

1 May 2019

Mrs Helen Riley  
Director of Children's Services  
Staffordshire County Council  
Tipping Street  
Stafford  
ST16 2DH

Marcus Warnes, Clinical Commissioning Group Chief Office  
Tim Moss, Local Area Nominated Officer

Dear Mrs Riley and Mr Warnes,

This letter is written in accordance with The Children Act 2004 (Joint Area Reviews) Regulations 2015<sup>1</sup> to inform Staffordshire County Council and NHS Staffordshire Clinical Commissioning Groups, as principal authorities, that Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission have jointly evaluated the written statement of action submitted to us on 12 November 2019.

The statement of action is deemed to be fit for purpose in setting out how the local area will tackle the significant areas of weakness identified in the published report letter. However, some minor improvements are required.

I note your implementation of a new governance structure to monitor the progress of the written statement of action. In particular, you are in the process of establishing several new boards to have greater oversight of the specific areas identified as weaknesses during the inspection.

The plan sets out a comprehensive set of actions to secure improvements. In priority five it is encouraging to read how you intend to co-produce good practice guides with providers to ensure children and young people are better prepared for the next stage of their learning, training or adulthood. However, the column that identifies who will 'lead' the actions for priority five is blank in each of the rows. This is also the case for other actions in priorities one, two and three. These omissions will need to be addressed so that it is possible to fully ascertain who will be held to account for the successful implementation of different actions.

In priority six, you identify further opportunities to develop good practice guides with headteachers and special educational needs coordinators across your local area to address concerns relating to exclusion. This is a key area for development.

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<sup>1</sup> The Children Act 2004 (Joint Area Reviews) Regulations 2015  
[www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/1972/regulation/4/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/1972/regulation/4/made).

Therefore, it would be helpful if your plan specified further how you intend to use 'good practice guidance' once published and how any findings will be implemented and reviewed (particularly given how exclusion can place pupils at an increased risk of harm).

Many actions have quite short time frames for completion. Given the level of recruitment identified in 1.1 'Roles and responsibilities to drive improvement', these timescales may require further review to ensure they are fully achievable.

The written statement of action must be published on local websites<sup>2</sup>, so that parents, carers, children and young people can understand the actions you are taking to improve the effectiveness of the local area in identifying and meeting needs, and improving outcomes for children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Yours sincerely,

**Lorna Fitzjohn, HMI**  
Regional Director  
West Midlands

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<sup>2</sup> Regulation 4 (5); [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/1792/regulation/4/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/1792/regulation/4/made)