



Essex Family Forum communication to Care Quality Commission and Ofsted after deferral of SEND local area inspection. - June 2025

We are concerned about the decision to grant a deferral of the Local Area SEND Inspection for Essex, following a request from the local area partners.

While we understand that imminent, significant organisational change is underway within the Essex health system, we are deeply disappointed that this has resulted in the postponement of such a crucial inspection. Families across Essex have waited since 2019 for services to be formally reviewed and held to account.

A delay of your inspection is a delay in shining a light on what is and isn't working in our area. It also postpones the opportunity for families to have their lived experiences acknowledged and reflected through the inspection process. While structural transformation may be happening at an executive level, the daily reality for families remains the same; many continue to face serious challenges in accessing timely, appropriate, and joined-up support for their children and young people with SEND. Families are owed the opportunity to have the flaws and challenges, together with any successes, examined and assessed.

The scale and complexity of the planned organisational changes are substantial, and it is unlikely that they will be concluded quickly. With key elements of the restructure expected to continue into 2025/26 and beyond, we must ask: how long are families expected to wait for accountability? This prolonged uncertainty places even more pressure on families who are already navigating a system that often feels fragmented, inconsistent, and unresponsive.

We are also concerned that the deferral could be perceived as an attempt to avoid scrutiny of current service delivery, by all who are experiencing the challenges described above. Families are, once again, being asked to wait—this time due to internal system change—while their lived experiences feel disregarded and needs remain unmet. This decision risks further undermining any remaining trust and confidence in the system.

We respectfully urge Ofsted to ensure that families remain at the centre of all decisions regarding inspections, and are not sidelined during periods of organisational change. We hope that any future inspection will offer a timely, honest, and meaningful reflection of the lived experience of children and young people with SEND in Essex.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss our concerns further

Management Committee

Essex Family Forum