

4 March 2019

Ms Sally Robinson  
Director, Children's and Joint Commissioning Services  
Hartlepool Borough Council  
Civic Centre  
Hartlepool  
TS24 8AY

Nicola Bailey, Clinical Commissioning Group Chief Officer  
Danielle Swainston, Local Area Nominated Officer

Dear Ms Robinson

### **Joint local area SEND revisit in Hartlepool**

Between 21 and 23 January 2019, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) revisited Hartlepool to decide whether the local area has made sufficient progress in addressing the areas of significant weakness detailed in the written statement of action (WSOA) issued on 10 October 2016.

As a result of the findings of the initial inspection and in accordance with the Children Act 2004 (Joint Area Reviews) Regulations 2015, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) determined that a written statement of action was required because of significant areas of weakness in the local area's practice. HMCI determined that the local authority and the area's clinical commissioning group (CCG) were jointly responsible for submitting the written statement to Ofsted. This was declared fit for purpose on 12 April 2017.

**Inspectors are of the opinion that local area leaders have not made sufficient progress to improve each of the serious weaknesses identified at the initial inspection.** This letter outlines our findings from the revisit.

The inspection was led by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors from Ofsted and a Children's Services Inspector from CQC.

Inspectors spoke with children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), parents and carers, along with local authority and National Health Service (NHS) officers. They visited a range of providers and spoke to leaders and staff about how they are implementing the disability and special educational needs reforms. Inspectors looked at a range of information about the performance of the local area. Inspectors met with leaders from the local area for health, social care and education. They reviewed performance data and evidence about the local offer and joint commissioning.

## Main findings

### ■ **Inconsistencies in the timeliness and effectiveness of the local area's arrangements for identifying and assessing children and young people's special educational needs and/or disabilities.**

There has been significant improvement in the proportion of education, health and care (EHC) assessments which are completed within the statutory 20-week timescale. The quality of professional advice provided by some health practitioners, such as speech and language therapists, has also improved. However, the quality of EHC assessments and plans is not checked systematically by local area leaders. As a result, the specificity of education, health and care provision in plans remains too variable and the outcomes continue to be neither measurable nor meaningful for too many children, young people and families. Weaknesses in improvement plans together with a lack of systematic checks on the impact of actions has held back the local area's progress. Governance of the local area's response to this significant weakness has not had the focus and urgency needed to keep the partnership's actions on track. **The local area has not made sufficient progress in addressing this area of significant weakness.**

### ■ **Weaknesses in providing clear and timely information, advice and support for children, young people and families.**

Local area leaders are striving to work more closely with parents and carers in Hartlepool. The parent and carer forum (PCF), 'one Hart, one mind, one future', has had a high-profile and influential role in helping local area leaders to understand better the experience of children and young people with SEND and their families. Local area leaders and the PCF have worked proactively to find solutions to several difficulties experienced by children, young people and families. This has led to improvement in some individual specialist services for children and young people with SEND aged 0 to 25. Hartlepool's special educational needs and disabilities information, advice and support service (SENDIASS) is highly valued by families. **The local area has made sufficient progress in addressing this area of significant weakness.**

### ■ **Weaknesses in the joint commissioning of services for children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.**

The local partnership has a clear intent to jointly commission services in a way which is more responsive to the needs of children and young people with SEND. Although some services are beginning to be commissioned in a more integrated way, the local area's progress in tackling this significant weakness has been too slow. In part, this is because local area leaders do not have a detailed or comprehensive enough understanding of the needs of children and young people with SEND and their families. It is also because leaders do not systematically check how effectively services are working together to meet the needs of children, young people and families. Importantly, current improvement plans and governance arrangements are not providing the focus and urgency needed to achieve improvement in joint commissioning at a suitably fast pace. **The local**

**area has not made sufficient progress in addressing this area of significant weakness.**

■ **Weaknesses in the monitoring of the effectiveness of services in improving outcomes for children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.**

Local area leaders have worked tenaciously on the development of a meaningful approach to measuring and evaluating the outcomes achieved by children and young people with SEND. Although incomplete at this stage, local area leaders are beginning to use this approach to commission services in a way which focuses on the difference they will make to a child, young person or family. This is already leading to improvements in the support some children and young people with SEND receive, for example to prepare them for employment and independent living. **The local area has made sufficient progress in addressing this area of significant weakness.**

As leaders of the local area have not made sufficient progress against all the weaknesses identified in the written statement, it is for the DfE and NHS England to decide the next steps. This may include the Secretary of State using his powers of intervention. Ofsted and CQC will not carry out any further revisits unless directed to do so by the Secretary of State.

Yours sincerely

Nick Whittaker  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

<b>Ofsted</b>	<b>Care Quality Commission</b>
Cathy Kirby HMI Regional Director	Ursula Gallagher Deputy Chief Inspector, Primary Medical Services, Children Health and Justice
Nick Whittaker HMI Lead Inspector	Lee Carey CQC Inspector

cc: Department for Education  
Clinical commissioning group  
Director Public Health for the local area  
Department of Health  
NHS England