



Department
for Education

Department for Education
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Sue Cook, Director of Children's Services
Dr Ed Garrett, Chief Executive, Suffolk ICB
Tracey Bleakley, Chief Executive, Norfolk and Waveney ICB

13 June 2023

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

Dear Sue, Ed and Tracey,

Thank you for meeting with DfE SEND and NHS England officials on 11 May 2023 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 representatives.

The evidence provided alongside the feedback from partners demonstrated the range of actions in place to accelerate improvement. These included plans to address the EHCP timescales and difficulties in recruiting educational psychologists by agreeing a contract with Enhance to write 44 EHCPs a month.

We are grateful to parent representatives for confirming the results of the latest parent carer survey results which highlighted key areas for improvement. It also showed some improvements across some areas although the parent carer forum felt some of the improvements were marginal. We are pleased that the parent carer forum was encouraged to see the measures taken to make the improvements to key services but also reported that many families were yet to see this impact positively on the lives of their children.

The key areas of progress reported were:

- New Decision-Making Panels which include schools
- Development of Graduated Response including Suffolk Inclusion Toolkit and supporting schools with the graduated approach and early identification of SEND
- Inclusion Support Line launched – signposting to anything to do with SEND, planning to roll out to health and social care professionals in time.
- Roll-out of the Valuing SEND - 40 schools have currently not had the training, but they are being picked up in the final round
- Education Access Team introduced – working with children who have been permanently excluded, and those who are at risk – numbers remain high but can see progress with the introduction of this team and how they can roll this out further.
- Joining up Locality Model across services – this is in place in some areas and developing further next year across all services.
- Capital Programme Phase 2&3 agreed.
- £1.8m investment in new staff in Inclusion Services (an extra £700,000 since last year)

- Transition to Liquid Logic completed – a huge piece of work but has all gone to plan. This provides better tracking and a more efficient system moving forward.
- CHRIS has now been in place a year and a full evaluation has been completed. This has shown some really positive outcomes from families, wider mental health crisis focus and introduced a number of different interventions and ways of supporting children and families.
- MH Support Teams in Schools expanded – East and West Suffolk and Waveney on track to meet expected timeframes and numbers of teams in place
- Neurodevelopmental Pathways launched – work has progressed since it was launched and is now embedded with lessons
- New dashboards and Outcomes Framework developed – dashboards have been revamped, reporting to the programme board. Outcome framework has been provided and set out the journey and aspirations for the partnership.
- Care Navigator (keyworker) programme rolled out to 18-25 cohort, LD health check delivery at 75% for 2022/23 – they are getting some good feedback on how this is working alongside other programmes of support that are available.
- Therapy review
- Secured a private contract to support with the EHCP work – this contract will need to be continued after the backlog has cleared but on a lesser scale
- Carried out an audit on 100 random EHCPs which has shown an improvement in the quality of the newer EHCPs – annual reviews are being used to improve plans with 56% of plans reviewed in the last 12 months.

Like you, a significant concern for the department is completion of Education Health and Care Plans within the statutory timescales 20-week timescales which falls well below national average. Of particular concern were the numbers waiting for more than 30 weeks for an EHCPs. We do, however, note that the measures you are taking to address this matter are similar to that of other areas who have had in the past taken action to address this issue.

The further developments we are looking for include:

- Evidence of clearing the backlog of overdue EHCPs and improvements to timescales for newly started EHCPs so that Suffolk is in a position to report on significant improvements in the performance during the last quarter of the 2023 calendar year and in 2024 onwards.
- Improvements in the review of EHCPs.
- Clarity over initial assessments and waiting for diagnostic assessment/intervention and Community paediatrician waiting times.
- Discussions around CAMHS waiting times and a trajectory over the last five years
- Outcomes for children being met – at the May 2023 review meeting it was reported that between 67% and 80% of children were meeting the outcomes in their EHCP. Clarification around how this is calculated would be helpful.

Your next six-month review meeting should take place week commencing 13 November 2023. An invite will be sent for Tuesday 21 November at 10am. We would like to hold this meeting in person if it is possible for you to source a venue in the Suffolk area. A primary focus will be on the impact of the work done to clear the EHCNA/EHCP backlog.

In the meantime, SEND and NHS England Advisers, Brian Gale and Louise Warren and Corrina Bielby 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 either party in the first instance.

We are copying this letter to Matthew Hicks, Leader of the Council, Ros Somerville, SEND Lead at Suffolk Council, to your SEND / NHSE Advisers, and to your DfE Case Lead.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Thornton', written in a cursive style.

Sharon Thornton

Regional Lead

SEND Improvement and Intervention
Department for Education (DfE)