



Department for Education

Regions Group
East Midlands
Level 7, St Paul's Place
125 Norfolk Street
Sheffield
S1 2FJ

Email: RG.EM@education.gov.uk

Colin Pettigrew,

Corporate Director: Children, Families and Cultural Services,
Nottinghamshire County Council,
colin.pettigrew@nottscc.gov.uk

Rosa Waddingham,

Chief Nurse, NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board,
rosa.waddingham@nhs.net

27 February 2024

Dear Colin and Rosa

Thank you for meeting with DfE colleagues on 12 January 2024 to review the progress you have made against your Priority Action Plan (PAP) and your strategic plans for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) across Nottinghamshire.

As requested, we have noted and officials have discussed with NHSE, your frustration that NHSE were unable to attend the stocktake. As you are aware, NHSE joined the planning meeting our team hosted to review the information you submitted, and a member of NHSE's regional team had intended to attend the rescheduled stocktake but was unwell on the day.

We were pleased to hear that you have made progress against the activity in your PAP and how the partnership has matured with stronger collective leadership of the improvements needed across the county. The documentation you submitted and the evidence you provided during the stocktake, demonstrated evidence of progress, including:

- Clear senior corporate interest and engagement reflected in regular meetings between the local authority and the Integrated Care Board (ICB) at Chief Executive level. This is coupled with changes to the County Council cabinet to reflect the Leader's priorities with the creation of two children focused members (one for Education and SEND and one for CSC and Families).
- A strong sense of partnership, and leaders working more collaboratively to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

- Leaders investing in new roles focused on local area SEND transformation and improvement, including a SEND programme lead, an independent SEND Improvement Board Chair and pathway leads.
- A focus on the wider SEND system in Nottinghamshire including undertaking a SEND Improvement Programme 'Reset' to evaluate progress since the inspection. Leaders have made a decision to restructure programme activity to enable a greater focus on the Partnership's six key coproduced outcomes.
- Knowing it can be difficult to maintain a stable SEND workforce following an outcome of this nature, we were pleased to hear that professionals remain dedicated and committed to improving provision and outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
- Improved 20-week timeliness through an increase in resource to support EHC needs assessments, on average families were waiting five weeks less to receive their EHC Plans in September 2023 than they were in January 2023 (36.8 weeks down to 28.3).
- At the time of inspection, 4.5% of EHC Plans were issued within 20 weeks. This has increased to 28% in line with planned improvements, and the leadership ambition is to exceed the national average, currently at 49%.
- Co-production with families and young people has improved with effective working relationships with the parent carer forum (PCF) and Young Pioneers. Leaders have committed to additional investment in the PCF to expand the offer to local families.

However, as discussed in the Stocktake feedback meeting, there are further specific improvements we would like to see in the near future:

- SEND governance structures and reporting processes should ensure robust oversight, monitoring, and responsiveness to escalation in relation to the PAP and wider SEND Transformation.
- Effective capturing of the SEND Improvement Programme 'Reset' narrative to demonstrate how it will support the Local Area Partnership's progress.
- The partnership should refine how it reports progress against the PAP to describe clearly the meaning of 'at risk' activities and to ensure any reporting has a clear narrative demonstrating current position and next steps.
- Improved and consistent communication about progress and plans with families and the workforce.

Based on the evidence provided, it is the view of the Department for Education and NHS England that you are making progress in line with the PAP you agreed with Ofsted/CQC and in enhancing your partnership's leadership and governance of SEND. Considering the progress demonstrated and the ongoing commitment of your partnership, the department is assured that no additional intervention is required at this time.

As you acknowledged during the stocktake, post-inspection activity has required a level of critical, and at times uncomfortable, self-analysis for the partnership, and you clearly articulated the leadership's desire and commitment to build on these reflections and to move into the 'performing' phase of your partnership's development.

Your next Area of Priority Action (APA) Deep Dive is scheduled for 19 March which will gather and interrogate detailed evidence on both APAs at the operational, working level, and the next Stocktake meeting should take place in June 2024.

In the meantime, SEND and NHS England Advisers, and Gemma Foster 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 Gemma Foster in the first instance.

I am copying this letter to your SEND / NHSE Advisers, and to your DfE Case Lead.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Copley' and 'C. Gray', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Kate Copley and Carol Gray

**Regional Director, East Midlands (Jobshare)
Regions Group**

CC

Rebecca Hogan DfE commissioned SEND Adviser aspireall@mail.com

Tina Ward NHSE SEND Adviser Tina.Ward6@nhs.net

Gemma Foster VCU EM SEND Case Lead Gemma.Foster@education.gov.uk