Improvement Notice

To: Wokingham Borough Council ('the council')
Shute End
Wokingham, Berkshire
RG40 1BN

This Improvement Notice is issued to Wokingham Borough Council on 02 October 2026 by the Department for Education, following the Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) Area SEND Inspection, published on 18 May 2026 and in response to the areas for priority action and improvement highlighted in the report.

1. This notice is given to address specific areas of concern that have been identified by the Department in relation to local SEND provision.

2. To comply with this notice, the following actions are required of the Council, working with NHS Thames Valley Integrated Care Board (ICB) *(formerly Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West ICB)* and its other local partners ("partners"), as set out in section 28 (2) of the Children and Families Act 2014.

Improvement steps to be taken

1. The Department requires the Council to address areas of concern identified as a matter of urgency, as set out in their published Priority Action Plan and updated Strategic Plan.

3. The Priority Action Plan addresses the following areas of concern:
    a. The urgent development and implementation by the ICB of a sustainable recovery plan for wheelchair services so that children and young people receive timely assessment, repairs and provision.
    b. The local area partnership must develop and maintain a robust, data-informed Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) that accurately reflects the current and emerging needs of children and young people with SEND in Wokingham.
    c. The local area partnership must deliver a recovery plan to rapidly improve the quality and accuracy of EHC plans, ensuring clear, current and evidence-based provision that fully aligns with health contributions.
    d. The partnership should improve joint commissioning, data sharing and multi agency governance so that services work together effectively to plan, deliver and assure high quality provision for children and young people with SEND in Wokingham. This includes strengthening oversight across education, health and social care to ensure provision is equitable, sustainable and aligned to need.
    e. The partnership should ensure that the recovery plan for the equipment service is fully implemented, monitored and embedded so that children and young people receive timely, needs led assessment and

intervention.

f. The partnership should ensure that its sufficiency strategies, including for AP, and for short breaks, are securely enacted and embedded so that there is a sufficient range of high-quality provision to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.
g. Leaders across the partnership should improve communication to professionals, parents and carers and children and young people, especially about the local offer, so that available services, their strategies, actions and impact are better understood.
h. The Partnership needs to review the identification of children with LD who are eligible for an annual health check and health action plan to ensure they are registered on their GP records as eligible. This should be promoted by the Partnership and include clear communication to families on the benefits of the annual review.
i. The partnership should ensure that recovery plans for occupational therapy, neurodevelopmental pathways, respiratory physiotherapy and CAMHS LD are fully implemented, monitored and embedded so that children and young people receive timely, needs led assessment and intervention.

4. The Council have recently worked with partners to produce a Local SEND Reform Plan. During the period in which they are delivering necessary improvements against the specific areas set out in this Improvement Notice, the Council and its partners must demonstrate the ability to also show progress against your local SEND reform plan.

5. Overall, the Council's plans, working with the ICB, should deliver appropriate and sustainable improvement. They should take account of the views of parents, children and young people, school and education leaders, and put co-production at the centre of improvement activity.

6. There is an expectation that all relevant multi-agency partners engage in this process and work in collaboration with the Council as it undertakes the required activity. The partnership, led by the Council, is responsible for developing and delivering a robust and sustainable improvement plan.

7. The Department has provided a SEND adviser and finance adviser to offer support and challenge to the Council on identifying and delivering against the necessary improvements. The Council should work with these advisers, and any other experts deployed to provide support and challenge, until such a time that the Department is satisfied this is no longer required.

8. To ensure there is clear evidence of progression:

    a. the Council must ensure there is an Improvement Board, with an Independent Chair, which is attended by key leaders across Education, Health and Care services, Parent/Carer Forum and appropriate Elected Members of the Council, to a timetable agreed with the Department. It is expected that the Chief Executives of the Council and the ICB, and the Children's Services and ICB Accountable Officers, are held to account for

the improvements required to be made through effective engagement with the Board and escalation/resolution of matters arising as the Board identifies;

b. the Improvement Board must have clearly assigned accountabilities for all actions agreed, along with clear and measurable targets covering the areas of concern identified and any additional actions recommended by the Department;
c. the Improvement Board takes equal responsibility for ensuring that they also deliver against the core minimum requirements of the Local SEND Reform Plan, that there is clear accountability through a named Senior Responsible Officer for the Local SEND Reform Plan and that improvement actions are progressed in alignment with the Local SEND Reform Plan;
d. those accountable for the actions in the Priority Action and Local SEND Reform plans must keep the content up to date, with a risk register and mitigation plan updated in line with the meeting cycle and provided to the Improvement Board in advance;
e. reports to the Improvement Board should include data, analysis and evidence of the impact of improvements on the lived experience of children and families, and the Council must ensure that they submit quarterly SEND Reform Plan data returns;
f. the Improvement Board should maintain an action and impact log which is updated at each meeting, highlighting objectives which are slow to progress and where contributions need to be strengthened.

9. Invitations to Improvement Board meetings must be sent on each occasion to the DfE-appointed SEND adviser, NHS England adviser and to the Department's lead as external attendees, rather than as members of the board.

Improvement against the above measures will be assessed as follows:

10. The DfE appointed SEND adviser and NHSE advisers, working alongside DfE and NHSE officials, will provide regular updates to ministers and the Department more generally of progress or concern against the areas set out in this notice; and any other such information relevant to the improvement journey. This includes the quality, ambition and implementation of the Local SEND Reform Plan by the Council and its partners.

Department for Education Stocktake Reviews

11. Officials from the Department will undertake reviews of progress against the Priority Action Plan at least every six months and more regularly where appropriate. We will also discuss delivery of your local SEND reform plan at these meetings, as part of the ongoing monitoring of these reforms. Where possible, we will seek to align timings so that stocktake review meetings can also cover that quarter's monitoring of your reform plan.

12. Reviews, including deep dives into the areas of concern, may cover but are not restricted 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; alternative provision commissioning; and engagement with children, young people, families and carers.

13. Prior to reviews, the Council should provide to the Department its own assessment of improvement. This may include, but is not limited to:

    a. progress against the Priority Action Plan and the Strategic Plan and Local SEND Reform Plan objectives;
    b. feedback from parents, carers, children and young people;
    c. clear information about local accountability and governance structures;
    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, each area for improvement and DfE recommendations;
        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.

14. From time to time, the Department may require that a diagnostic review or assessment is undertaken by a party agreed with the Department.

15. 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:

16. The Council should aim for actions included in the Priority Action Plan to be delivered by the beginning of December 2027 or sooner, and for the impact measures to be evidence by the agreed target dates. The Council should also ensure that delivery of the Local SEND Reform Plan is evidenced.

17. This Improvement Notice will not be stepped down until the Minister agrees that there is sufficient evidence of improvement against all of the areas for improvement. The Council should continue to deliver its local SEND reform plan alongside this improvement activity – if implementation of the reform plan is not

line with expectations, the Department may consider a revised or new Improvement Notice to address this.

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

18. 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, she may choose to invoke her 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:** 02 October 2026

Paul Schofield

Senior Civil Servant in Department for Education