



1 December 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

Services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) and their families in Somerset reached an important milestone this week, with the publication of a plan for rapid improvement.

Somerset County Council (SCC) and NHS Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) were set by Inspectors, the task of working closely with children and young people, their parent carers and professionals to draw up a plan for improving each of these areas and the culture and practices which underpin them.

The Written Statement of Action outlines how we are going to work together to ensure improvements are made to the SEND System in Somerset. Ofsted/CQC will expect to see these improvements delivered within 18-24 months when they will reinspect the Local Area. It is our blueprint for change in SEND services. The Written Statement of Action was co-produced with parent carers, young people, lead SEND professionals across the County Council and CCG, all SEND staff, school governing bodies, education staff and voluntary bodies.

Many individual parents and young people offered their views and support, including more than 750 parents who responded to a Somerset Parent Carer Forum survey, this was particularly heartening, especially during the heart of the Covid-19 pandemic when you were all juggling so many different things including home schooling. We would like to wholeheartedly thank all those who took time to contribute to the work and helped to ensure the voices of parents are heard.

The foundation for the Written Statement of Action is the Somerset Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) 0-25 Charter which is about partners working effectively together and putting parent carers and children at the heart of service planning and new service design to ensure all families get the services they need.

All partners (SCC, NHS and Schools) have committed to:

- Work more closely with children and young people with SEND and their families to understand and learn from their experiences as we develop strategies to improve the area.
- Further improve leadership capacity across services in Somerset to provide effective support to children with SEND.
- Continue to strengthen and embed partnership working across Education, the NHS, Public Health & Social Care.
- Improve joint commissioning arrangements between Somerset County Council and the NHS, improving leaders' ability to ensure they are meeting area needs as well as improving outcomes and achieving cost efficiencies.
- Develop our pathway for children and young people with autistic spectrum disorder to address the poor service too many families are receiving.
- Extend inclusive practice in schools across the local area and in turn reduce exclusion rates which currently mean too many children and young people are not accessing education.
- Improve the outcomes for all children with SEND, through ensuring effective identification of needs and the right support to make a difference to children.
- Ensure that multi-professional assessment and planning required for Education, Health and Care Plans is carried out more swiftly.
- Ensure that the quality of professional input for Education, Health and Care Plans is at a consistently high level.

The Written Statement of Action details how the local area will address these areas for improvement and sets out milestones to ensure that these are achieved.

Progress will be reported monthly to the SEND Improvement Board (SIB). You can read the Terms of Reference for the SIB on Somerset's Local Offer website here: <https://choices.somerset.gov.uk/025/local-offer/area-inspection-by-ofsted-and-cqc/send-improvement-board/>

The Department of Education and NHS Regional Advisors sit on the SEND Improvement Board so will provide support and challenge to the area on a monthly basis. In addition to the monthly meetings, they will hold formal quarterly monitoring meetings.

If the Regional Advisors have concerns about the implementation and/or progress of the delivery of the Written Statement of Action, they are able to call intervention meetings and/or refer Somerset back to Ofsted/CQC.

We know that in the past some families in Somerset have not had the support they need and that it's vital we now deliver the improvements outlined in the statement.

You can read the statement on Somerset's Local Offer website here:

<https://choices.somerset.gov.uk/025/local-offer/area-inspection-by-ofsted-and-cqc/>

You will see that there are a lot of improvements required within the Written Statement of Action, many of which support the infrastructure of the whole SEND system, this will mean that it may take some time for families to see the improvements and feel the benefits of the system improvements but please do be reassured that we are fully committed to making a difference.

Yours sincerely



Pat Flaherty  
Chief Executive  
Somerset County Council



James Rimmer  
Chief Executive  
NHS Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group