



Department
for Education

Ms Joanne Hewson
Interim Director Children's Services
North East Lincolnshire Council
Municipal Offices
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18th June 2020

Dear Ms Hewson

NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL IMPROVEMENT NOTICE

I am writing to you in relation to the Improvement Notice issued to North East Lincolnshire Council on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education.

We are aware that local authorities are facing unprecedented pressures arising from the Covid-19 crisis in addition to carrying out normal children's social work activity to ensure children are safe and protected from harm. We know you and your teams will be doing everything you can to keep children safe during this unprecedented time.

As part of these efforts, it is critical that local authorities continue their focus on improving services. The pressures created by Covid-19 are a reminder of how important it is that we tackle longer-standing challenges in children's social care services, to ensure that we can deliver effective and efficient services that meet the needs of children and families.

We are working closely with local authorities where there is an Improvement Notice in place to understand the impact of Covid-19 and support them in implementing robust response plans. The Improvement Notice specifies certain requirements which we recognise may be a challenge for you to meet in the current climate. In these exceptional circumstances we are confirming the following flexibilities to enable you to deliver your responsibilities at this challenging time while continuing your improvement journey:

- a) Improvement boards to be held virtually with an expectation that all usual board members or their representatives will attend, including statutory partners and education leads occurring every 6 weeks at the very least.
- b) Improvement boards can be re-focussed to support management of Covid-19 and partnership response to key issues.
- c) Improvement plans to be monitored and updated with delivery risks due to Covid-19 clearly identified.

- d) Adviser roles to encompass the LA's response and management of Covid-19 and therefore reporting to update on progress of both improvement work and Covid-19 response.
- e) DfE review meetings to be scheduled virtually when necessary and within 3 months of the original timeframe, involving key individuals. These meetings should focus on progress to date as well impact of Covid-19 to service delivery.

These measures have been agreed after careful consideration, taking into account your local authority's position in terms of improvement and feedback from your Regional Improvement Support Lead and Adviser.

While offering these flexibilities, our focus continues to be to ensure that children are safe and protected from harm and we expect that the local authority will maintain momentum in progressing the improvement objectives outlined in the Improvement Notice. Whilst we are satisfied that North East Lincolnshire met the deadline in the Improvement Notice of the end of May to achieve the objectives against its original improvement plan, the authority must now produce a new improvement plan focusing on wider, longer-term objectives. If we become concerned about progress, we will take quick action to address this.

Please note that these are temporary measures for the duration of the Covid-19 crisis and there is an expectation that once you have returned to business as usual, you will return to the priorities and timeframes specified in your Improvement Notice. As ever, please continue to work closely with your regional improvement support lead as you make progress and to keep plans under review.

I am copying this letter to Rob Walsh, Chief Executive, Councillor Philip Jackson, Leader of the council and Stuart Smith, Children's Services Adviser for North East Lincolnshire. The letter will be published on the .Gov webpage - we will confirm with you when this has been done.

Yours sincerely



Matthew Edwards
Deputy Director, Children's Social Care, Improvement and Interventions