

SCRUTINY REPORT

MEETING:	Children's and Young People's Scrutiny Committee
DATE:	September 2025
SUBJECT:	The Local Area Response to the Published SEND inspection and monthly update
REPORT FROM:	Wendy Young, Head of Service – Inclusion & SEND
CONTACT OFFICER:	Jeanette Richards, Executive Director, Children's Services

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 Following Bury's local area SEND services Inspection by the Care Quality Commission and Ofsted. The inspection team identified widespread, systemic failings in services and highlighted the challenge that we need to do more to improve the outcomes of children and young people with special educational needs.

1.2 The inspection identifies 6 priority actions which Bury Council and NHS Greater Manchester ICB are jointly responsible for, along with 3 areas for improvement. As a result of the inspection outcome, the local authority has been issued with an Improvement Notice and will be subject to monitoring visits followed by a re-inspection in approximately 18 months.

2.0 ISSUES

2.1 As a result of the inspection outcome, the Bury local area has produced a Priority Action Plan, which we are locally referring to as our Priority Impact Plan (PIP).

2.2 The PIP has been co-produced with stakeholders, including parents and carers and is the strategic plan for SEND, setting out what needs to be delivered in the next 18-24 months with key milestones and key performance indicators. The plan is published on our local offer.

2.3 Support for the delivery of the Priority Impact Plan has been supported through additional investment by the council and the ICB – this will support the programme management and governance (see below) but also address some of the critical deficits identified in the report. The level of investment secured is approximately £450,000 a year.

2.4 Bury Council has also applied for Intervention Support Fund (ISF), which is a targeted grant provided by the Department for Education (DfE) to support local authorities in England that are under formal intervention to bolster resources and further support the implementation of the Priority Impact Plan (PIP). A response to the grant application is currently awaited and further information, should this be granted at the next Scrutiny Committee.

Governance arrangements

2.5 The SEND Improvement & Assurance Board (SIAB) is accountable to the Cabinet within the Council, and to the GM Integrated Care Board via the Locality Board, which operates as a sub-committee of the ICB Board and replaces the previous SEND local area partnership Boards.

2.6 The SIAB meet monthly (first meeting took place on 17th June 2024), and benefits from an independent chair, Deborah Glassbrook who has experience of working with other local areas who are subject to intervention in relation to SEND. The Board include strategic leaders from across the partnership and a Delivery Group has been mobilised with Terms of Reference agreed, with active participation in both groups from across the partnership.

Project Management support has now been onboarded and is embedded to support the programme.

Minutes and papers from each SIAB are provided through the Local Offer Website to ensure visibility.

2.7 Each Priority Action has a nominated lead officer, who will be a senior officer within their organisation. The Workstream Leads provide monthly highlight reports to the SIAB and ensure monthly reviews of the risk register. Reports will be expected to provide updates on activity, performance data and quality assurance findings.

The Local Area Priority Impact Plan (PIP) outlines the high-level strategic plan for SEND improvement, with the performance monitoring, future activity and risk/risk register. In accordance with the reporting requirements of this board and as part of this standing agenda item, Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny Committee will be reported to in the same format.

2.8 Monitoring arrangements

Following an Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) SEND inspection, local areas are required to implement monitoring, support, and challenge arrangements to improve their SEND service delivery. This process involves several key steps:

Monitoring: Continuous oversight of the local area's SEND arrangements to ensure they meet the required standards.

Support: Providing guidance and resources to help local areas address any identified weaknesses.

Challenge: Holding local areas accountable for making necessary improvements.

Bury Local Area Partnership remains to be subject to such scrutiny. These arrangements, to date, have taken place in the form of 'deep dive' activities and 'stocktake' visits facilitated by the Department for Education and NHS England Colleagues.

The comprehensive reviews conducted by the Department for Education (DfE) and NHS England, as previously reported, was undertaken in December 2024 and more recently in July 2025, (July 10th, report attached). The purpose of these visits was to assess progress made by the local area in addressing the issues identified in the improvement notice, progress on the delivery of the Priority Impact Plan (PIP) and the impact to date.

In summary the key findings noted:

Progress Against PIP: The partnership is delivering actions within agreed timelines. There's clear alignment between planned priorities and actual delivery.

Leadership & Collaboration: Stronger relationships have been built across the partnership, with a shift from siloed working to genuine collaboration. The Strategic Improvement and Accountability Board (SIAB) continues to provide effective support and challenge.

Voice of Children & Young People: The Changemakers presentation was highlighted as a strength, showing meaningful engagement with young people's views.

Impact & Outcomes: The focus is now shifting from planning to demonstrating tangible impact. While progress is evident, the partnership is encouraged to better evidence improved outcomes for children and families.

Statutory Compliance: Most phase transfer reviews were completed within statutory timelines, and annual review engagement has improved.

Workforce Development: A comprehensive workforce strategy is in development, alongside targeted training to build system-wide capacity.

Areas for continued focus were identified as:

- Embedding improvements into everyday practice
- Strengthening impact measurement and data use
- Expanding communication and engagement across a broader range of children, young people and their families
- Overcoming workforce capacity and workforce challenges

Deep Dive Activities

In March 2025, the Local Area Partnership undertook a focused deep dive into Priority Area 2: Early Identification, with particular attention given to the Graduated Approach, as previously reported. This activity was designed to monitor improvements by conducting a thorough examination of current practices, identifying root causes of challenges, and exploring opportunities for sustainable development. Comprehensive data and evidence were gathered to assess the current position, analyse trends, and inform targeted actions.

Building on this work, the Partnership has progressed the development of a locally tailored Ordinarily Available Provision, aligned with the Greater Manchester agreed approach. This integrated model incorporates the Graduated Approach and is supported by a Communities of Practice model to enhance school-level support and scheduled for launch in September 2025.

Coinciding with this launch, a second deep dive is planned for September 2025, focusing on SEND Quality Assurance (QA). The aim is to review existing QA activity across the partnership, map current practices, and engage stakeholders in shaping the session through coordinated group discussions. This initiative seeks to build a clear and shared understanding of QA work, identify strengths and gaps, and uncover opportunities for improvement. It will also contribute directly to strategic planning and inspection readiness.

Key evidence sources, including Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), service evaluations, and stakeholder feedback, will be reviewed to inform the process. Findings will be visualised through a dashboard or slide deck to support transparency and decision-making. Crucially, the QA Framework will be triangulated with the SEND Strategy to ensure alignment, and insights from QA activity will be used to close the learning loop, feeding directly into planning, delivery and system-wide development.

This work is particularly timely as we prepare for monitoring inspections under the SEND Inspection Framework, anticipated from October 2025 onwards. The evidence gathered through these activities will play a critical role in demonstrating progress, identifying impact, and ensuring inspection readiness across the partnership.

3.0 CONCLUSION

The Local Area SEND Partnership is continuing in its committed to improving services for children and young people with SEND and their families.

The SIAB has received assurance that we are progressing, in accordance with the commitments set out in the Local Area SEND Priority Impact Plan. There is still a considerable amount of work to be done, and it is essential that we maintain a consistent pace and ensure that we capture the impact for our children, young people and their families and that this is sustained throughout.

List of Background Papers:-

Bury SEND POST Stocktake Letter, July 2025

Contact Details:-

[Report Author] Wendy Young, Head of Service, SEND & Inclusion

Executive Director sign off Date:_____

JET Meeting Date:_____