# DfE Detailed 2955Department for Education Sanctuary Buildings Great Smith Street London

**SW1P 3BT**

Dr Lee-Anne Farach, Director of Children’s Services Paula Wilkins, Chief Officer, CCG

5th October 2021

# LA SEND Revisit: Ceasing Formal APP Reviews

Dear Lee-Anne and Paula,

Thank you to you and your team and partners for meeting with me and my colleagues; Liz Flaherty, SEND Adviser, Andre Imich, SEND professional Adviser, Emma Brown, Case Lead and Jacqui Stillwell and Natalie Warman, NHS England Improvement Advisers, on 20th September to review the progress you have made against your Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) over the past six months.

I was very pleased to hear of the clear and sustained progress against the activity in your APP and that there is sufficient evidence that your work is having a positive impact.

In your APP, agreed with the department and NHS England, the key areas of focus, based on the issues highlighted in your Ofsted and Care Quality Commission revisit report dated February 2020, included:

1. The lack of a clearly communicated strategy that is understood and shared by leaders across the area.
2. The lack of strategic leadership across the area between the council, the CCG and education providers.
3. The quality of EHC plans was not acceptable.

You had two areas of focus remaining following the APP progress review meeting in January 2021, where it was agreed that the local area had made sufficient progress in addressing the third area of weakness about the quality of EHC plans.

The primary concerns remaining, that were identified for consideration were:

1. That the local area needed to provide further evidence of the impact of the communication plan in effectively improving leaders understanding of the strategy and that the strategy was shared by leaders across the area.
2. Further evidence was required on the improved strategic leadership between partners.

There was a particular interest in hearing directly from education and parent representatives on both points.

Both in your documentation and during the progress review meeting, you have now been able to demonstrate clear and sustained progress.

In response to a) above that:

* + There is a clearly communicated strategy, understood and shared, and a clear intent to maintain this high level of communication when the new strategy goes out for consultation
  + From their perspective, school and education providers were positive about the improvements in the communication of the strategy
  + The PCF demonstrated their understanding of the strategy and acknowledged that parents understand the content (although some parents may not recognise it as being part of the overall strategy)

In response to b) above that:

* + Leaders across the area fully understand and have a shared willingness to work together to embed the strategy across the SEND system in Medway.
  + There are strong systems in place that underpin the assertion that leadership across partners is sufficiently improved.
  + Schools and education providers were positive about the improvements from their perspectives on strategic leadership between partners, in particular the accessibility of leaders across the SEND service.
  + Education, Health, Parents, the Local Authority and the council are working more effectively to ensure actions taken have a positive impact on the lives of Children and Young People with SEND in Medway.

This clear and sustained progress means that we no longer need to continue with formal monitoring.

I know that this positive result comes as the result of a great deal of commitment and hard work on the part of the Local Authority, the Clinical Commissioning Group, families and front-line staff across education, health and social care. I would like to thank you for all that you are doing to support some of the most vulnerable children and young people in society, and to congratulate you on the progress you have made. Please do continue with these efforts and build on the successes you have already achieved.

As with all local areas that were required to produce a Written Statement of Action, you will continue to receive support and challenge from your SEND and NHSE Advisers, who will wish to assure themselves on an ongoing basis that you are managing to sustain the progress made. In particular we are interested in following progress on:

* The support offered for the PCF, including:
  + strategies for reporting back to parents relating to confidential responses from strategic leadership meetings and responses given by strategic partners
  + leadership support to enable the PCF to help the local area to communicate the SEND strategy effectively with all parents
* How the role of SENDIAS supports the roll out of the communication around the SEND strategy
* The minimisation of any potential confusion around the communication of the current SEND strategy and the consultation for the new SEND strategy
* How to maximise any opportunities to fully utilise expertise of the special schools’ leadership teams in the co-production of the new strategy and the support to mainstream schools on SEND
* Co-production with schools, maintaining the high standards already established

The department will also keep your situation under review and retains the right to request updates on strands of activity in the APP or to reinstate more regular and formal reviews should the need arise.

Please contact Emma Brown ([emma.brown@education.gov.uk](mailto:emma.brown@education.gov.uk)) if you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter further.

I am copying this email to Councillor Alan Jarrett, Leader of the Council; Neil Davies, Chief Executive, Josie Iles, Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, Lisa Scarrott, representative of the Parent Carer Forum, and to the MPs in the local area.

Yours sincerely,



Heather Campbell Regional Lead

SEND Improvement and Operations Division Department for Education (DfE)