



Department
for Education

Department for Education
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Sue Cook, Director of Children's Services
Tracey Bleakley, Chief Officer, CCG Norfolk & Waveney
Ed Garrett, Clinical Commissioning Group Accountable Officer, Ipswich and East
Suffolk and West Suffolk

16 March 2022

SIX MONTH PROGRESS REVIEW AGAINST YOUR ACCELERATED PROGRESS PLAN (APP)

Dear Sue, Tracey and Ed,

Thank you for meeting with DfE SEND and NHS England officials on 27 January 2022 to review the progress you have made against your APP over the last twelve months.

We are particularly grateful for the contributions from your parent carer forum and school representatives. The local area's collective determination to making sustainable improvements to SEND services and to the lives of children and young people was clear.

The evidence provided reassured us that good progress is being made in a number of key areas related to the APP although there have been some delays in implementation due to the pandemic. The improvements we noted included:

- Strengthening of governance and accountability arrangements.
- A substantial capital programme to address the shortfall in specialist places.
- The action plan to respond to the issues identified in the Peer Review including a very significant investment of over £1m to increase the capacity of the SEND team.
- Improvement to the quality assurance process for EHCPs which include auditing by an external organisation to test the validity of internal quality judgements.
- Training to improve the social care contents of EHCPs and the appointment of a designated officer for social care.
- A good performance in completing EHCPs within 20 weeks in 2021.
- The introduction of a new NDD pathway in East and West Suffolk in February 2022 supported with an additional £700k (pa) investment and the new AFRID pathway to be delivered by the James Paget Hospital.
- The additional investment in speech and language services and early intervention work such as Speechlink.
- The new mental health crisis outreach service.

- Funding to increase the capacity of the EWB hub and help to reduce waiting lists.

We are also grateful to your schools' representatives for their insight and it is reassuring to learn that leaders are very involved in plans being put in place and communication has improved. However, further work is needed to demonstrate impact as this is not yet filtering down.

We are pleased that it was possible to form a new Parent Carer Forum in a relatively short period of time and we look forward to seeing the final results from the survey of parent and carer views. It was evident from the meeting that the forum representatives will provide a robust challenge to statutory services alongside making a positive contribution to service improvements. We noted that while representatives were encouraged by recent development and investments in services, they emphasised that families were yet to experience the benefits of some of these new developments and that there were still frustrations in accessing some support

With this in mind, we would wish to meet in July 2022 to consider progress in the following areas with a particular focus on the impact of recently introduced improvements:

- Progress towards the 12 and 18 week targets for speech and language therapy.
- The impact of the action plan following the peer review and the additional £1.1m investment in improving the capacity of the SEND team. In particular, how the investment is helping improve communications with families and their experience of the EHCP process.
- The difference the following recent improvements have made to the lives of children and young people and their families:
 - New dedicated parent/carer helpline, due to go live in February 2022,
 - Crisis Outreach Service, due to go live in February 2022,
 - The new NDD Pathway including the additional £700k investment in the voluntary sector, the success of the recovery plan and benefits of additional consultant capacity,
 - The difference the following recent improvements have made to the lives of children and young people and their families.

Please can you provide your availability to Corrina Bielby (corrina.bielby@education.gov.uk) for week commencing 18 July 2022 to ensure this meeting is held before the school summer holidays commence.

In the meantime, your SEND and NHS England Advisers, and DfE Case Lead, will continue to provide you with support and challenge. If you have any questions or need any further support, please contact either party in the first instance.

We are copying this letter to Matthew Hicks (Leader of the Council), Brian Gale (SEND Adviser), Anneliese Hillyer-Thake (NHSE Adviser) and Corrina Bielby (Case Lead, DfE).

Yours sincerely,

K. Moore

Katie Moore
Regional Lead

SEND Improvement and Implementation Unit
Department for Education (DfE)

CC. Ros Somerville, SEND Lead
Richard Watson, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Strategy and
Transformation