

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
6 SEPTEMBER 2022

QUESTIONS ASKED UNDER STANDING ORDER 34

Question asked by Miss Karen O’Reardon

“I would like to know why, following the CQC and Ofsted inspection in 2020, a case by case inquiry was not raised to review children and young people with additional needs placed within local authority care, in the years leading up to the inspections.

I believe that the inspections identified staff members not being adequately trained on additional needs and mental health in children and young people. Parents could have been negatively impacted by this in terms of having been wrongly identified as being emotionally harmed and neglecting those children as well as being punished for an unwillingness from children and young people to attend school and having untidy homes as a result of behavioural issues and parents being worn out”.

Response by the Chairman

The CQC and Ofsted Inspection in 2020 identified two areas of focus for the Local Area:

- Under developed joint commissioning arrangements.
- Systematic weakness in the quality of EHCP’s (Education and Health Care Plan) compounded by the lack of quality assurance framework to improve new and existing plans. The Local Authority should ensure EHCP’s have good quality outcomes and good contributions from Health and Social Care.

There were no concerns raised in the inspection specifically around young people with additional needs placed in the local authority care system, therefore a case by case inquiry has not been undertaken. However, the department does routinely audit cases for learning and practice development.

The CQC and Ofsted Inspection in 2020 did not identify staff members not being trained properly in additional needs and mental health for children and young people. Indeed, social workers are trained and skilled to both assess and work with children with additional needs and those who have suffered emotional harm. Social Work basic training equips social workers with these skills and once qualified, as part of supervision and regular training, these skills and experience are built upon. The department has a detailed programme of training delivered via Learning and Development along with other inhouse training. Social Workers are required to provide evidence of their training and continuous development as part of their annual registration with Social Work England.