

Improvement Notice

To: Plymouth City Council ('the Council')
Department for Children's Services
Ballard House
West Hoe Road
Plymouth
PL1 3BJ

This Improvement Notice is issued to Plymouth City Council on 8 November 2023. It follows the Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) Area SEND Inspection, published on 22 August 2023 and is in response to the areas of priority action and improvement highlighted in the report.

1. This notice is given to address all the areas for priority action and areas of improvement identified in the inspection report published on 22 August 2023.
2. To comply with this notice, the following actions are required of the Council, working with the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and its other partner agencies ("partners"), as identified by the Children Act 2004 (Section 11).

Improvement plan

3. The Council's improvement plans should deliver appropriate and sustainable improvement, taking account of the views of parents, children and young people, school and education leaders and wherever possible, putting co-production at the centre of improvement activity. Plans must cover the areas of priority action and improvement areas identified in the Ofsted and CQC inspection report of 22/08/2023, as well as any recommendations made by the Department, including:
 - a. clear oversight and tracking to measure the direct impact on children, young people and their families;
 - b. arrangements for improving the sharing of information between partners to enable the earlier identification of children and young people with SEND;
 - c. how partners will work together to reduce the likelihood of exclusion for pupils with an EHCP;
 - d. how partners will work with Devon Integrated Care Board to risk assess children on waiting lists, ensuring that those with multiple needs get the earliest support possible;
 - e. how children and young people with SEND who also have social care needs get the care and support they need, particularly relating to those vulnerable children identified in the inspection report;

- f. support offered to children and young people with SEND is consistent by ensuring that all children receive the mandated checks in line with the Healthy Child Programme; and that all children and young people benefit from the application of the graduated response;
 - g. long waiting times for children and young people requesting support from health services continue to be addressed;
 - h. provision of training for all social care, health and education practitioners to enable consistent identification, care and support for children and young people with SEND;
 - i. that leaders use the information available to them to plan ahead, ensuring the right services and support are in place to meet the future needs of children and young people with SEND in Plymouth.
4. To ensure there is clear evidence of progression:
- a. the Council must ensure there is an improvement board, with the chair agreed by the Department and attended by key leaders across education, with representation from school and college leaders, health and care services, including the Chief Executives of the LA and the ICB, the Children Services Accountable Officer, the ICB Accountable Officer and appropriate elected members of the council to a timetable agreed with the Department;
 - b. the improvement board must assign accountabilities for all actions agreed, along with clear and measurable targets covering the areas of priority action and improvement areas identified in the Ofsted and CQC report;
 - c. those accountable for the actions in the improvement plans must keep the content up to date, with a risk register and mitigation plan updated in line with the board meeting cycle and provided to the board in advance;
 - d. reports to the improvement board should include data, analysis and evidence of the impact of improvements on the lived experience of children and families;
 - e. the board should maintain an action and impact log which is updated at each meeting, highlighting where objectives which are slow to progress and where contributions need to be strengthened.
5. Invitations to improvement board meetings must be sent on each occasion to the appointed DfE adviser, NHS England adviser and to the Department's case lead.

6. Reviews, including areas of priority action deep dives, may cover but are not exclusive to: leadership; governance; co-production; quality of workforce training and support; multi-agency arrangements including joint commissioning, education, health, and social care provision; the timeliness and quality of Education, Health and Care plans and engagement with children, young people, families and carers.
7. Prior to any reviews, the Council should provide to the Department its own assessment of improvement. This may reflect, but is not limited to:
 - a. progress against improvement plan objectives;
 - b. feedback from parents and carers;
 - c. clear information about local accountability and governance structure;
 - d. the documentary evidence used to plan, track and evaluate the impact of actions. This may include:
 - I. A progress update against each area of priority action and improvement area;
 - II. A dashboard of performance measures showing whether targets and milestones are being met in a timely manner; any slippage; evidence of impact and whether the local area is on track to meet the next set of milestones.
 - III. Evidence that key partners, including children and young people, families and schools are playing an active role in improving services.
8. From time to time, the Department may require that a diagnostic review or assessment is undertaken by a party agreed with the Department.
9. 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.

Timescales:

10. The Council should aim for the impact measures set out in the improvement plan to be evidenced by the agreed target dates. The Council should also aim for actions included in the improvement plan to be delivered by the end of December 2024 or sooner. However, the Improvement Notice will remain in place until sufficient progress has been evidenced, and the Minister agrees to close it.

Failure to comply with this Improvement Notice by the assessment dates or

poor progress:

11. 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, they may choose to invoke their 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.

Signed:

Date:

A handwritten signature in grey ink, appearing to be the initials 'AS' or similar, written in a cursive style.

Senior Civil Servant in Department for Education