

## Inconsistent SEND Support Raises Human Rights Concerns

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Kirklees Council’s services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) remain inconsistent, despite progress since a previous inspection found “significant areas of weakness”. A new report published on 5 August identifies ongoing shortcomings in the local authority’s ability to deliver timely and consistent support.

Inspectors from Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission assessed the effectiveness of the council and health services in meeting their responsibilities under SEND reforms. While they recognised improvements since 2022, when a Written Statement of Action was issued following a critical review, the latest findings raise concerns about key gaps in provision.

One of the main areas flagged is the transition to adulthood. Inspectors found that young people with SEND often lack adequate support in moving into further education, training or employment. Some who are capable of working or learning reportedly “disengage altogether” due to insufficient help.

The report also highlights prolonged delays in accessing health services, such as child mental health (CAMHS), wheelchair provision, and diagnostic assessments for neurodevelopmental conditions. These delays mean many young people are not receiving essential support when they need it.

In education, the quality of Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans was found to be “too variable”. Many annual reviews are late, leading to disruptions and missed support. In several cases, EHC plans fail to translate into meaningful help.

Despite these challenges, the report praises the dedication of staff and leadership. Therapists and early years teams were commended for their compassionate approach and early interventions. Inspectors noted that SEND children’s voices are central to local decision-making, evidenced by their input into the design of two special schools.

Responding to the report, Tom Brailsford, Executive Director for Children and Families at Kirklees Council, acknowledged the findings but emphasised that improvements were already underway. He cited rising national demand for SEND services as a challenge and highlighted that Kirklees’ situation reflects broader issues seen across England.

Cabinet members Cllr Viv Kendrick and Cllr Jane Rylah echoed this view, stressing the council’s ambition for every child and its continued investment in special education infrastructure and collaborative support. An updated improvement plan is expected to be released in the coming weeks.