



Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Sajeeda Rose
Chief Executive
Nottingham City Council
By email

James Blythe
*Deputy Director, Local
Government Stewardship and
Interventions*

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

www.gov.uk/mhclg

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Dear Sajeeda,

I am writing to invite your Authority, if it wishes, to make representations to the Secretary of State, under Section 15(9) of the 1999 Act, about the intervention he is proposing. This follows receipt of the latest progress report from the Nottingham City Council Commissioners, and a letter from your Authority, both received on 5 December 2025. This letter, along with the Commissioners' report will be published on www.gov.uk.

Nottingham City Council has been under intervention since an Improvement and Assurance Board was appointed in January 2021. The intervention was escalated in September 2022, with the Board moved to a statutory footing, and again in February 2024 with the issuing of new statutory Directions and the appointment of Commissioners until February 2026 with powers to exercise certain council functions.

The Secretary of State considers it is clear that the Authority has made significant improvements over the past two years under your and Cllr Khan's leadership and with Commissioners' oversight. Both the Authority's letter of 5 December and the Commissioners' latest report document areas of significant progress and also areas for further improvement and focus. Ministers agree with the Commissioners' assessment that some improvements are very fragile and not yet embedded across the organisation, and that some areas, particularly around service design and transformation, are in early stages and yet to be implemented.

The Secretary of State has carefully considered the evidence available, including that in the latest Commissioners' report and letter from your Authority. He is satisfied that your Authority is not yet meeting its Best Value Duty requirements, specifically in

the themes of Continuous Improvement and Service Delivery as described in the statutory guidance on the Best Value Duty published in May 2024.

On that basis, he is minded to exercise powers of direction under the 1999 Act in relation to your Authority to secure its compliance with the Best Value Duty. In recognition of, and to help build on this significant progress, the Secretary of State is minded to provide a further but reduced package of statutory support to the Authority for eighteen months, to be reviewed after twelve.

The package of measures, which he is proposing to implement through appropriate Directions, is set out in the attached Annex. He proposes your Authority's continued improvement would be supported and overseen by two Ministerial Envoys, to be appointed by the Secretary of State, one with expertise in local government leadership, transformation and implementation and the other with local government political background. This, he intends, would help provide the sector expertise you requested in your letter to support the move towards continuous improvement. The Secretary of State proposes the Ministerial Envoys would not have powers to make any decisions on behalf of the Authority. Furthermore, in line with Commissioners' views about a less intensive model, the Secretary of State considers that the Ministerial Envoys would spend significantly fewer days working with your Authority than the team of three Commissioners.

The Directions would focus on actions your Authority should take to continue to drive and embed the improvements needed, as outlined in the Authority's letter and the Commissioners' report, in order to support your Authority to fully meet the Best value Duty and deliver for your residents. These are focussed around the development and implementation of a Continuous Improvement Plan guided by a Continuous Improvement Committee.

Your Authority asked for sector support in relation to adults' and children's services to support it reconfigure and transform these services as needed. The Secretary of State does not intend to make any ministerial appointments at this stage; but is proposing to direct the Authority to secure such expertise, which we would expect you to do in collaboration with the Envoys.

For the avoidance of doubt, the Secretary of State proposes also to withdraw the Directions issued on 22 February 2024.

Your Authority is now invited to make such representations as it wishes about the Secretary of State's proposed Directions. All such representations should be sent by email to interventions@communities.gov.uk, so as to be received on or before 11 February 2026. They will then be carefully considered by the Secretary of State when deciding whether to make any and, if so, what Directions and appointments.

Ministers are clear that they expect the Authority to continue working with the Commissioners as necessary, ensuring ongoing improvements until a final decision is made.

I am copying this letter to the Authority's Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer.

Yours sincerely,

James Blythe

Deputy Director, Local Government Stewardship and Interventions

ANNEX A

PROPOSED INTERVENTION PACKAGE

1. The Secretary of State is considering exercising powers of direction under section 15(5) of the Local Government Act 1999 (the '1999 Act') in relation to the Nottingham City Council ('the Authority') to secure its compliance with the Best Value Duty. This follows the submission of the latest progress report (the 'report') from the Commissioners at Nottingham City Council, led by Sharon Kemp OBE, to the Secretary of State on 5 December 2025.
2. The Report highlights clear progress since February 2024 when the intervention was escalated and Commissioners appointed. Nottingham City Council has stabilised its finances and financial management procedures, with a draft 2026/27 budget set without Exceptional Financial Support. New appointments to the leadership team has brought stability and ambition to improve, improved governance arrangements are in place, and the Authority has established the foundations for service improvement, including corporate and service specific Target Operating Models. However, Commissioners are clear that many changes remain 'a work in progress', with some achievements remaining fragile, that implementation of service transformation remains 'embryonic', and that embedding many aspects of the continuous improvement and reforms is still required. They recommend that the Commissioner model of intervention should end on 22 February as scheduled, and that all decision-making powers are returned to the Authority. To ensure that the Authority accelerates and embeds the necessary improvements Commissioners also recommend that 'appropriate experts' are appointed to provide lighter touch support to the Authority and assurance to Ministers on progress moving forward.
3. The Leader of Nottingham City Council, Councillor Neghat Khan, also wrote to the Secretary of State on 5 December. The Authority also recommend an end to the Commissioner led model of intervention, whilst noting the constructive support and advice provided by the Commissioners, but also notes that the improvements made will need time to embed across the whole organisation. The Authority wishes to develop a Continuous Service Improvement Plan focused on key services, supported by targeted, proportionate 'expert external support', and a future governance model including a public Improvement Committee and internal boards.
4. In light of the conclusions and evidence in the Report, and other relevant information set out in the correspondence from Councillor Khan and in engagement between the department and the Authority and Commissioners, including meetings, the Secretary of State is minded to implement a new statutory intervention package set out below. The Secretary of State believes the proposed intervention package is necessary and expedient for the Authority to continue to drive and embed the improvements needed to secure full compliance

with its Best Value Duty in order to achieve the best outcomes for its residents and service users.

5. The Secretary of State has set out the proposals to assist the Authority to formulate any representations it may choose to make. The Secretary of State acknowledges that, save in cases of urgency, the Authority has a statutory right to make representations if the Secretary of State is considering making a Direction. The Secretary of State will carefully consider those representations in deciding whether to make any and, if so, what Directions. The Secretary of State specifically reserves the ability to make further or revised Directions after implementing this, or any, intervention package (if that is what the Secretary of State decides to do).

Overall purpose and approach

6. The evidence from the Report and other information highlight on-going concerns in two of the themes set out in the statutory Best Value guidance published in May 2024:
 - a. On **Continuous Improvement**: The report sets out that whilst the foundations for transformation have been laid by the Authority, there is acknowledgement that an ambitious plan is required to deliver change. Commissioners note that these plans are embryonic in nature and state they have yet to see consistent improvement and implementation across the Authority's transformation programmes. Further assurance is required to ensure that the necessary improvements are being made over an extended period of time. The Authority have still not reached the point of consistently identifying what 'good' looks like on a deep level, and there are still various changes that are yet to embed or had time to mature.
 - b. On **Service Delivery**: Service areas are still seeing large overspend, in particular Children's Services and Adult Social Care which is impacting the Authority's ability to meet their Best Value Duty. Whilst both service areas have committed to new operating models to ensure quality service delivery, these improvements are starting from an extremely low base and full-scale transformation is required in areas that have been resistant to change.
7. The Secretary of State considers that given the evidence of concerns in relation to these areas, as revealed by the Report and other relevant materials, in line with the recommendations from Commissioners and the request from the Authority, a broad and supportive statutory intervention package is necessary and expedient to support the Authority and ensure compliance with their Best Value Duty.

Statutory intervention package

8. The proposed intervention package is designed to accelerate and strengthen the improvement work needed at the Authority. It recognises the significant progress made since February 2024, and is considerably narrower in scope than the

current intervention package. It recognises the significant progress made since February 2024 and is considerably narrower in scope than the current intervention package. It focuses on the scale of the remaining challenge and the level of improvement necessary at pace for the Authority to fully meet its Best Value Duty and deliver for its residents.

9. The aims of the proposed intervention package are to support the Authority to:
 - a. establish the Authority's Continuous Improvement Committee (the Committee) with appropriate membership and transparency.
 - b. prepare and agree with the Committee a Continuous Improvement Plan (which may include or draw upon improvement or action plans prepared before the date of these Directions), with resource allocated accordingly.
 - c. to embed improvements in relation to scrutiny and decision-making functions, financial and risk management, accounting processes and reporting arrangements, officer-member relations and service delivery.
 - d. to embed improvements to ensure conformity with the Best Value Duty, thereby delivering improvements in services and outcomes for the people of Nottingham.
10. In order to assist the Authority in achieving the necessary improvements, the Secretary of State is minded to appoint a team of two Ministerial Envoys who the Authority will be directed to work with under s15(5) of the 1999 Act. Ministers will reflect on Ministerial Envoy appointments during the 'minded to' period to ensure they are fit for purpose to support the Authority moving forward, but they are minded to appoint two Ministerial Envoys, one with expertise in local government leadership, transformation and implementation and the other with local government political background. The Ministerial Envoys will provide assurance to Ministers on progress and will report on a six-monthly basis. Ministers are also reflecting on the Commissioners' recommendation that some continuity from the existing Commissioner team would provide a sound footing for consolidating and accelerating improvement.
11. The Secretary of State proposes to direct the Authority to cooperate with the Ministerial Envoys, and to allow them all reasonable access to the Authority's premises, documents, employees or members in support of their work.
12. The intervention package is formed of actions the Authority would be directed to take. The proposed Directions would be in place for eighteen months, with a review point built in after twelve months.
13. In the event that the Ministerial Envoys are dissatisfied with the progress, engagement or commitment of the Authority in relation to this intervention package, they will report this to the Secretary of State; upon which the Secretary of State will consider what further measures may be necessary to secure the Authority's compliance with its Best Value Duty. Equally, if the Envoys are satisfied that the Authority is improving at a rate faster than anticipated, they will report this to the Secretary of State who will consider whether a de-escalation of the intervention is appropriate.

Proposed Directions to the Authority

14. The proposed Directions set out actions which the Authority must undertake to effect the changes needed as well as supporting and facilitating the work of the Ministerial Envoys.
15. Working with, and to the satisfaction of Ministerial Envoys, establish a Continuous Improvement Committee (the Committee) including appropriate membership including external expertise to provide challenge and advice. Agree the Committee's Scheme of Work and meeting agendas with Envoys. Membership of the Committee should draw on existing Committee membership where appropriate and must include:
 - Independent external member as Adults Social Care Lead;
 - Independent external member as Children's Lead;
 - The Leader as Chair of the Committee;
 - At least two Opposition Councillors; and
 - The Ministerial Envoys.
16. Within three months from the date of these Directions, to prepare and agree with the Ministerial Envoys a Continuous Improvement Plan (which may draw on any plans prepared before the date of these Directions), with resource allocated accordingly. At a minimum, the Continuous Improvement Plan should include the actions and workstreams:
 - To embed improvements in delivering financial stability across the Authority.
 - To embed improvements in the proper functioning of the Authority's scrutiny and decision-making processes.
 - To embed improvements in risk management and internal audit arrangements.
 - To continue to act to embed continuous improvement in all service areas, transforming front-line functions and the organisation's culture.
 - To continue to embed all improvements across the Authority and sustain a culture of continuous improvement and positive member-officer relationships.
17. To continue to work with other councils in the Nottinghamshire area for unitary local government and on implementing any such proposals later agreed upon, seeking the advice of Ministerial Envoys as required.
18. For the Direction period, to cooperate with the Ministerial Envoys appointed by the Secretary of State.

19. To have regard to and respond promptly and in public to any recommendations from the Committee with respect to the Nottingham City Council Continuous Improvement Plan and its implementation.
20. To allow the Ministerial Envoys at all reasonable times, such access as appears to the Ministerial Envoys to be necessary:
 - to any premises of the Authority;
 - to any document relating to the Authority: and
 - to any employee or member of the Authority.
21. To provide the Ministerial Envoys, at the expense of the Authority, with such reasonable amenities and services and administrative support as the Ministerial Envoys may reasonably require from time to time to carry out their functions and responsibilities under these Directions.
22. To pay the Ministerial Envoys reasonable expenses, and such fees as the Secretary of State determines are to be paid to them.
23. To provide the Ministerial Envoys with such assistance and information, including any views of the Authority on any matter, as the Ministerial Envoys may reasonably request.
24. To co-operate with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government in relation to implementing the terms of these Directions.