



Department
for Education

Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

Tel: 0370 0012345

By email:

Ms Sue Cook, Executive Director of People Services
Dr Ed Garratt, Clinical Commissioning Group Accountable Officer, Ipswich and East
Suffolk and West Suffolk
Melanie Craig, Clinical Commissioning Group Accountable Officer, Great Yarmouth
and Waveney
Judith Mobbs, LA SEND Lead, Local Area Nominated Officer

9 December 2020

Dear Sue, Ed, Melanie and Judith,

**ACTIONS FOLLOWING YOUR 18-MONTH PROGRESS REVIEW MEETING FOR
SEND WITH THE DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND NHS ENGLAND ON 19
NOVEMBER 2020**

Thank you to you and your colleagues for meeting with senior Department for Education (DfE) and NHS England (NHSE) advisers and officials on 19 November 2020 to review the progress you have made against your SEND Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) over the past twelve months. I am particularly grateful to Lucie Callow and Sally Garrett, School representatives and Anne Humphreys and Claire Kingaby-Lewis, Parent Carer Forum representatives for their time, and for sharing their perspectives. Please do pass on my thanks to them both.

I was very pleased to hear from your case lead Corrina Bielby, and your DfE and NHS England advisers Brian Gale and Anneliese Hillyer-Thake, that you have made clear and sustained progress against the activity in your APP and that there is evidence that your work is having a positive impact on the quality of service delivery in Suffolk.

Your APP post action plan addressed all 21 areas for improvement raised in the revisit report which are grouped under:

1. Leadership and performance monitoring
2. Communication and relationships
3. EHCPs
4. Mental Health
5. Neurodevelopment partway development

6. Community Health services (therapies)

Both in your paperwork and during your progress review, you have now been able to demonstrate that:

- you have fully addressed the issues regarding leadership identified by inspectors during the revisit. This has been clearly demonstrated by the commitment from senior staff from all agencies, the agendas of the SEND programme board, the establishment of the SEND oversight board and the focus on performance where accountable staff are asked to provide the board with the “story” behind the performance indicator. The success of the leadership was clearly evident in the area’s response to covid-19. I also note the highly effective involvement of Suffolk’s Parent Carer Network in the development and implementation of your improvement plans. It is clear that partners in Suffolk have created a much stronger working together culture that they are determined to sustain.
- you have made significant progress in addressing the issues raised in the revisit report regarding EHCPs. In particular, the improvements to the timeliness of EHCPs since 2019 is commendable and if sustained, in November and December it will likely ensure Suffolk is in the upper quartile of highest performing LAs in 2020 on this indicator. I also note the progress in improving the quality of EHCPs and the comprehensive quality assurance arrangements in place. I was pleased to hear that school representatives confirmed the improved quality. Suffolk has been quicker than many areas to focus on the performance regarding the annual review of EHCPs. I welcome the proposed support from the Council for Disabled Children on social care. I am also pleased to hear that you are evaluating the effectiveness of Moving into Adulthood Plans in informing the review of existing EHCPs to ensure they are effective in preparing young people for adulthood. Both initiatives should help sustain the progress you have made in improving the quality of EHCPs.
- you have made significant and satisfactory progress in improving the communications with a wide range of stakeholders. I note during their interim visit to Suffolk this term, inspectors from Ofsted and the CQC found that there were a number of routes in which parents could raise concerns and that these concerns received a response. We also note that when inspectors looked at a small sample of cases, two families reported improved information sharing which avoided the frustration of repeating their stories to a number of different professionals. The partnership working with the Suffolk Parent Carer Network to improve communications with a wide range of parents is evident. The multi-disciplinary surgeries for SENCOs are a promising development and I look forward to hearing how successful your plans are in ensuring effective use is made of this initiative across the county. As well as improving the content of the Local Offer on the website, you are using a wide range of other methods (social media, newsletters etc) to communicate what is available - the increased use of these facilities by the public is encouraging.

- you have made progress in improving some aspects of mental health services and services for children with ADHD and ASD. However, your plans acknowledge that more work is needed in some key areas before families experience the full benefits from your proposals. This includes responding to the Care Quality Commission's [inspection report](#) on the NSFT published in January 2020 which found that specialist community mental health services were inadequate. I note that there have been delays in implementing the service improvements for those with mental health needs who are in crisis, the implementation of neurodevelopment pathway and the overall redesign of mental health services and the business case for additional resources. I recognise that Covid 19 may have had a part in this. However, I urge that this is given urgent priority bearing in mind that the inspection report identifying mental health as a significant weakness was published in February 2017. Parents would not be deemed unreasonable in their expectation that their children should now be able to experience the benefits of the improvements.
- I am encouraged by ongoing developments, such as:
 - the investment and development of the Emotional Health and Welling Hub;
 - the additional consultant capacity which has improved waiting times for ADHD assessments;
 - the crisis call centre and the current recruitment of staff for the crisis outreach service;
 - as part of the neurodevelopment pathway, the £700k investment in additional support for families that will be in place in 2021 and the current implementation of the new pathway in Waveney; and
 - the strengthening of the CAMHS clinical expertise in the leadership structure of NSFT.
- you have made good progress in improving the speech and language therapy offer and I note the strong performance indicator regarding the number of children seen within 18 weeks by the integrated paediatric community service. The roll out of [speech link](#) in all but five primary schools is a promising development and we look forward to hearing about its impact.

Over the next six months, I propose:

- 1) (As agreed at the meeting), you will have a separate conversation with Anneliese Hillyer-Thake (NHS Adviser) and Lorraine Mulronev (Senior Nurse, Children and Young People and SEND, NHS) to discuss the Community Paediatrics as there was not time to discuss this.
- 2) Brian, Corrina and Anneliese will monitor and support progress every three months either through specific monitoring meetings and/or attendance at the SEND programme board

- 3) Brian and Anneliese will view a small sample of recent EHCPs to verify the progress you have made in improving quality

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on winning the 2020 NASEN David Ryan SEND Publication of the Year Award for Suffolk's SEND Post 16 Transition Guide.


I know that the progress you have made is as a result of the commitment and hard work on the part of the local authority, the Clinical Commissioning Groups, families and front-line staff across education, health and social care. I am also aware that local authorities are facing unprecedented pressures arising from the Covid-19 crisis and that these improvements have been made against an extremely challenging backdrop. I would like to thank you for all that you are doing to support some of the most vulnerable children and young people in society, and to congratulate you on the progress you have made. Please do continue with these efforts and build on the successes you have already achieved.

As with all local areas that were required to produce a Written Statement of Action, you will continue to receive support and challenge from your DfE and NHSE Advisers, who will wish to assure themselves on an ongoing basis that you are managing to sustain the progress you have made. As a minimum, we will wish to hold another senior official's review meeting, usually held on a six monthly basis which may be delayed until no later than September 2021. We anticipate a particular focus on the progress in implementing you plans for mental health services and the neurodevelopment pathway.

Please contact Corrina, Brian and Anneliese should you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter further.

I am copying this letter to Nicola Beach (Chief Executive); Matthew Hicks (Leader of the Council); Mary Evans (Cabinet Member for Children's Services); Anne Humphreys and Claire Kingaby-Lewis (Chairs of Suffolk's Parent Carer Forum); Jo Churchill MP (Bury St Edmunds); Daniel Poulter MP (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich); Tom Hunt MP (Ipswich); James Cartledge MP (South Suffolk); Therese Coffey MP (Suffolk Coastal); Peter Aldous MP (Waveney); Matthew Hancock MP (West Suffolk), and your DfE and NHS England advisers and case leads.

Yours sincerely,



Sidrah Chowdry
Department for Education