

Bercow: Ten Years On

Audit of Local Area Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) inspections: how do these reflect support for children and young people's speech, language and communication needs (SLCN)? – A Summary

Joint inspections between the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and Ofsted seek to evaluate the implementation of the reforms introduced by the Children and Families Act 2014 across local areas. Since May 2016 42 inspections have been conducted. As part of the evidence gathering for the *Bercow: Ten Years On* these reports have all been interrogated for reference to:

Table 1: Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) inspections
Children's communication: search terms included "communication", "Speech", "language", "SALT", "SLCN" or "communicate." It did not include reference to communication between services and parents or between different services
Joint Commissioning
The use of evidence to monitor outcomes
The Local Authority Local Offer: looking at ease of use, level of collaboration, awareness

Table 2: Findings				
Topic	Number of references	Were these references...?		
		Positive	Negative	Mixed
Children's communication	40 out of 42	17 (42.5%)	8(20%)	14 (35%)
Joint Commissioning	31 out of 42	16 (52%)	9 (29%)	5 (16%)
Use of Evidence	42 out of 42	7 (17%)	19 (45%)	15 (36%)
Local Offer*: Ease of Use	32	10 (31%)	15 (47%)	6 (19%)
Local Offer*: Consultation and Co-production	15	11 (73%)	1 (7%)	0
Local offer*: Parent and young person knowledge of it	39	5 (13%)	25 (64%)	6 (15%)

*Please note the local offer is mentioned in every report as it is part of the inspection framework

Children's Communication

The majority of negative comments regarding services that support children's communication needs related to long waiting lists, inconsistent services and insufficient specialist staff. The positive comments were in relation to accurate identification of need, well integrated services, good examples of joined up working and good interventions with evidence of impact. Most of the comments were mixed, where the inspectors could see examples of good practice but there were still issues, such as long waiting lists.

Joint Commissioning

Where commissioning was considered poor it was described as fragmented, underdeveloped and not sufficiently outcomes based. Good joint commissioning was outcomes based and resulted in innovative working but it did require strong leadership.

Use of Evidence to Monitor Outcomes

Much of this feedback was mixed with some teams in an area showing good examples of monitoring, using data and being outcomes focussed and others not making use of data. One area demonstrated making good use of published research to make commissioning decisions.

Local Offer

The main criticism of the local offers was lack of parental awareness. Even those that were praised for being well developed were often not used by parents, as families had not been made aware of them. There are examples in some areas of young people and carer groups being involved in the development and redevelopment of the local offer. Where this has happened it is highly praised by inspectors.

Written Statements of Action

Fifteen areas had to produce a written statement of action following the report. These are areas that are not implementing the reforms well enough and need to create a plan to address this. Of the 15 that were required to produce a statement of evidence:

- One had to make improvements to its speech and language therapy service to increase access to vulnerable groups.
- Seven had to improve their joint commissioning arrangements.
- Nine had to improve the way they monitored the effectiveness of their services.
- Six had to make improvements to either the functionality of the local offer or parents' awareness of it.