge will be undertaken by a team which consists senior colleagues who have significant experience of leading and managing SEND services in other local authority areas and will typically include:

- Team Leader (assistant director of children’s services with significant SEND experience)
- An operational manager/ senior social work practitioner with experience with children with disabilities
- A health manager/ practitioner with experience of SEND at a strategic and operational level
- An education specialist (e.g. head teacher) with experience of SEND in a range of education settings
- An LGA peer challenge manager

4.5 The challenge is an interactive exercise. During the challenge the peer team will examine evidence from a number of sources. These will include:

- documents that outline the local area approach to special educational needs and disabilities;
- a self-assessment prepared by the Council, CCG and their partners;
- performance data;
- a variety of other documentation provided by the Council and health partners;
- review of Education, Health and Care Plans; and,
- interviews and focus groups conducted with staff from the local authority, CCG, partners, schools, commissioned services, parents/carers and children and young people to explore standard themes and the self-assessment and other key lines of enquiry.

4.6 The outcome of the peer review will be a written report, outlining strengths and areas for development, which can inform the review and update of the self-evaluation in January 2021.