

Tips on Engaging in a Local Area SEND Inspection

During a Local Area SEND Inspection, you may have opportunities to speak with Inspectors about your role, the work you do with children and young people, and how you collaborate with partners to improve outcomes. These conversations provide an opportunity to showcase the positive impact of our collective work and demonstrate our commitment to delivering high-quality support for children and young people with SEND.

We understand that an inspection can feel like a demanding, and sometimes stressful, experience. To support you throughout the process, you will be invited to attend pre- and post-meeting debriefs. You are also encouraged to speak to your manager, a member of the Inspection Logistics Team, or the LANO/Deputy LANO if you have any questions/concerns. This resource has been developed to help you feel confident, prepared, and informed during the inspection period. It provides practical guidance and tips on effective communication and engagement, helping you to share your knowledge, experience and achievements in a professional and consistent way.

General Approach

- Be welcoming, professional and courteous at all times.
- Remain calm and confident. Inspectors are there to understand the local area, not to catch people out.
- Be mindful of conversations in wider office spaces, especially when inspectors are on site.
- Be honest if you do not know something. Offer to find out or direct inspectors to the appropriate colleague.

- Focus on the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND and their families.

Communication with Inspectors

- Listen carefully to the question being asked.
- Answer the question directly before providing additional context.
- Use clear, jargon-free language where possible.
- Avoid acronyms unless you explain them.
- Give examples to demonstrate your points.
- Distinguish between:
 - What is currently in place.
 - What is being developed.
 - Future plans.

Evidence and Examples

- Use real examples of practice and impact.
- Be prepared to talk about:
 - How children, young people and families are involved.
 - Multi-agency working.
 - Decision-making processes.
 - Outcomes achieved and impacts made.
 - Challenges and improvement actions.
- Ensure claims are supported by evidence where possible.

Being Honest About Challenges

- It is acceptable to acknowledge areas for development.
- Demonstrate awareness of challenges and what is being done to address them.
- Avoid becoming defensive if discussing areas of weakness.

- Inspectors value self-awareness and continuous improvement.

Consistency Across the Partnership

- Use agreed local area terminology and priorities.
- Be familiar with:
 - The Local Area Partnership vision and values.
 - Governance and accountability arrangements for the Local Area Partnership.
 - The local area's strengths and key improvement priorities outlined in the Self-Evaluation Framework (SEF)
 - Recent progress made.
- Understand your own role and contribution within the wider SEND system.

Working Environment

- Be punctual for meetings and discussions.
- Have requested information available and organised.
- Minimise interruptions during meetings where possible.
- Ensure confidentiality is maintained at all times.

- Ensure any Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOEs), or requests for additional information, are noted and shared with the Logistics Team in a timely way

Talking About Children and Families

- Always use respectful, strength-based, person-centred language.
- Focus on outcomes, impact, and lived experiences.
- Be mindful of confidentiality and avoid sharing identifiable information unnecessarily.
- Demonstrate how the voice of children, young people and families informs practice.

Things to Avoid

- Bring along memory aids to meetings but try and avoid reading directly from a prepared script.
- Guessing answers.
- Criticising partners or other teams – we are a partnership.
- Using jargon-heavy language.
- Making claims that cannot be evidenced.
- Overstating success or understating challenges.

Be yourself, be honest, and be proud of the work you do. Inspectors want to understand the reality of the experiences of children and young people with SEND. Speak confidently about your role, the impact of your work, and the improvements we are making together.