



Department
for Education

Department for Education
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Tina Russell, Director of Children's Services, Worcestershire Children First
Simon Trickett, Chief Executive, Integrated Care System (ICS) Lead Herefordshire & Worcestershire Integrated Care Board (ICB)

19 April 2023

Dear Tina and Simon,

Re: TWELVE MONTH PROGRESS REVIEW AGAINST YOUR ACCELERATED PROGRESS PLAN (APP)

Thank you for meeting with DfE SEND and NHS England officials on 29 March 2023 to review the progress you have made against your APP over the last six months.

We are particularly grateful for the contributions from your Parent Carer Forum (PCF) and school representatives. It was clear that a vast amount of work has taken place. The local area has a tangible commitment from stakeholders, willing to build more inclusive cultures to improve its SEND services for the children and young people in Worcestershire.

The evidence provided, alongside the feedback from partners, demonstrated the range of actions in place to continue and accelerate improvement. These included:

- Clear articulation of the positive cultural change being experienced in schools.
- The increased staffing in the Local Authority (LA) of Educational Psychologists and case workers, along with the increased workforce in health services such as, special school nursing and therapy services.
- That the ICS is addressing quality and timeliness through improved systems and improved parental engagement and feedback.
- The positive work being undertaken to address the weakness around the lack of suitable specialist provision to meet the identified needs of children and young people. This includes the development of mainstream autism provision and the approval of a 120-place special free school.
- The establishment of trackers, audits, and reviews to capture and analyse data and feedback.
- The co-produced "Engaging with Parent Carers for school's toolkit" provides a practical handbook with links to further information and resources. Monitoring and evaluation of its implementation will provide further learning in this key area.
- The re-launch of the SENco network.

The LA has clearly demonstrated its willing to engage in offers of support which includes:

- Its inclusion of the Delivering Better Value (DBV) project.
- Securing support through the RISE consortium to review and improve the preparing for adulthood agenda.
- Accessing the regional RISE EHC training and support package.

In relation to the work around co-production, over the last twelve months there has been an increase in parental representation across the various workstreams and participation in engagement events, to shape service delivery. We heard from the PCF an increasingly positive view of the area, which is beginning to filter through to other parents. We understand Worcestershire Children First (WCF) will continue to work closely with the PCF to establish clear targets around increased membership, better parental representation, and community engagement.

In September 2022, school representatives felt they were included in the work streams, and it was recognised that there had been a positive shift in working relationships between WCF and partners. These relationships were reaffirmed by the work being led by schools in partnership such as, the Wyre Forest Project, improving engagement with local GPs and the regularly held Headteacher briefings.

As the improvement work continues, we would like to see further evidence of:

- How the local area is embedding the changes into its policies and processes. Further work is needed to build on the early signs of impact and improved outcomes along with a clear understanding of how these improvements will be evidenced and sustained.
- The processes being used to facilitate and coordinate the gathering of education, health, and social care advice to secure good EHC plans. Attention needs to be given to join up approaches across the partnership, evidence the impact of actions undertaken, and how these will be sustained.
- How the local area continues to develop and embed monitoring and evaluation systems to demonstrate oversight, actions, and impact on the experience of children and young people who receive SEN support or have an Education, Health and Care plans (EHCP).
- The work being undertaken to develop the leadership of SEND and inclusion. The improvement work should reflect an inclusive culture in all learning environments. The evidence could be captured by showing how many schools are engaging in the school inclusion project, particularly those where engagement has been problematic.
- Building on the work which has already taken place through the production of “You Tube” videos and sessions developed to close the gap in early years settings.

- Engagement with children and young people with SEND to allow for their voices to be heard.
- How the school's toolkit is being developed to reflect a multiagency approach across all services to demonstrate how they all work with CYP and families.
- The risk register being used to ensure sustainability of improved practise going forward.
- Partnership led communication, such as newsletters, to showcase the multi-agency work being undertaken to give confidence to the wider community.

At your next review meeting, I would like to hear of continued evidence of the further developments outlined above. Your next six-month review meeting will take place in September 2023.

In the meantime, SEND and NHS England Advisers, Pat Tate, and Debbie Ward, along with Deanne Michie as your DfE Case Lead, will continue to provide you with support and challenge. If you have any questions or need any further support, please contact either party in the first instance.

We are copying this letter to Simon Geraghty, Leader of the Council, to Mel Barnett (Director of All Age Disabilities (0-25)), Andre Imich (DfE Lead Professional Adviser), Pat Tate (DfE Adviser), Lorraine Mulroney (National Specialist Advisor-SEND, NHS England), Deborah Ward (NHS England Adviser), Nicola Wesley (NHSE) and Deanne Michie (DfE Case Lead).

Yours sincerely,

K. Moore

Katie Moore
Regional Lead
West Midlands Vulnerable Children's Unit