

## **Improvement Notice**

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To:  
North Somerset ('the council')  
Town Hall,  
Walliscote Grove Road  
Weston-Super-Mare  
BS23 1UJ

**This Improvement Notice is issued to North Somerset Council on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2021 following an assessment that the local area has failed to make sufficient progress against six areas of weakness in its special educational needs and disability (SEND) service provision, as set out in the Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) SEND Revisit report, published on 28 June 2021.**

1. This Notice is given to address all six areas for improvement identified in the report of the Ofsted and CQC revisit to local area services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families, dated 16 June 2021. (Annex 1)
2. To comply with this Notice, the following actions are required of the Council, working with the Clinical Commissioning Groups and its other partner agencies ("partners"), as identified by the Children Act 2004 (Section 11).

### **Improvement plan**

3. The Council will produce an improvement plan, risk register and impact framework to deliver appropriate and sustainable improvement. The plan should include clear and measurable targets for 3, 6, 12 and 24 months of implementation. It must cover the areas identified in the Ofsted and CQC revisit report of 16 June, as well as recommendations made by the Department.
4. To ensure there is clear evidence of progression:
  - a. the content of the risk register, improvement plan and a record of progress against it must be kept up to date;
  - b. the Council must ensure there is an improvement board which meets monthly, chaired by an elected member and attended by key leaders across education, health and care services, including the Chief Executive, the Social Care Accountable Officer and the CCG Accountable Officer. The improvement board must clearly assign accountabilities for all actions agreed, along with timescales for achieving them. In addition, the board should maintain an action log which is updated at each meeting;
  - c. invitations to these meetings must be sent on each occasion to North Somerset's linked SEND Advisers from the Department and NHS England;

- d. the board will oversee implementation of the improvement plan and report to the Department and NHS England every two months on progress against the objectives in the plan. It can commission updates from partners in order to do this;
- e. reports to the improvement board should include data, analysis and recommendations supported by evidence of impact of improvements on the quality of practice and experience of children and families;
- f. the Council should highlight those objectives which are slow to progress and highlight where contributions need to be strengthened;
- g. the improvement board should evidence through its working how the views of frontline staff and of schools, parents, children and young people have been taken into consideration in the development of practice and standards.

### **Department for Education reviews**

- 5. Officials from the Department will undertake reviews of progress against the improvement agenda at least every six months, and more regularly where appropriate.
- 6. These reviews may cover, but are not exclusive to: culture; performance; leadership, management and governance; quality of workforce training and support; multi-agency arrangements – including the role and contribution of health providers; joint commissioning; and the timeliness and quality of Education, Health and Care plans and engagement with children, young people, families and carers.
- 7. From time to time, the Department may require that a diagnostic review or assessment of performance in a specific service area is undertaken by a party agreed with the Department.
- 8. For any review or assessment, the Council must provide the person(s) conducting it with:
  - a. access to, and time with, staff and leadership;
  - b. accurate and up to date data on performance and quality;
  - c. facilities to carry out the reviews; and
  - d. access to minutes of meetings or any other relevant information.
- 9. Prior to any reviews, the Council should provide its own assessment of improvement. This may reflect, but is not limited to:
  - a. progress against the improvement plan objectives;
  - b. staff surveys;
  - c. the quality of feedback from parents and carers.
- 10. Taking account of the measures set out in this improvement notice, the Council

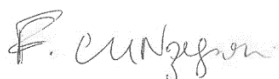
should aim for actions included in the improvement plan to be delivered by the end of April 2023 (i.e., within 18 months of the Ofsted and CQC revisit) or sooner, where appropriate.

**Improvement against the above measures will be assessed as follows:**

11. DfE & NHS officials will require formal reports on progress at regular monitoring meetings (usually 6 monthly but could be more frequent if required). DfE and NHS Advisers will also provide to the Department updates of progress or concern against the areas set out in this notice; improvement against the Ofsted and CQC requirements; and any other such information relevant to the improvement journey.

**Failure to comply with this Improvement Notice by the assessment dates or poor progress:**

12. Should the Council be unwilling or unable to comply with this Improvement Notice or should the Secretary of State not be satisfied with the council's progress at any stage, he may choose to invoke his statutory powers of intervention (s497A Education Act 1996) to direct the Council to take any further actions deemed necessary to secure the improvements required in SEND services.



**Fiona Nzegwu**  
**Senior Civil Servant in Department for Education**

**Annex 1 (Improvement Notice - North Somerset)**

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Areas requiring significant improvement - North Somerset.

- a. A lack of strategic direction and planning by senior leaders across the local area to implement the SEND reforms through an effective SEND strategy.
- b. A lack of capacity within the local area to implement the SEND reforms effectively.
- c. The standards achieved and the progress made by the children and young people with SEND were not good enough.

- d. There were weaknesses in the variability of education, health and care plans (EHC plans), including the variable contributions from health and social care, and a lack of processes to check and review the quality of EHC plans.
- e. Underdeveloped arrangements for joint commissioning.
- f. A lack of systems to track outcomes, including exclusions, for children and young people with SEND across the partnership.