**Area SEND – Inspection feedback on Alternative Provision**

The purpose of this document is to identify the findings from the Area SEND inspection reports regarding AP, with a focus on good practice and areas for improvement. This may be viewed alongside NWADCS Alternative Provision Overview and AP Practice Resource Matrix, for a broader understanding of the expectations around Alternative Provision in local areas.

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|  | **Where inspections identified good practice** | **Where inspections identified scope for improvement** |
| **Strategic planning**    **LA oversight of AP**  **Commissioning** | “Partnership leaders have a comprehensive strategy for commissioning and oversight of AP following an external review in 2018. Leaders are not complacent and know there is still work to be done to ensure that the experiences and outcomes for CYP in these alternative placements are more positive.”  “The LA has consulted with schools to increase the supply of appropriate AP and specialist school places. New ideas are focusing on a more inclusive approach.”  “Leaders have close oversight of the progress of children and young people who attend alternative provision and specialist settings outside the borough. They monitor attendance, educational achievement and EHC plan outcomes. They visit settings and track the impact that each provision has on each child or young person with SEND, taking suitable action where necessary. As a result, children and young people who attend alternative provision and out-of-borough specialist settings achieve well.”  “Area leaders oversee the commissioning of placements in AP.”  “A new post to coordinate the commissioning and to check the quality of AP has been agreed. However, the pace of change is not yet fast enough.”  “Leaders have successfully commissioned effective AP as well as additionally resourced provision in mainstream schools.”  “...effective commissioning arrangements for those in alternative provision. Leaders work closely with schools to ensure that any children and young people who are placed in alternative provision remain in contact with their home schools through frequent review meetings. School leaders and partnership leaders effectively check the quality of provision twice each year.”  “The local area partnership has effective and embedded systems and structures to support commissioning and robust quality assurance of AP within the local area and out-of-area placements. This includes residential special schools. In turn, this helps to ensure that these children and young people are safe and benefit from appropriate placements which are tailored to their individual needs.” | “Leaders have not done enough to ensure that practitioners working in education, health and social care are clear about their accountabilities and responsibilities. There is variability in practice. Some professionals do not have the necessary awareness and knowledge to secure what is available for CYP with SEND. This leads to insufficient and unclear access to support and guidance and misunderstanding from families and practitioners of how placements in AP are commissioned.”  “Although leaders are in the process of evaluating and improving the alternative provision offer, they do not have secure knowledge of the quality of provisions used and offered to children and young people with SEND who need education other than at school.”  “Leaders do not have a comprehensive strategy for the identification of AP, other than the PRU. School leaders work together to identify and share school-based AP. This ensures that they can meet the needs of CYP with SEND. However, leaders do not collate this detail to help identify any gaps in provision that could be better met through the commissioning process.”  **INSPECTION AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT:**  Leaders must continue to develop their oversight, strategy, and commissioning arrangements of suitable AP so that there is sufficient suitable provision that meets the needs of CYP with SEND.  “Leaders in education should continue to review the breadth and offer of alternative provision in order to inform commissioning so that alternative provision meets children and young people’s needs and improves their outcomes.” |
| **Inclusion** | “Leaders have developed the ‘belonging strategy’ …. The strategy is underpinned by the work of the behaviour support advisory team and the effective use of AP. AP is used as an ‘intervention and not respite’. This has reduced the number of suspensions and exclusions in primary and secondary schools.” | “Too many pupils with SEND have long-term placements in AP where it is not in their best interests, rather than being offered specialist provision or being supported to stay in their own school. Leaders are aware that the commissioning of AP needs to be better if it is to improve outcomes for these CYP.”  “In schools, staff are not always well supported to understand and meet the different needs of CYP with SEND.” |
| **Monitoring and oversight of settings**  **Quality assurance** | “The LA maintains a list of registered alternative providers that it has approved following checks on the quality of provision and safeguarding arrangements.”  “Leaders regularly check the quality of the AP they commission to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of all CYP. Leaders have developed strong working relationships with key providers, which ensures effective sharing of information.”  “The LA maintains a directory of registered and unregistered alternative providers that have been subject to an annual check of their safeguarding arrangements.”  “The local area partnership publishes a directory of AP that they have checked for suitability.”  “…area leaders recognise that there remains some variability in the quality of AP. Leaders have evaluated the quality and range of alternative providers across the region to pave the way for a new AP strategy. A key aim will be to iron out inconsistencies and continue to improve the quality of AP across the local area.”  “Leaders have established robust arrangements to check on the suitability of commissioned AP and out-of-area placements, including residential special schools.” |  |
| **Pupils in settings, transition, and enabling factors** | “CYP with SEND are benefiting from improved access to AP and, where appropriate, education other than at school (EOTAS), which are carefully considered to meet their individual needs.”  “The local area partnership has extended the opportunities available to CYP with SEND who access education and support through AP. This is supporting CYP with SEND to re-engage successfully with their education. The local area partnership’s oversight of AP is robust.”  “Leaders have close oversight of the progress of children and young people who attend alternative provision and specialist settings outside the borough. They monitor attendance, educational achievement and EHC plan outcomes. They visit settings and track the impact that each provision has on each child or young person with SEND, taking suitable action where necessary. As a result, children and young people who attend alternative provision and out-of-borough specialist settings achieve well.” | “Leaders know there is a lack of appropriate specialist settings and AP (AP). This means that some CYP are not able to get the right help quickly enough. At times, this contributes to the breakdown of placements, and leads to CYP spending too much time out of school. Leaders recognise this and are planning a new strategy to address these concerns.”  “However, this provision is too often put in place when a child or young person’s needs have not been assessed or met in a timely way, which means they have reached a crisis point.”  “School leaders and parents and carers do not feel that they have been suitably involved in the decisions that have been made about these alternative provisions or on the impact they have had on their children and young people.” |