



Department  
for Education

Department for Education

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Cath McEvoy-Carr, Director of Children's Services, Newcastle City Council  
Deanne Taylor, Head of Service SEND, Newcastle City Council

5 May 2023

## **EIGHTEEN MONTH PROGRESS REVIEW AGAINST YOUR ACCELERATED PROGRESS PLAN (APP)**

Dear Cath and Deane,

Thank you to you and your colleagues for meeting with officials and advisers from the Department for Education (DfE) and NHS England (NHSE) on 27 April 2023, to review the progress you have made against your SEND APP since our meeting in October 2022.

When speaking to officials at Newcastle, the local area's collective passion and drive toward making sustainable improvements to SEND services and to the lives of children and young people was evident. Your PCF representative was present at the meeting and together you demonstrated that co-production was crucial, and the ongoing work which has gone into understanding challenges facing parents and carers. It was great to hear how proud you are of your workforce and the hard work undertaken within the past 6 months.

The key areas of focus, highlighted in feedback from our previous meeting were:

- To demonstrate the impact of new processes and systems on EHCP timeliness in line with national average.
- To demonstrate the improvement in exclusion and suspension data in line with national average.

Both in your paperwork, and during your progress review, you demonstrated:

- The ongoing commitment from your Newcastle Promise Board (SEND Sub Group) to address the remaining areas detailed in your APP including a 'deep dive' into school level data.
- Targeted support for Early Years where you have experienced some of the greatest demand for EHC assessment requests.
- An improvement in the % of primary age pupils with SEND who were permanently excluded.
- Greater investment in your graduated response together with a new Educational Psychologist service core offer of support. Feedback is being gathered and this will be evaluated shortly by your SEND Sub Group to measure the impact which it is having.

However, we also found that:

- Even though investment in staffing and an electronic SEND portal has been introduced, and the quality of EHCPs has improved, it has not yet driven improvements of timeliness in order to meet the statutory requirement.
- There are a number of promising workstreams, frameworks, and processes under development, but it has not yet been possible to measure whether they are leading to improvements in pupil exclusions and attendance.

**During the next six months, we ask that you remain focused on improving your EHCP timeliness and that there is an improvement with your exclusion and suspension data making all in line with national averages.**

As with all local areas that were required to produce an APP under Ofsted's previous framework, you will continue to receive support and challenge from DfE officials who will wish to assure themselves on an ongoing basis that you are managing to sustain the reassuring progress you have made.

We discussed within the meeting the possibility of commissioning our DfE SEND adviser, Cath Hitchen, to support Newcastle with your EHCP timeliness. We will also invite the Department's regional school colleagues into conversations around exclusions and suspensions for a joined approach and there will be further conversations around support available to review and improve the neurodevelopmental pathway.

Your case lead, Andrea Latheron-Cassule, will be in touch to arrange dates for these meetings; please contact her in the first instance should you have any questions. We will hold a further six-month APP review meeting in September 2023.

I am copying this letter to Chief Officer, North East and North Cumbria ICB Mark Adams, Leader of the Council Nick Kemp, Chief Executive Pam Smith and local MPs Nick Brown, Catherine McKinnell, and Chi Onwurah. In addition, a copy is also being sent to your DfE and NHS England advisers. You may also wish to share this letter with the Chair of the Parent Carer Forum, and any other key stakeholders.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Simon Clark', with a stylized, looping initial 'S' and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Simon Clark

Head of Vulnerable Children's Unit  
North East Regions Group  
Department for Education.