

Local Area Special Education Needs and Disabilities Systems

Peer Challenge Guidance Manual July 2023

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1. Introduction

This guidance manual is designed to help councils, Integrated Care Boards (ICB), their partners, members of staff, peer teams and managers of peer challenges to understand the purpose and methodology of a SEND peer challenge. It is not intended to be prescriptive as each challenge will have its own individual features and potential key lines of enquiry. The steps set out in the manual provide a firm base for ensuring that each challenge can be conducted successfully.

The fundamental aim of each challenge is to support councils, integrated care boards, and their partners, which includes parents/carers, to reflect on and improve the lived experience and outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

It is important to remember that a peer challenge is not an inspection and should not be conducted like one by either the peer team nor the host council. Rather, it is providing a critical friend to challenging the councils, ICBs and their partners in assessing their strengths and identifying areas for improvement. The key purpose of the challenge is to stimulate local action about how the local area system can improve the lived experiences and outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

There will be core elements common to each peer challenge but additional areas of focus can be determined by the council and the ICB. The peer challenge is an interactive exercise during which the peer team will examine evidence from a number of sources. These will include:

- documents that outline the local area approach to special educational needs and disabilities – this really needs to be the SEND Strategy and any delivery plan
- a self-assessment prepared by the Council, ICB and their partners. This is used to help triangulate the performance data, audit findings, experience of schools, early years providers, children, young people and parents and carers.
- performance data – multi-agency if possible - note standardised data dashboard anticipated as recommended by SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan.
- a variety of other documentation/evidence provided by the Council, health and partners relevant to the key lines of enquiry.

- review of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) representing the breadth of categories of need, including alternative provision (undertaken by the Local Government Association)
- Interviews, focus groups and discussions conducted with staff from the local authority ICB, local health providers, schools, early years providers, schools and other education providers including alternative provision, commissioned services, parents/carers and children and young people. These will be used to explore standard themes, the self-assessment and other key lines of enquiry that have been chosen.

The peer challenge will conclude with a presentation by the peer challenge team. This will provide the team's views on the strengths of SEND provision across the system and areas for consideration. A feedback report covering the main points of the peer challenge will then be sent to the host council.

Although this will be the end of the formal peer challenge, the Local Government Association (LGA) will ask the council for feedback on the impact and experience of taking part in the challenge. Opportunities for sector support and discussion of how good practice identified can be disseminated will be pursued through the regional SEND Improvement Advisor (SIA) and Children's Improvement Adviser (CIA). In addition, the LGA principal adviser will discuss with the council any corporate implications of the challenge, and the possibility of developing a case study on an element of the local authority's practice.

Over time the LGA will use the learning from the challenges to contribute to the developing body of good practice to be used by councils and partners in their own improvement journeys.

2. How long does a challenge last?

The peer team will spend four days on-site with the council and its partners. This will be preceded by an intensive period of planning, organisation and preparation to produce a self-assessment, the challenge timetable, access to documentation and information and set up the review of EHCPs. The LGA will provide support and guidance through this period.

The LGA expects to have a final report submitted to the council within three weeks of the on-site phase.

3. The peer challenge themes

The peer challenge will be structured around key themes and established probes which explore these themes in detail. To ensure robustness of the challenge process the following themes will usually be explored:

- Effectiveness of leadership and governance of the SEND system across the local area

- The identification and assessment of children and young people who have SEND
- Provision of timely support that meets the range of identified needs of children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities including transitions into adult services
- Impact of local area partnerships on lived experience and improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND
- How local area partners work together to co-produce with children, young people and their families to be ambitious in driving outcomes and improving the SEND system

The local area may also identify their own key lines of enquiry that reflect their local context, priorities and existing learning. These will be agreed with the LGA and a key consideration will be that the breadth of the focus is manageable and the peer team is confident it can gather sufficient evidence to underpin each key line of enquiry. Suggested other key of lines enquiry include:

- Capacity and resources including Commissioning and Finance
- Children and young people are well prepared for adulthood
- Children and young people with SEND have access to good quality educational placements that support them in achieving their full potential

Full details of the ‘standard’ themes and probes are given in Appendix 1 which the council and peer teams need to read.

4. Basic stages in a challenge

The information in the table below sets out the basic stages in a challenge. Sections 6 to 12 and the supporting appendices contain more detailed information regarding how the methodology will work at each stage.

Stage	Time Period	Action
Initial enquiry	Any	Once the Council indicates that it may wish to have a peer challenge, an early discussion/exchange of information takes place between the council and the LGA to discuss why this may be appropriate and the process and timeline

Set-up meeting, formal proposal and scope	At least three months before date of challenge	Council confirms it wishes to have a peer challenge and scoping meeting arranged between council, and LGA to agree particular focus, dates, peer team requirements and any necessary background information. If possible ICB to join this initial scoping discussion. LGA will issue a proposal that captures this discussion. It is often extremely helpful if the key lines of enquiry for the peer challenge are shared and agreed through the local SEND leadership board (or equivalent strategic, multi-agency SEND forum that is in place locally)
Allocation of challenge manager and support.	As soon as council confirms date for a challenge	LGA allocate challenge manager and project co-ordinator.
Identification of peer team	As soon as council confirms requirements.	LGA sources potential peer team members which are agreed with the council and ICB as soon as possible.
Initial preparation	Commence as soon as council confirms date for a challenge	Peer challenge manager undertakes initial desk research regarding the council and contacts council challenge sponsor to discuss challenge arrangements.
Peer challenge preparation	At least two months before on-site challenge	The council and its partners start to collate documentation and prepare interview programme for on-site days. Identification of EHCPs to be reviewed are agreed with LGA
Final challenge preparation	At least ten days before challenge.	Council & ICB finalises interview programme for on-site work. All the above to be sent together with documents to a secure portal
On-site	On-site stage	Council and ICB delivers overview presentation. Peer team conduct interviews and produce final presentation.

Post challenge	Within three weeks of on-site stage ending	<p>Challenge manager drafts feedback report, agrees draft with team.</p> <p>Draft report subject to LGA quality assurance processes and sent to host council for comment within three weeks of the challenge.</p> <p>Comments received from council and final version issued to host council, LGA Principal Adviser, LGA Head of Children's Improvement and relevant regional LGA Children's and SEND improvement Adviser.</p> <p>Discussions held re further support. Evaluation of challenge undertaken.</p>
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5. The peer challenge team

The LGA convenes a team to deliver each peer challenge. The team represents the variety of interests in an integrated children's sector, and typically might comprise the roles outlined in the table below:

Team member	Indicative number of days involvement
A Director of Children's Services (DCS) (team leader)	Six (four days on-site plus pre-reading and report contribution)
A local authority operational manager/senior social work practitioner with experience of children with disabilities	Five (four days on site plus pre-reading and support with final letter),
A health manager/practitioner with experience of SEND at strategic and operational level	Five (four days on site plus pre reading and support with final letter)
An education specialist with experience of SEND in a range of educational settings	Five (four days on site plus pre-reading and support with final letter)
The challenge manager	Nine days (five off site, four on site)

The following points should be noted.

- 1) The above team is a 'standard team'. In practice it may be necessary to add additional team members depending on the areas to be explored, local circumstance, partnership arrangements etc. Likewise, the

voluntary sector may be represented on the challenge team, where requested.

- 2) The indicative number of days should not be exceeded without prior approval from the LGA head of children's services. Similarly, any additional peers must be specifically approved by them.
- 3) In practice it has been found to be very helpful if team members specialise or lead in their own area of expertise in examining the themes.
- 4) The peer challenge manager will try to ensure that members of the team have 'down time' during the challenge to deal with any urgent personal/non-challenge matters and to support their wellbeing. However, such time is usually very limited as the challenge process is very intensive.

In addition, a project co-ordinator will be appointed to assist with logistical arrangements, payment of expenses etc. They will not normally attend the on-site work.

There may also be occasions when, for the purposes of gaining first-hand experience of a peer challenge, LGA may request the permission of a council for another team member. In all cases, this will be agreed with the council first.

Team roles, ground rules and skills required

Although they will work as a team throughout, each member of the peer team does have specific responsibilities and there are basic ground rules under which the team will operate.

Liaison with the council

The peer challenge manager will liaise regularly with the council while the peer team is being drawn up to ensure the team matches the council's requirements as closely as possible. The aim is to have a complete team allocated at least six weeks prior to the on-site stage commencing. This is a guideline, as circumstances may dictate otherwise, and the main priority is to ensure suitability of team members.

The council should be formally consulted by the peer challenge manager once the team has been drawn up to ensure acceptability. Acceptability includes ensuring that particular team members do not have a significant current or previous relationship with the council, which could affect their ability to be impartial (e.g., previous employment, a close relationship with a senior officer or member within the council to be reviewed etc.) or a commercial interest.

Where a team member withdraws at short notice the challenge manager will propose an alternative as soon as possible, considering that the availability of peers will be limited.

Finalising the team

Once the team has been agreed, the peer challenge manager must request the peer support team to issue all team members with a purchase order to confirm the arrangements for their attendance.

Document Distribution

All the information provided by the council and its partners will be uploaded to a designated group on a secure shared portal hosted by Knowledge Hub. This can only be accessed by the team, the host authority and the project co-ordinator.

6. The council team and responsibilities

The host council will need to identify a challenge sponsor and an organiser for the challenge. The responsibilities for these posts are set out in Appendix 3, which the council should read.

In addition, the council should be aware of its responsibilities in agreeing to and participating in the peer challenge process. These responsibilities are set out in Appendix 4.

7. Set-up and scoping stage

When a council indicates that it is interested in hosting a challenge, the LGA will arrange a meeting with the DCS who will act as the council's peer challenge sponsor and representatives from the ICB(s) and on occasion from Education.

The purpose of the meeting will be to confirm that a peer challenge is appropriate, consider the focus, additional key lines of enquiry, the timetable, peer team requirements and any necessary background information.

The LGA will inform Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) that a challenge will be taking place and the proposed dates. It must be stressed that the sole purpose of this notification is so that Ofsted and CQC can take this into account when planning their own inspection programmes.

If the peer challenge is being subsidised by the LGA then they will also report this proposed activity to the Department for Education (DfE) if this is part of the funding contract that is in place.

A formal proposal e-mail will then be sent by the LGA to the council confirming the discussion and proposed arrangements for the challenge.

8. Initial preparation stage

The peer challenge manager will then commence the initial preparation stage. This should include regular liaison with the peer challenge organiser that has been appointed by the council.

The peer challenge manager will:

- liaise with the relevant LGA principal advisor and regional SIA and CIA for background on the council
- read latest inspection letters and scan through the council's website
- brief themselves on the political composition of the council
- find out about the council's children's services plans and priorities in relation to SEND.

The peer challenge manager will:

- confirm the council's aims for the challenge, ensuring that the agreed focus of challenge is still appropriate to meet their requirements
- confirm the ICBs aims for the challenge
- consider the involvement and participation of the education sector in the challenge
- consider involvement and participation of the parent / carer voice
- develop their understanding of the key issues faced by the council and local area of SEND
- consider the peer challenge methodology and expectations of the council, discuss the process and look at the practical arrangements
- consider arrangements for the final presentation.

It is important that the challenge manager ensures that the council are aware of their responsibilities for ensuring a smooth and productive challenge as laid out in Appendices 3 and 4, which the council should read.

The peer challenge manager will also contact each member of the peer team to ensure that they understand the process, discuss team roles, make sure they have a copy of this manual, identify any queries or special requirements etc.

Communications and publicity

The purpose of a peer challenge is to promote learning and improved outcomes. In that context, the council should consider communications and publicity regarding the challenge and its findings as early as possible.

Although the final report is the property of the receiving council and is not published by the LGA, its purpose is to enable improvement and learning; it is not a document intended to be kept confidential. It is unlikely that a Freedom of

Information request for the final report could be resisted. It is best to presume from the outset that the report will be publicly shared and plan to manage this positively.

The council will want to consider where and when the outcome of the challenge will be discussed e.g., the Children's and Young People's Board, the SEND Local Area Inclusion Partnership or Health and Wellbeing board. If the final report is to be discussed at the council executive, a scrutiny committee or an NHS body, it will become a public document. There may be local media interest, but pro-active PR is not recommended.

The final report will be sent to the DCS and copied to the LGA Principal Adviser and regional SIA and CIA.

9. Challenge preparation

These are crucial stages of the challenge process and vital to the ultimate success of the challenge. It requires considerable commitment by the host council and their prime responsibilities are set out in Appendix 3.

During this stage the host council and challenge manager must liaise closely and ensure that the following are prepared and supplied to the peer team in accordance with the timescales laid down:

- pre challenge documentation (see Appendix 5)
- performance data (see Appendix 5)
- on-site interview and programme (see Appendices 6 and 7).
- list of children and young people with EHCPs as outlined in Appendix 8

NB It is essential that the council read all the relevant appendices.

The ICB(s) health and education providers should also be aware of their responsibilities in contributing to the peer challenge. It will be helpful if the ICB can communicate with the regional and local SEND leads across the ICB and with provider organisations to advise them that they are participating in the peer challenge.

10. On-site stage

The sub-sections below go through the key stages of the overall on-site stage. This is the 'centre piece' of the whole peer challenge process and is heavily dependent upon the challenge preparation stages having been undertaken thoroughly. It is a demanding four days for both the peer team and the host council and requires considerable joint working and goodwill to ensure its success. It is a joint process and should be approached as one – including the 'no surprises' policy outlined below.

No surprises policy

A 'no surprises' policy should be adopted throughout the peer challenge. This means the council and ICB lead should be provided with regular feedback on the key issues emerging during the on-site work.

The peer team leader and challenge manager should also give the council sponsor a good understanding of what will be presented at the final presentation. This gives the chance to resolve any outstanding issues and ensure appropriate language and wording is used. However, it is the independent peer team's presentation and they should present what they have found (both strengths and areas for further consideration) in an open, easy to understand and constructive manner, albeit in a manner that is sensitive to the council's and ICBs situation.

The peer team should aim to give a draft of their proposed final presentation to the local authority and ICB challenge sponsors no later than 12.00 hours on day four. This should then be discussed by the council and ICB challenge sponsor (and any of their team that they wish to invite), the team leader and the challenge manager (plus other members of the peer team as appropriate). This will allow for final crafting of the presentation before the presentation in the early afternoon of day 4.

First peer team meeting

The Peer Challenge Manager will coordinate a virtual meeting (typically on Microsoft Teams) for the team to meet ahead of starting on-site. Prior to day one of the on-site stage the peer team will have its first in-person meeting the evening of the day before the peer challenge starts on site. Peer challenges typically commence on Tuesdays to avoid peers travelling to councils on the weekend.

. The peer challenge manager will facilitate this meeting and it will cover:

- team introductions
- ensuring that the team is familiar with the methodology and programme of interviews/focus groups
- agreeing who will specialise in any particular themes – if not agreed by e-mail beforehand
- agreeing who will conduct which interviews the following day – may be held over to day one if required
- answering any queries the team may have.

This meeting should be conducted with an informal yet business-like approach. It is important that the peer team get to know each other, are comfortable with their roles, understand the methodology and tasks required to complete the challenge process.

The peer team may wish to share some initial thoughts regarding the council and the challenge but care must be taken to ensure that confidential matters are only addressed in a suitable environment.

At the start of day one the peer team will meet with the council, ICB and partner representatives during which the council/ICB will present a short overview presentation for the peer challenge team.

Area SEND system overview presentation

The presentation should be for no more than 20 minutes and consist of around four slides as follows:

- SEND in the context of the local area
- areas of strength
- areas the local system wishes to develop further
- planned key actions to achieve the desired development.

It is for the council, ICB and partners to decide who to have at this meeting but it is suggested that the council considers inviting:

- Lead member for children's services
- CEO of council
- Director of children's services/council challenge sponsor
- Relevant assistant directors/heads of service
- Representative/s from the ICB – executive lead for SEND
- Designated medical officer/ designated clinical officer (DCO)
- Designated social care officer
- Director of public health
- Local authority commissioner/s
- Health commissioner/s
- Head teacher representative/s
- Representative from parent/carer forum

On-site interviews and observations

This will form the main activity for the rest of days one to three of the on-site stage. Day one will be a focus of visiting schools and settings to meet children and young people and hear directly from them, staff working with the children and young people and some parents and carers so that the voices and lived

experiences of children and young people drive all the activity and thinking over the week. The ground rules for how the peer team will operate during this stage are given in Appendix 2. The focus of the interviews will be on validation and exploration of the evidence from children and young people and parents/carers, the self-assessment, documentation and experience of schools, and evidence of practice. This will lead to discussion of the interviewees understanding of strengths and areas for the development of the service and to how those strengths and areas for development are reflected in current improvement and development work. A typical on-site programme is given at Appendix 7.

The feedback presentation

The final phase of the on-site stage will be a feedback presentation by the peer team, led by the peer team leader, to the local area SEND system and LGA representatives.

There is a standard format to the feedback presentation and the challenge manager will explain this to the team. Each member of the team will contribute to drafting the presentation, often taking personal responsibility for a specific theme(s). The language used should be straightforward and be an honest and open summary of the team's findings as regards both strengths and areas for further consideration.

The presentation should identify any good practice and suggestions for improvement that the team think should be shared within the council's region.

11. The written feedback

Following the on-site stage, the peer team will compile a report based on the peer challenge findings comprising:

- an executive summary of the key issues
- strengths and areas for further development identified throughout the process
- recommendations based on the findings and which will help the local area SEND system improve the experience of children and young people with SEND

Please note that the challenge is not intended to produce a judgment nor to make extensive recommendations. The feedback report should include sufficient detail to enable readers who were not at the presentation to understand the findings of the challenge.

12. Post-challenge evaluation

The views of the receiving council are secured through a telephone interview with the DCS undertaken by the LGA within three to six months' of challenge completion.

Evaluation questionnaires are sent to the challenge team by the project coordinator after the final letter is issued to the council.

Challenge managers will also feedback on the performance of peers.

Appendix 1 – SEND overview

In order to ensure the integrity and fitness for purpose a SEND challenge always includes the following ‘standard’ themes. However other key lines of enquiry may be added at the request of the council and ICB if relevant to SEND and practical within the time available. These include:

- Effectiveness of leadership and governance of the SEND system across the local area
- The identification and assessment of children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Provision of timely support that meets the range of identified needs of children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities including transitions into adult services.
- Impact of local area partnerships on experience and improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND
- How local area partners work together to co-produce with children, young people and their families to be ambitious in driving outcomes and improving the SEND system.

Additionally, areas may wish to consider

- Capacity and resources including Commissioning and Finance
- Children and young people are well prepared for adulthood.
- Children and young people with SEND have access to good quality educational placements that support them in achieving their full potential.

Set out below is a summary of the individual points that the peer team may wish to consider during the challenge.

Consideration should also be given to the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 and how settings, the local authority, ICB and partners ensure non-discriminatory practice in relation to the access and provision of services for children and young people with disabilities.

Leadership and governance of SEND across the local area

How do the local area SEND system leaders demonstrate that outcomes for children with SEND are improved:

- Leaders are ambitious for children and young people with SEND
- Effective leadership and governance across the council and ICB at all stages of children and young people’s lives

- Leaders have an ambitious strategy with shared outcomes and embed a culture of high expectation across services and provision
- Leaders understand their responsibilities and accountabilities in wider area strategy and legislation
- Services are providing effective multi-agency responses, developed in line with best practice and are focused on improving outcomes and experience of children and young people with SEND and their families
- The 0-25 agenda is fully embraced across partners and that each partner is playing its part in a coordinated way to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND and preparing them for adulthood
- There are clear processes for decision making which are well understood
- Leaders actively engage and work with children and young people and their families
- There is an accurate shared understanding of the needs of children and young people in their local area.
- Leaders regularly evaluate services and evidence improvements.
- Leaders created an environment for effective practice and for multi-agency working to flourish.

The identification of children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in a timely way

How does the local area SEND system:

- At an early stage of child development, services and programmes are identifying children with SEND. For example, through the delivery of the Healthy Child Programme, early help services (Family Hubs etc.) health visiting, hearing screening so that needs are met in a timely and prevent escalation of needs
- Criteria for carrying out assessment of need and accessing services for support are understood and the application of the criteria improves outcomes
- Integrated health checks are being carried out
- Parents, carers and relevant local authority are informed where a child under compulsory school age has, or probably has SEND and/or a disability
- Access to diagnostic and therapeutic services is timely (speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, portage, physiotherapy, paediatricians etc.)
- Looked after children are receiving initial health assessments in a timely manner
- Local authority and health services are identifying social, emotional and mental health needs at an early stage e.g., Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), educational psychology services
- Support is provided for parents and carers of children and young people.

- Private, voluntary and independent nursery provision and childminders are provided with support in the identification of SEND through Area SENCOs
- SENCOs are provided with support and training to undertake their role
- Statutory timescales are met for Education, Health and Care assessments
- School census data is analysed to identify possible inconsistencies in the identification of needs
- Educational attainment and progress measures are analysed and used to identify the progress made by children and young people with SEN compared to pupils who do not have SEND
- Practitioners across education, health and social care are clear about the type of information and advice they are expected to provide as part of the assessment process

Assessing and meeting the needs of children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities

How does the local area SEND system demonstrate that:

- Children and young people participate in decision making about their EHCPs and they are developed through engagement and co-production with parents/carers, children and young people
- Children and young people have access to impartial support and advice that enables them to make informed choices about their futures
- Children and young people get the right help at the right time
- The Dynamic Support Register is up to date, owned across the system and used to promote bespoke responses to those with complex needs
- There is full involvement from health practitioners and clinicians to support the EHCP needs assessment process and they are clear on process and timescales
- There is agreement between the local authority, ICB and providers on when and how health services will engage, depending on whether the child is known/not known, or was known and has been discharged
- There are clear decision making pathways and/or panel processes in place for joint funding arrangements
- Annual reviews are undertaken at the appropriate time with the relevant professionals involved
- EHCPs are quality assured and moderated & DCO's have sign off on quality on behalf of ICB
- There is a clear understanding of the graduated response for SEND and all partners understand thresholds
- There is a Parent/Carer Forum that is supported and is influential in the co-production and evaluating of services

- There is access to a wider group of parents in the planning, delivery and evaluation of services
- Children and young people are involved in the planning, delivery and evaluation of services
- The Local Offer is developed by partners and is accessible, interactive, relevant and up-to-date and enables parents/carers, children and young people to access information in a format that meets their needs
- The SEND Information, Advice and Support Service is actively promoted by all partners and children and young people have advocacy support if appropriate
- There is a Short Breaks scheme available for children and young people and promoted through the Local Offer and professionals
- There is an Autism Strategy and clear neurodevelopmental pathways for access to services
- Personal budgets are promoted and there is clear eligibility criteria and decision making processes associated with them involving all partners
- Assessments and service provision is person-centered and outcome focused
- Schools and Pupil Referral Units in the local area are rated 'Good' or above
- Alternative provision is used appropriately and is meeting the needs of children and young people
- Settings are meeting their obligations under the Equality Act 2010
- Information sharing across all agencies is good and meets statutory requirements and government guidance
- Information regarding access to mediation advice and services is available and promoted on the Local Offer.

Improving outcomes for children & young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities

How does the local area SEND system demonstrate that:

- Children and young people are valued, visible and included in their communities
- There are high aspirations explicitly set and embedded in leadership, services and partners including schools
- There are a range of independent living options for young people with SEND within the local area
- There are a range of employment opportunities available to young people leaving school and Further Education colleges e.g., supported internships
- Access to leisure and sporting opportunities is promoted to children and young people with SEND to enable them to be active members of their community

- Transition from pediatric health to adult health services is well managed and health outcomes for young adults are good
- Transition from one provider to another or a move to adult services is managed in a transparent and timely manner
- Young people and their families or carers are involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of the transition pathway
- The provision of SEND services is improving Good Level of Development (GLD) outcomes at the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and uptake of Disability Access Fund (DAF) in the early years
- Outcomes for children with SEN Support at Key Stage 1, 2 and 4 are improving
- Outcomes for children and young people with EHCPs at Key Stage 1, 2 and 4 are improving
- Outcomes for Looked after children with SEND are improving
- School attendance of pupils on SEN Support and those with EHCPs are monitored and plans put in place to support individuals to attend school
- The level of fixed term and permanent exclusions for pupils on SEN Support and with EHCPs are monitored and plans put in place to reduce the number of exclusions
- Alternative provision is ambitious for children and young people and they are supported to meet their full potential
- Young people with SEND are in employment, education and training
- Outcomes for young people aged 19-25 are tracked to include employment and health support.

Capacity and managing resources

How do the local area SEND system demonstrate that:

- Joint commissioning arrangements meet the local areas responsibilities for identifying, assessment and meeting needs.
- There is an effective joint commissioning framework that produces tangible benefit to the lives of children and young people (up to age 25) that has been agreed and co-produced with all partners including parents/carers, children and young people. This should include arrangements for pooled budgets, agreeing personal budgets, the arrangements for the assessment of need, securing the provision specified in EHCPs and preparing for adulthood.
- System leaders understand that children and young people with SEND may be vulnerable to abuse and ensure this is carefully considered when commissioning and evaluation services.
- Financial resources (including the Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block funding) are managed effectively to meet current requirements and future challenges. Areas to be addressed will include:
 - Is the budget under/overspent?

- How is the budget monitored by senior managers?
 - What plans are in place where there are overspends? Are they realistic and achievable?
 - What information is provided to the Schools Forum regarding High Needs Block Funding?
- Staff in schools and other settings, parents and carers understand the funding arrangements for SEND including how decisions are made on high cost residential or specialist provision for children and young people with complex needs.
- Physical resources and SEND provision are regularly reviewed against projected need and adapted to meet changing requirements to ensure that children and young people's education needs are met on a full-time basis including young people who require alternative provision as early as possible e.g., those children who have been excluded must have full-time education provision no later than the sixth day of exclusion.
- The local authority ensure that there are intervention plans for each child in alternative provision.
- There is clarity of commissioning and oversight of alternative provision.
- there is a sufficiently skilled, trained and supported workforce for the delivery of SEND services across the local authority, ICB, health and specialist service providers.
- there is a Designated Medical Officer (DMO) or DCO) or a Designated Social Care Officer (DSCO) with capacity and influence to ensure effective arrangements are in place and the post has dedicated Programmed Activity.
- there is support for mainstream settings to promote inclusivity.

Appendix 2 – Peer team roles and ground rules

The following summarises the key responsibilities of the peer challenge team. However, all peers should expect to work as a team and be flexible in the working methods adopted on site.

Peers should read the information relating to these roles and the ground rules that should apply to all peers, at the end of this appendix. **In addition, they must ensure that they are aware of, and adhere to, the principles of data protection and confidentiality laid out in Section 4 of this manual.**

Peer challenge manager

The role of the peer challenge manager is to:

- manage the overall challenge process and advise the team and council
- act as the first point of contact for the council and support it in preparing for the challenge, including conducting the pre-meeting and liaising over the timetable and key documents
- source the peer team through the peer support section
- act as co-ordinator, facilitator and adviser to guide the team through the challenge process
- ensure that the interviews and visits schedule is communicated to the team
- ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of the peer challenge team
- facilitate team meetings as required
- ensure that the final presentation is prepared by the team on time
- draft, with the team leader and input from the team final written feedback to the council and partners (using the relevant LGA quality assurance procedures) and liaise with the team and council to agree this
- provide insights into how the council and partners are performing against the themes including any specialist area allocated.

Peer challenge team leader

The role of the team leader is to:

- lead the team as regards professional SEND issues and judgements throughout the challenge
- act as the 'public face' of the challenge, fronting it to the council, ICB and partners, building positive and constructive relationships
- input specialist advice around the SEND challenge – in general, and around any specialist theme agreed
- read all the supplied documentation to conduct the challenge

- undertake a programme of interviews, focus groups and visits during the on-site work
- help prepare the final presentation, including drafting slides for any specialist themes agreed and deliver this to the council, ICB and their partners
- present the final feedback with support from the challenge manager and other team members
- help prepare and contribute to the final written feedback
- use relevant skills and experience to provide insights into how the authority is performing over the themes
- contribute to the formal evaluation process.

Other specialist peers

The role of other specialist peers is to:

- input specialist advice around the SEND challenge
- read all the supplied documentation to conduct the challenge
- undertake a programme of interviews focus groups and visits during the on-site work
- review a selection of EHCPs on-site and in schools
- help prepare the final presentation and be prepared to answer questions on specialist areas
- contribute to the final written feedback
- contribute to the formal evaluation process.

Project co-ordinator

LGA will appoint a project co-ordinator who will:

- ensure general liaison with the team, and the council and partners regarding logistics, accommodation and expense payments
- liaise with the team to identify any dietary requirements, mobility issues etc.
- provide all members of the peer challenge team with the following, two weeks before the on-site week commences:
 - team, council and LGA contact details
 - administrative details e.g., claiming expenses, hotel arrangements
- organise the formal evaluation process
- provide general support to the challenge manager.

Team ground rules

Some team members may not have met before or previously taken part in a challenge, and it is important that everybody is clear about the parameters within which they will be operating. To aid this, a set of ground rules have been developed and peers should be familiar with these and ensure they are comfortable with them. The challenge manager should discuss and agree ground rules with the team at the meeting on the evening prior to the on-site week, although it is also good practice to flag up the rules at first contact.

i) Ensure a positive experience for the council and its partners and the peer team

It is important to focus on the strengths of the council, ICB and their partners, as much as the areas for possible improvement.

Every team member will have their own professional and personal responsibilities during the week of the peer challenge and will want to be in regular contact with their family. However, the council and its partners must always feel that their needs are being prioritised. The challenge manager will try to ensure that team members are provided with opportunities in the timetable during the course of each day to make phone calls and look at emails. Mobile telephones should be turned off at all other times.

A peer challenge is a people-focused process, and it is vital that everyone the team comes into contact with perceives them as professional, attentive and courteous.

ii) Value colleagues' input

Team members will have different views, perspectives and knowledge, which should be respected and valued. Assimilating the views of all team members into the feedback presentation requires all team members to be willing to listen and engage in constructive debate, and to be prepared to challenge and be challenged. It is important that people feel comfortable expressing their views.

The challenge process can be intense, demanding and tiring so it is important that people are tolerant and supportive of one another during the week.

iii) Confidentiality and dealing with sensitive issues

Information that team members glean during their interviews and visits is absolutely non-attributable to individuals and this must be emphasised by the peer team at the start of every interview, focus group etc. and respected at all times, without exception.

Again, attention is drawn to the principles set out in Section 4 of the manual and which must be adhered to at all times.

It is vital for the credibility of the challenge that the team establishes a climate of trust in which people feel they can be open and honest.

A key motivation for peers is the opportunity to learn from others. Peers are encouraged to return to their own authority at the end of the process and talk about their experiences. However, in doing so, peers should respect the fact that some of the information the team comes across may be sensitive in nature and must not be used in a way that could undermine the council, ICB or the integrity of the peer challenge process.

It is difficult to predict what issues may arise during the course of a challenge. If a team member comes across anything in an interview, visit or focus group etc. of a 'whistle-blowing' or safeguarding nature, it is important that they share this with the challenge manager and team leader immediately – **before acting on it in any way**.

The challenge manager and team leader will need to make a judgement as to whether the matter is sufficiently serious to be raised with the authority or ICB e.g., where there are serious concerns about the safety and welfare of children. The challenge manager will involve the council challenge sponsor at this point. It will be for the council to decide on any appropriate action.

When compiling the peer written feedback or feedback slides, every effort must be taken to ensure that we do not present information which criticises individuals directly or in a way which enables them to be identified. However, the challenge team may decide that it is important to report back in a general way on issues relating to individuals, where a body of evidence exists.

v) Guidance for interviews

Wherever possible, interviews will be conducted by two persons. There may be circumstances, however, where the interview programme means that this is not possible.

All peer team members should follow the basic principles below:

Ahead of each interview or visit, if opportunity allows, agree with your partner the areas to be covered. In addition, agree who will provide the initial introductions and scene setting, and who will take notes (if not both of you).

At the start of each session, first introduce yourself, and then invite your colleague/s to do the same. Also take the lead in outlining that:

- the challenge is not an inspection – it is a supportive but challenging process to assist councils, ICBs and their partners in celebrating their strengths and identifying their own areas for improvement; the key purpose of the challenge is to stimulate local discussion about how the council and its partners can become more effective in delivering improved outcomes for children and young people with SEND
- the team is only there at the request of the council and ICB; it is not being imposed on the council or ICB

- team members are acting as 'critical friends', looking at both strengths and areas for further consideration
- the views of a wide range of people both inside and outside the council are being gathered
- the process depends on people being open and honest about what the council and its partners are good at, and what issues need to be addressed
- all the information that the team gleans is absolutely non-attributable to individuals or specific groups.

Outside of the introductions, peers should not talk about their own council and experiences unless it is strictly relevant to do so. Ensure everybody is enabled to contribute in focus groups and that nobody monopolises them. Do not mention comments made by named interviewees in other forums.

Remember that these interviews are for the team to gain information. They should be conducted in an informal manner and with open questions. Peers should not use the interviews to give opinions/judgements.

The focus of the interviews will be on validation and exploration of the evidence from the self-assessment and documentation and other evidence of practice. This will lead to discussion of the interviewees understanding of strengths and weaknesses of the services supporting children and young people with SEND and to how those strengths and weaknesses are reflected in current improvement and development work. The lines of enquiry and probes set out in Appendix 1 will be used to structure these interviews.

At the end of each interview or focus group, peers should ask if those being interviewed have any questions they would like to ask, or any concerns they would like to raise. Thank colleagues for their time and, assuming it has been the case, their openness and honesty.

It is absolutely essential that interviews are conducted within the agreed time limits for the discussion. Any over-running will create logistical difficulties. If there is a need for further discussion the challenge manager should arrange for a second interview.

vi) Capturing information

All team members must keep notes from interviews, focus groups etc. in a clear and accessible way, using proportionate and objective language and ensuring that all points are based on substantiated information. The notes of interviews and focus groups will be collected by the challenge manager, retained as part of the supporting evidence for the challenge and archived. These written notes should be factual records of the discussions that have taken place.

Where statements are made by individuals, it is important that peers ask for details of examples and evidence to illustrate the point made – this provides vital

evidence for the team. The team should not at any time act on 'hearsay' or unsubstantiated information. All evidence should be triangulated and robust. Members of the team usually use notebooks in which to make their notes. However, a commonly used technique is for team members to also complete a 'post it' for each relevant point and place these on flip charts in the base room under the relevant themes. This allows the team to easily share information, have a 'feel' for what has been covered, identify gaps and disagreements etc. The challenge manager will agree with the team exactly how such an approach will operate.

Appendix 3 – Council team roles

The following summarises the key responsibilities of the council team;

Council challenge sponsor

This should be a senior manager within the council (preferably the director or assistant director of children's services). The role of the challenge sponsor is to:

- commission the challenge
- ensure there is high level commitment to the challenge process within the council and its partners
- where necessary ensure that people are available for interview
- be the main link between the council and LGA on points of principle regarding the challenge, themes to be explored etc.
- ensure that the council/ICB overview presentation is prepared for delivery on the morning of day one of the on-site stage
- to ensure that all the facilities and organisation required for the challenge of EHCPs are in place
- to ensure that educational settings are fully briefed about the challenge process and understand the organisation required for the visits, including meeting children, young people and their parents/cares
- provide oversight for the council's challenge organiser and ensure that all their responsibilities are completed within the timescales stated
- receive and collate comments on the draft feedback report
- contribute to the formal evaluation process.

Integrated Care Board sponsor

This should be a senior manager within the ICB (where there is more than one ICB working across the council area, a lead ICB should be agreed). The role of the ICB sponsor is to:

- ensure there is high level commitment to the challenge process within the ICB(s) and its/their partners
- where necessary ensure people within the ICB(s) and commissioned services or health provider organisations are available for interview
- ensure that the council/ICB overview presentation is prepared for delivery on the morning of day one of the on-site stage
- to ensure that health settings are fully briefed about the challenge process and understand the organisation required for the visits including meeting staff, children and young people and their parents/carers.

Council challenge organiser

The role of the council challenge organiser is to:

- be the 'single point of contact' with the challenge manager and LGA project co-ordinator on all logistical details e.g., base room, catering, transport etc.
- prepare the draft timetable in consultation with the challenge sponsor and ensure that people are available for interview

- uploading required documents for the challenge team
- be available during the on-site stage for requests from the team additional documents, meetings etc. – in practice the challenge manager will need to see the council challenge organiser at frequent intervals during the on-site stage.

Appendix 4 – Key council responsibilities

The council should be aware of its responsibilities when requesting a challenge. These can be summarised as follows:

- identification of a challenge sponsor and challenge organiser to undertake the responsibilities outlined in Appendix 3
- attendance at a set up meeting by the challenge sponsor and director of children's services (if not the same person), ICB representative(s), challenge organiser and, if possible, key partners
- assurance that key personnel will be available and participate as required in each element of the challenge
- liaise with the ICB sponsor to ensure all information is provided on time and individuals within the health services are briefed and available for interview
- organisation of the interview schedule in conjunction with the challenge manager and ensuring that people will attend – this should be completed and finalised with the challenge manager two weeks before the on-site stage
- liaison with schools and other settings to arrange visits and meet with children, young people and their parents/carers
- completion of a self-assessment against the key lines of enquiry
- provision of the data and documentation to the LGA as outlined in the methodology (Appendix 5), by the agreed deadline
- ensuring that on-site rooms for the initial presentation and feedback are organised – both need PowerPoint projectors—***please ensure that any security/ encryption issues are identified and resolved to allow for presentations to be loaded onto local computer systems***
- attendance at the initial and feedback presentations by personnel from the council, ICB and their partners, as agreed with LGA challenge manager
- provision of a base room for the peer challenge team for the duration of the on-site week as outlined in the guidance manual, including the provision of appropriate refreshments – the requirements for this room are set out at the end of this appendix
- provision of suitable rooms for all interviews (people's individual offices are fine for these)
- ensure that comments on the draft feedback report are returned within two weeks
- contribute to the feedback and evaluation process
- commitment to ensuring the agreed action plans are followed through and an appropriate monitoring mechanism put in place.

Team base room

The council must ensure that there is a suitable base room for the team throughout the on-site stage. This must be close to where the bulk of the on-site interviews will be held. The team will spend a considerable amount of time in this room and so consideration should be given to ensuring that it is large enough to accommodate comfortably all members of the team, equipment and has adequate light and ventilation.

The room must be for the sole use of the team members, with all interviews and focus groups being held elsewhere. The room needs to be private and lockable, or at a minimum contain a lockable cabinet to securely store materials with sets of keys for team members going. The base room needs to be accessible to the team after hours. The room will need to be equipped with the following:

- two computers – with access to EHCPs
- access to a printer
- two flipcharts with marker pens and replacement paper (flip charts should be able to be hung on the walls)
- a central meeting table providing adequate room for each person on the challenge team.

The team will require around 200 large-sized post-it notes (three different colours,) for use in the team base room and during focus groups. A box of biro pens and some blue tac, and the provision of a screen that the team can connect their laptops to.

Catering

Tea, coffee, water, fruit juice, fruit, biscuits and other light snacks should be provided in the room or nearby and be accessible at any time throughout the day and evening. The team will need to be provided with lunch each day, either in the team base room or from the canteen. Where team members are visiting schools or other settings, arrangements for packed lunches or lunch in the setting should be made. It is important that catering arrangements are planned in conjunction with the timetable for the week.

The project co-ordinator will liaise with each of the team members in advance and notify the council in good time of any specific dietary requirements they may have.

Transport and Parking

The team will car-share wherever possible when travelling from the hotel to the base room location. Car parking spaces should be made available for the duration of the challenge. The council challenge organiser should liaise with the challenge manager regarding the number of spaces required on particular days. If possible, arrangements should be made to transport the team to the various educational settings. If this is not possible, address and postcode details should be provided together with information regarding car parking.

Appendix 5 – Documentation and data required at challenge preparation stages

During the initial challenge preparation stage, the host council should assemble the key documents that the peer team will need to see before arriving on site and supply appropriate performance information and the EHCPs to be audited. **These must be uploaded onto the agreed shared portal at least ten days before the on-site stage.**

The council & ICB should consider what documents the peer team will need to see to understand the council and ICB context, strategy, action plans, performance and ways of working in relation to SEND. Wherever possible these should be the actual documents themselves rather than links to web sites. Details of significant developments and initiatives should also be provided. The most recent Self Evaluation Framework (SEF) should be included.

However, the council must recognise that the peer team has a finite amount of time to read and understand documentation and so must not be swamped with unnecessary detail. It is far more important at this stage that the team has a clear understanding of the key issues and is able to ask for any supplementary information it may require while on site.

The following is a list of the typical documents that should be provided at this stage:

- self-assessment against the key lines of enquiry*
- most recent SEF for SEND and AP
- children and young people's plan (CYPP) or equivalent
- SEND & AP strategy and action/improvement plan and/or Local Area Improvement Plan
- organisational structures (local authority and health)
- extract from joint strategic needs assessment (JSNA) for children and young people with SEND
- outcomes for children and young people with SEND in national assessments
- attendance and exclusion information
- Education other than at school (EOTAS) and AP data
- data relating to the identification of SEN at SEN Support and EHCP levels
- information about the destinations after leaving school, including about young people not in education, employment or training
- performance towards meeting expected timescales for statutory assessment
- inspection reports for the local area, its services and providers
- Policy/statement on short breaks
- Preparing for adulthood strategy
- Autism strategy
- Graduated response framework and early help offer

- joint commissioning framework and strategy
- Reports to Schools Forum on Dedicated Schools Grant funding for High Needs Block
- Information regarding Safety Valve or Delivering Best Value SEND if these programmes are in the local authority
- Financial information from the ICB in relation to SEND
- The level of appeals to the First-tier Tribunal (Health and Social Care Chamber) (Special Educational Needs and Disability), including cases resolved prior to tribunal hearing
- Complaints to Ofsted/CQC
- Any relevant serious case reviews and outcomes
- SEND information produced via DfE/Department of health/local government national analysis for the local area
- Commissioning and performance data on delivery of:
 - Healthy Child Programme
 - School nursing services or neo-natal screening programme
 - 0-25 service for child and adolescent mental health services, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy (to include commissioned care pathways and specialist arrangements for children with SEND, community paediatrics & the neurodevelopmental pathway)
- Data about initial health assessments and review health assessments for children looked after who have SEND
- Pathways for referrals to health services for assessment, including CAMHS, therapies, child development centres and associated performance data
- Statistics on health attendance and input into education health care assessment and review meetings
- Any scrutiny reports on SEND
- Any reports to the Health and Wellbeing Board and/or LSCB on SEND
- Reports on engagement with children, young people, and communities regarding SEND provision.

**If the council and/or ICB have used the Children with Disabilities Toolkit self-assessment audit tool this can be provided but a narrative self-assessment is still required or Council for Disabled Children's SEND Audit.*

Team members will need to read those documents that are relevant to their particular focus during the challenge However, all team members will read as a minimum:

- Self-assessment
- SEND strategy
- Performance information

The Peer Team may request some hard copies of any documents provided should but will see to work virtually where possible.

Appendix 6 – On-site interview programme

The on-site stage is the ‘centre piece’ of the whole challenge process. Its smooth operation is vital to the success of the challenge and requires careful planning. It is essential that during the preparation of this stage that there is good liaison between the council challenge organiser and the challenge manager (who will advise on practicalities etc.). The timetable should be finalised two weeks before the actual on-site stage commences.

Practical timetable pointers

Compiling the programme and considering all diary commitments of those involved, practical arrangements, etc. can be time consuming. It is strongly suggested that this work is commenced as soon as possible with a rough draft being given to the challenge manager at an early stage so that they can advise on any practical difficulties they can foresee.

It is important to understand how the challenge team will operate during the challenge and how this will affect the on-site programme.

The peer team will not operate as one single team during the challenge. Instead, they will split into smaller teams (usually two people in each team) to ensure that between them they can see all the people required during the challenge period.

Generally, there should be two interview streams running at any one time (see example interview programme below). However, if required and where the size of the team permits, three streams may operate on occasion to allow for full coverage of all those who need to be seen or where diary commitments force this to be necessary.

The membership of the teams will alter during the period of the challenge. This means that all interviews, focus groups etc., must end at the same time so that challenge team members can swap over.

Individual interviews should be scheduled for one hour. In practice the peer team should interview for three quarters of an hour and use the remaining time to allow for crossover of teams, note writing etc.

Focus group sessions should be for one and a half hours.

The teams will need to visit a number of key sites such as nurseries, primary and secondary schools, special schools and FE provision. A visit to a Children’s Centre should be included where health services are provided. A visit to the Acute, Community Trust or CAMHS to meet the SEND lead should also be included. Transport arrangements and time for travel for these visits need to be taken into account particularly in large county areas.

Parking arrangements for the team while on site should be in place. If it is not possible for an interviewee to be on-site, an online meeting may be acceptable if agreed with the challenge manager beforehand.

The challenge team will need to meet together at stages of the challenge to compare notes, reflect on what they have found out, ask for additional information, etc. Slots for this need to be built into the timetable.

In order to cover as much ground as possible, the timetable may include evening sessions, but be careful people aren't too overloaded.

Peer teams need breaks for lunch and comfort breaks!

People the team should consider seeing during the on-site stage

It is important that the council and ICB think about who the team should see while on site to be able to understand how the council and its partners are organised, their strategies, performance etc. This must take account of any themes that the council has asked the team to explore.

As the roles and circumstances of each council and ICB are different, it is impossible to give a definitive list as to who should be seen by the team. Set out below is a list of people that the team would normally expect to see depending on the KLOEs. Key strategic members and officers will need to be seen individually but, where appropriate, other groups of staff etc. may be seen in the form of focus groups. The focus will be on seeing staff who can reflect on the evidence of practice outcomes, observation of practice and impact of improvement and development work in the council and across the Local Area Partnership.

Who	Notes
Chief executive of council	
Lead member for children's Services & any portfolio holder for SEND & AP	
Director of public health	
Director of children's services	
Senior manager(s) for SEND and inclusion, school improvement	
Social care lead with responsibility for transition to adulthood	This may sit in one team or children's and adults social care may need to come together
SENCOs	Focus group which reflects all LA areas
SENDIASS representative	
Local authority commissioners	

Local authority managers and practitioners	Educational psychologists, school improvement advisers, children with disabilities social workers, other social workers as relevant and participation and engagement lead
Health managers and practitioners	This should include health visitors, school nurses, therapists
Health commissioners	
ICB SEND lead and ICB CEO	
NHS senior managers and/or providers	Heads of Midwifery, Health Visiting, Therapeutic Services, CAMHS
DCSO – if role is established	
DCO/DMO	
Headteachers	Across range of tiers including special, Pupil Referral Unit(s) and Virtual Headteacher, Alternative Provision leads
CEO(s) of commissioned services including voluntary sector	
Parent/Carer Forum	A wider group of parents can be considered as a focus group in addition to PCF
Children and Young People with SEND	

Site visits

The challenge team must also visit educational settings and meet with the headteacher, SENCO, parents/carers and children and young people. In the case of the visit to a health trust it should be a meeting with the SEND lead.

It is essential that these site visits include a visit to:

- Special schools
- Mainstream schools – at each tier
- FE colleges
- Early years provision (nursery, children’s centres/family hubs)
- Alternative provision
- Acute, Community Trust or CAMHS In large County and Metropolitan councils, logistics around travel to sites will need to be taken into consideration.

In large County and Metropolitan councils, logistics around travel to sites will need to be taken into consideration.

Appendix 7– Sample on-site programme

The timetable below gives an indication of how an on-site programme may look. It should be studied in conjunction with Appendix 6 Please note that this is intended as a guide and will need to be amended to suit the needs of the individual challenge.

For each interview, the council should supply name/s, job title/s and location.

Day 1

Time	Team A	Team B	Notes/Additional Meetings
8.30 – 9.00	Team shown to base room, domestic arrangements etc		
09.00 – 10.00	Council Overview Presentation		
10.15 – 11.15	Visit to Early Years Provision	Visit to a Primary School	
11.30 – 12.30	Visit to a secondary school	Visit to an AP unit	
12.30 – 13.15	Lunch	Lunch	
13.15 – 15.30	Visit to FE provision	Visit to Specialist unit in a school	
16.00 – 17.00	Meet group of children	Meet group of parents	
17.30 – 18.00	Team Meeting		
18.00 – 19.00	Feedback to DCS/ICB		

Day 2

Time	Team A	Team B	Notes/Additional Meetings
8.30 – 9.00	Team Meeting		
09.00 – 10.00	Meeting with DCS	Meeting with ICB SEND Lead	
10.00 – 11.00	Meeting with SEND Board reps	Focus group of health practitioners	
11.30 – 12.30	Local Authority Commissioners	Health Commissioners	

12.30 – 13.15	Lunch	Lunch	
13.15 – 15.15	LMCS & Portfolio Holder	Focus group on early identification & early support	
15.30 – 17.00	Focus Group of Schools staff – SENCO's; Educational psychologists	Focus Group of Local Authority SEND Service Staff	
17.15 – 18:30	Team meeting		
18.30	Feedback to DCS/ICB		

Day 3

Time	Team A	Team B	Notes/Additional Meetings
8.00 – 9.00	Team Meeting		
09.00 – 10.00	Head of CAMHS	SENDIASS representative	
10.15 – 11.45	DMO /DMO & DSCO	Focus Group transition to adulthood	
12.00 – 13.20	Visit to SEND Lead of Acute Hospital Trust	Focus Group of SENCOs	
13.30 – 14.15	Lunch	Lunch	
14.15 – 15.45	Focus Group of Headteachers	Focus group children's social care	
16.00 – 17.30	Meeting with finance leads	Space for additional meeting with young people and or visit to short breaks/ yp activity	
17.45 – 18.15	Feedback to DCS/ICB		
18.15 – 19.00	Team Meeting		

Day 4

Time	Team A	Team B	Notes/Additional Meetings
8:30-11.00	Team prepare final presentation		
11.00-11.45	Presentation run-through with DCS/ICB		
11.45-12.45	Lunch		
12.45-14.00	Presentation to Local Authority, ICB and partners		
14.00	Team Depart		

Appendix 8 – Review of EHCPs

As part of the peer challenge process the team will assess the quality of a number of EHCPs. The team will look at the input from health, education and social care and the involvement of children/young people and their parents/carers.

The team will look at the plans of some of the pupils they meet in educational settings.

In addition, the team will look at a number of plans of children and young people who are:

- Missing from education or home educated
- In placements in the independent sector outside the local authority area
- In AP
- Subject to youth justice provision
- In transition from children's services into adult services
- Looked after/care leaver
- Child in need
- Child on child protection plan
- Child of service personnel
- Child in hospital

In preparation for the challenge the local authority should make available on the first day of the challenge a list of all those children who fall into the above categories. The team will then choose at least one EHCP in each of the categories to look at in detail.

Following the school visits, the team may ask for the file of a child(ren) they have seen.

The template the team will be using for this exercise is in Appendix 9.

Appendix 9 – EHCP Challenge Template

Case ID:	
Child DOB:	
SEND Officer:	
Name of LGA Reviewer:	
Date of Review:	

Brief Summary of Key Review Findings
<p>Strengths:</p> <p>Areas for Consideration:</p>

- *Please complete all sections of the review.*
- *Refer to the LGA Case Review Guidance for ‘Quality Markers’. This should be used as a guide for ‘good practice’, not a comprehensive list of points to review.*
- *Throughout each section of the review consider the outcomes for the child/young person- will this plan make a difference?*
- *Consider- Can the child and their needs be ‘felt’ through the plan?*
- *Is the plan up to date and relevant to their needs now?*
- *Has the plan been reviewed timely?*

Review criteria heading	Brief evaluation of the quality of the EHCP area.
<p>Section A: Are the views, interests and aspirations of the child and their parents clear at the outset of the plan? Is there a photo of the child?</p> <p>Is the child’s language, ethnicity, culture considered?</p>	
<p>Section B: Are the child or young person’s special educational needs detailed clearly and positively? Has the plan been written for the child rather than simply including text lifted from professional advice?</p>	

Review criteria heading	Brief evaluation of the quality of the EHCP area.
<p>Section C: Are there health care needs which relate to their SEN? Is the information presented in non-medical language?</p>	
<p>Section D: Are there social care needs which relate to their SEN or to a disability? Have social care informed the plan? Is the child's daily lived experience understood?</p>	
<p>Section E: Are the outcomes sought for the child or young person clear and SMART? Is there a balance of shorter and longer term outcomes?</p>	
<p>Section F: Is the special educational provision required to meet their SEN both detailed and clear?</p>	
<p>Section G: Is there any health care provision detailed? (as reasonably required by the learning difficulties or disabilities which result in the child or young person having SEN.)</p>	
<p>Section H: Is there any social care provision required from social services under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. Was it detailed and clear?</p>	

