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Dear Colleague,

Joint local area SEND inspection in Nottinghamshire

As you know, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) undertook a joint inspection of the local area of Nottinghamshire between the 20 and 24 June 2016. The purpose of the inspection was to review the area's effectiveness in implementing the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) reforms following the biggest Government overhaul we've seen nationally of services to support SEND families and carers in over 40 year.

Nottinghamshire is only the third area in the country to be inspected under this new regime out of 150 which will all be inspected over the next three years. Being inspected so early on under a new inspection framework is always a disadvantage. Had we been inspected in three years' time, we would inevitably have been further along our SEND journey and would have had the advantage of learning from those inspections that went before us. As it is, it is reasonable to expect that the inspectors would identify areas of development for Nottinghamshire.

Under the framework which describes the arrangements for these inspections, each local area receives a joint letter from Ofsted and the CQC following the inspection. This details the inspectors' key findings and outcomes. This takes a narrative form, rather than a specific grading.

We are writing to advise that Nottinghamshire has now received its outcome letter; a copy of which is appended for your information. The letter has been published on the Ofsted website and we will make it available to the citizens of Nottinghamshire via the County Council and Local Offer websites.

You will see from the letter that there are a number of positive findings drawn from across education, health and social care, in terms of the support that is offered to children and young people with SEND and their families. In particular the inspection team recognised:

- the high level of commitment that they found amongst all stakeholders towards the implementation of the reforms and the tenacity of local area leaders in piloting new ways of working to improve outcomes
- the strength of our Families of Schools structure and the support provided to enable schools and settings to access advice, guidance and funding to quickly meet the identified needs of children and young people. This structure also supports the transition of primary pupils into the secondary phase of their education
- the effectiveness of health visitors and school nurses in the early identification of children's needs

- the value of the “concerning behaviours pathway” as a tool for addressing specific communication, social, emotional and mental health needs
- that the arrangements for looked after children enable them to access support which is beneficial to them
- that there were examples of the innovative use of short breaks funding to identify and meet the needs of children, young people and their families.

The inspection team acknowledged that the local area’s self-evaluation of its progress in implementing the reforms was broadly accurate. The inspection letter notes, for example, that a transition protocol has been produced to address concerns and anxieties about the move between children’s and adult services, but that further work is needed before this is fully implemented.

Similarly, the letter notes that the Integrated Children’s Disability Service, which becomes fully operational from September 2016, has already recognised the need to improve the quality and consistency of Education Health and Care Plans, and that this has been identified as a priority for the new service.

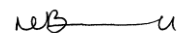
Derek Higton, the Service Director for Youth, Families and Culture wrote immediately following the inspection to offer some initial thoughts based on the oral feedback from the inspectors and to offer thanks for your contributions to the inspection process. We would like to take this opportunity to echo those sentiments, but also to thank you for your high level of commitment to ensuring that the reforms are driven forward. This was rightly noted by inspectors in their outcome letter.

It is this commitment which we need to harness to ensure that the inspection process is used as a positive catalyst to push on with the further developments we need to make. As such, we will be establishing a multi-agency action plan to consolidate the work that has already begun to address the identified areas for improvement and to ensure that we maintain a local area perspective on improving outcomes for children and young people with disabilities in Nottinghamshire. We will of course, keep you abreast of these developments.

Yours sincerely,



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