

SCRUTINY REPORT

MEETING: Children & Young People Scrutiny

DATE: 23 July 2026

SUBJECT: Bury's Local Area SEND Monitoring Inspection

REPORT FROM: Ben Dunne, Director of Education & Skills

CONTACT OFFICER: Wendy Young, Head of SEND

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Between 9 and 11 March 2026, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) undertook a monitoring inspection of the Bury Local Area Partnership to assess progress against the six Areas for Priority Action (APAs) identified in the full Area SEND inspection that took place in February 2024.
- 1.2 The local area monitoring inspection took place over two weeks and 3 days, from the notification call on 23 February 2026 to the on-site field work between 9 and 11 March 2026. The report is due to be published on 29 June 2026.
- 1.3 As part of the inspection a range of documents were shared with inspectors (over 70 in the initial upload), and during on-site activity the 2 Ofsted inspectors and CQC inspector spoke to almost 100 professionals from across the local SEND system, including staff from across the Council, our health partners and schools. Inspectors also met with parent and carer representatives and young people from our Changemakers group.
- 1.2 The monitoring inspection concluded that effective action has been taken in all six priority action areas. This represents a significant milestone in Bury's improvement journey, evidencing that:
- a. Leadership across education, health and care is stronger with prompt action when needed, leading to improved professional confidence in supporting children and young people with SEND
 - b. Governance and oversight arrangements are working well, with effective use of data
 - c. Multi-agency working and co-production have improved, with wider stakeholder input
 - d. Systems and services have been strengthened to better support children and young people with SEND
- 1.3 As noted in the report, "Effective action does not mean that the area for priority action is no longer a concern or that the local action can stop taking action to address it". However the report marks a transition point from recovery to system-wide transformation, with the Council and partners expected to continue delivery through the SEND and wider children's services reform agenda.

2.0 ISSUES

2.1 The monitoring visit focused on the 6 areas for priority action that were identified in our Local Area SEND Inspection of February 2024. These were:

- Priority Action 1 - Leaders across the partnership should ensure that the SEND strategy continues to be implemented to improve the lived experiences of children and young people with SEND. This should be overseen by shared strategic governance to ensure that the pace of improvement is maintained.
- Priority Action 2 - Leaders across the partnership should work collaboratively and effectively to improve the early identification of children and young people's SEND as part of the graduated approach. In particular, they should urgently improve:
 - children's access to support from education, health and social care to improve the early identification of needs
 - children, young people's and professionals' access to an effective, well-resourced educational psychology service.
- Priority Action 3 - Leaders across the partnership should improve the quality and availability of support for children, young people and their families while they wait for specialist assessments. This includes:
 - children and young people waiting for a speech and language therapy assessment and subsequent intervention
 - children waiting for a community paediatric assessment and subsequent intervention
 - children and young people on a neurodevelopmental pathway for an assessment of ADHD or autism.Leaders across the partnership should also ensure that young people aged up to 25 years old have access to a locally agreed neurodevelopmental diagnostic pathway.
- Priority Action 4 - Leaders across the partnership should improve preparation for adulthood from the earliest ages for all children and young people with SEND in Bury. This should include a well understood and co-produced strategy to embed preparation for adulthood effectively across the partnership.
- Priority Action 5 - Leaders across the partnership should establish and implement a strategic approach to high-quality transitions for children and young people with SEND from birth to 25.
- Priority Action 6 - Leaders across the partnership should further improve the quality of the statutory EHC plan process. This should include:
 - improving the quality of advice received from professionals as part of the needs assessment process
 - improving the timeliness and quality of updated EHC plans following annual reviews
 - improving appropriate social care contributions to EHC plans so that children and young people's social care needs are reflected more accurately improving the focus on preparation for adulthood in children and young people's EHC plans so that their experiences and outcomes improve.

- 2.2 Ofsted and CQC carry out joint inspections of local areas at the request of the Secretary of State for Education under section 20(1)(a) of the Children Act 2004. At their discretion, they may also carry out monitoring inspections of local areas using their power in section 20(2) of the Children Act 2004.
- 2.3 Inspectors assess the extent to which the local area partners are complying with relevant legal duties relating to arrangements for children and young people with SEND. This includes duties under the Children and Families Act 2014, the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998.
- 2.4 The inspection framework was devised jointly by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) for use from 2023, and reviewed and updated in June 2025. The purpose of inspection is to:
- provide an independent, external evaluation of the effectiveness of the local area partnership's arrangements for children and young people with SEND
 - where appropriate, recommend what the local area partnership should do to improve the arrangements
- 2.5 Area SEND inspections are delivered jointly by Ofsted and CQC and assess how effectively local area partnerships:
- Identify and meet the needs of children and young people with SEND
 - Improve outcomes across education, health and care
 - Work in partnership with families through co-production
- 2.6 Inspections evaluate how well members of a local area partnership work together to improve the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND. The 'Local area partnership' refers to those in education, health and social care who are responsible for the strategic planning, commissioning, management, delivery and evaluation of arrangements for children and young people with SEND who live in a local area.
- 2.7 When evaluating the local area partnership, inspectors focus mainly on how effectively the local authority and integrated care board (ICB) jointly plan, evaluate and develop services for children and young people with SEND.
- 2.8 The scope of the inspection covers children and young people with SEND who live in the local authority area and attend education settings or receive health and/or care services outside of the local authority's geographical boundaries. However, it does not cover those who live in other local areas and attend an education setting within the local authority's boundaries.
- 2.9 A full re-inspection would be expected 3 years after our original inspection in February 2024, or 18 months after the monitoring inspection. This would indicate an inspection date between February 2027 and September 2027.

3.0 CONCLUSION

Continued improvement and transformation: next steps

- 3.1 In February 2026 – on the same date that Bury received notification of the inspection - the government published its reforms to the SEND system in England as part of its White Paper, 'Every Child Achieving and Thriving'. This paper sets out expectations for major transformation across the school and SEND system.
- 3.2 As part of the wider transformation, all local areas were asked to co-produce a local area SEND Reforms Plan and submit to the DfE by 19 June 2026, which has been successfully completed.
- 3.3 The SEND Reform Plan will replace the Priority Impact Plan (PIP) as our main area of transformation, as a natural step on our improvement journey. The plan is focused on the four pillars of SEND reform:
- Strengthening inclusion across settings - ensuring mainstream education can meet a wider range of needs
 - Improving access to specialist support and local placements
 - System leadership, partnership and co-production
 - Inclusive culture and behaviours (enabled by system enablers)
- 3.4 Our robust partnership approach to governance will continue to oversee delivery of the SEND Reforms Plan, and governance arrangements are being refreshed to ensure that with new reform and transformation priorities we do not lose sight of ongoing improvement.
- 3.5 External scrutiny through the DfE will be in place as part of the Reforms, with regular meetings with our Senior SEND Delivery Case Lead and quarterly data returns.
- 3.6 We will also continue to meet with Ofsted annually as part of the Area Engagement Meeting process which will include scrutiny of our Self-Evaluation.

List of Background Papers:-

Bury Area SEND Monitoring Inspection

Contact Details:-

Beth Speak, Children's Improvement & Transformation Manager b.speak@bury.gov.uk

Executive Director sign off Date: _____

JET Meeting Date: _____