



Department  
for Education

Department for Education  
Sanctuary Buildings  
Great Smith Street  
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SW1P 3BT

Neelam Bhardwaja, Director for Children and Families  
Marcus Warnes, Accountable Officer, ICB

10 October 2022

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

Dear Ms Bhardwaja and Mr Warnes,

Thank you for meeting with DfE SEND and NHS England officials on 29 September 2022 to review the progress you have made against your APP over the last six months.

We are particularly grateful for the contributions from your parent carer forum (PCF) and school representative. It was clear that the local area is beginning to make sustainable improvements to SEND services and to the lives of children and young people.

The evidence provided alongside the feedback from partners demonstrated the range of actions in place to accelerate improvement. These included the updated RAG rated APP progress plan and workstream updates along with the presentation shared at the review meeting.

We are grateful to parent representatives for confirming that they are building good foundations within the SEND Strategic Partnership. The PCF is embedded in the work being undertaken in the APP along with other SEND developments including, contributing to the SEND newsletter.

Progress is being made across most of the actions set out in your APP and it is encouraging that:

- The Strategic Partnership continues showing commitment and engagement in the SEND Improvement Programme.
- You have good systems in place to oversee your improvement programme.
- The programme management is focused on the need to capture evidence of impact, in addition, to completion of actions.
- The eight district hubs have provided an opportunity to strengthen the strategic partnership between the LA, health and schools.

- Work on the Voice Project included the Voluntary Youth Service (VYS), the PCF and SENDIASS, and you are planning to launch the Staffordshire Promise.
- You undertake quarterly surveys to inform panel practice and use the analysis of that along with analysis of complaints and tribunals to inform improvements.
- You have introduced tight monitoring of annual review amendments and made changes to the district model to improve SEND key worker capacity.

We will continue to monitor the APP and meet with you in 6 months for an update on:

- The embedding of the “tell it once” approach.
- Work being undertaken to focus on the voice of children and young person.
- The embedding of Children Social Care (CSC) training and engagement, and evidence that CSC are engaged in providing compliant, timely and quality advice to the EHC process.
- The progress you are making in relation to the aspiration to have termly contact with Lead Family Practitioners within schools.
- Work being undertaken to accelerate the implementation of digital solutions between Capita and Hub.
- Progress and timescales within the risk assessment with a request to include RAG ratings.
- Workforce capacity, including Social Workers, Therapists, Educational Psychologists and Case Workers.

Your next six-month review meeting will be scheduled to take place in April 2023.

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

We are copying this letter to Alan White, (Leader of the Council), Andre Imich (DfE Lead Professional Adviser), Pat Tate (DfE Adviser), Deanne Michie (DfE Case Lead), Lorraine Mulrone (National Specialist Advisor-SEND, NHS England), Nick Harrison, Senior Programme Manager, NHS England) and Deborah Ward (NHS England Adviser) and Halit Hulusi (SEND lead).

Yours sincerely,

*K. Moore*

Katie Moore  
West Midlands Regional Lead, Vulnerable Childrens Unit  
Department for Education (DfE)