



Department  
for Education

South West Regions Group  
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Jo Walker, Chief Executive, North Somerset Council  
Shane Devlin, Chief Executive, BNSSG Integrated Care Board  
Cllr Gibbons, Executive Member for Children, Young People, Lifelong learning, and Skills

20 December 2022

## **SIX MONTH PROGRESS REVIEW AGAINST YOUR SEND IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

Dear Jo, Shane and Cllr Gibbons,

Firstly, I would like to thank you and all those, from across the local area, who attended the meeting with DfE and NHS England officials on 7 December 2022, to review the progress that has been made against your Improvement Plan over the last six months. With particular thanks to Ed Bowen-Roberts and Jacqui Scott for representing the voice of local schools and to Kenton Mee, for representing the voice of parents and carers through the Parent Carer Forum. The increasing strength of the local area partnership which has developed over time was notable.

At the meeting we heard about your shared purpose and ambition for children and young people with SEND and were encouraged to see an increase in traction when putting the plan into action. We noted the strengthening governance arrangements with increased accountability evident. The recent increase in capacity in both the LA and ICB is leading to early signs of improvement in quality assurance processes for Education Health & Care Plans (EHCPs).

We found the presentation and updated plan, with clearly defined progress against the associated key performance indicators (KPIs), helpful in showing improvements, and this, combined with feedback from partners, demonstrated:

- That improvements made in Area One have led to stronger governance arrangements and increased awareness of the Local Area SEND Strategy, resulting in the growing sense that “SEND is everybody’s business”. We are sufficiently assured that actions and KPIs have been met and that this area can be stepped down from formal monitoring. However, the Local Area’s success in improving the other areas of significant weakness will depend on these improvements being maintained. Therefore, the Local Area should regularly assure itself of this.

- That the improvement to tackle Area Six has resulted in a better understanding of data and an increase in the use of SEND data in education settings and in holding leaders to account across the Local Area. We are sufficiently assured that actions and KPIs have been met and that this area can be stepped down from formal monitoring.

The progress seen over the last six months is reassuring. At the next six-month review meeting in June 2023, DfE and NHSE will be looking for assurances that the work has continued at pace, that improvement is maintained in areas which have made progress, as well as in areas where there is more work to do. In particular, we will be interested in the following:

- How the increase in capacity across the Local Area is having an impact on outcomes for children and young people, and how the focus on moving to a needs-led service is feeding into this. We would like to hear directly from School Leaders who are implementing the four Nurture Hubs.
- How the improved outcomes for children with SEN Support in KS1 and the consistent progress 8 scores for KS4 (against a decline for SEN support nationally and regionally) are being maintained.
- How the decline in KS2 combined Reading, Writing, Maths for children with SEN Support is being tackled.
- How outcomes for pupils with EHCPs are being prioritised for rapid improvement in Key Stages 1, 2 and 4.
- If the improvement to reduce permanent exclusions for children with EHCPs is being maintained and the actions being taken to improve the permanent exclusion data for children with SEN Support.
- If the increased capacity in Area Four is having an impact on the consistency, quality and timeliness of EHC plans and on the annual review process.
- The development of joint commissioning arrangements, including how the new models meet demand in relation to children and young people with social emotional & mental health needs and those with Autistic Spectrum Disorder.
- What the SEND Board's plans are for overcoming any barriers to the recommissioning of Occupational Therapy and Speech and Language Therapy, including how escalation routes are utilised through the improved partnership governance arrangements.
- How data and the views of parents and carers are used to make decisions.
- Whether the points in the Ofsted/CQC revisit report have been addressed with clear evidence of impact for children and young people with SEND and their families.

In the meantime, the SEND and NHS England Advisers, Keith Thompson and Mark Tucker, and Emma Brown as your DfE Case Lead, will continue to provide you with support and challenge. If you have any questions or need any further support, please contact them in the first instance.

We are copying this letter to Cllr Steve Bridger, Leader of the Council; Lorraine Mulrone, National Specialist Advisor, SEND NHS England; Andre Imich, SEND professional adviser, DfE; Keith Thompson and Mark Tucker, SEND and NHSE advisers and to Emma Brown, DfE Case Lead.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Knott', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kellie Knott  
Head of Vulnerable Children's Unit - South West  
Department for Education