

Improvement Notice

To: Bury Council ('the Council')
Town Hall
Knowsley Street
Bury
BL9 0SW

This Improvement Notice is issued to Bury Council on 21 May 2024 following the Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) Area SEND Inspection, published on 7 May 2024 and in response to the areas for priority action and improvement highlighted in the report.

1. This notice is given to address the six areas for priority action and three areas for improvement identified in the report of the inspection published on 7 May 2024.
2. To comply with this notice, the following actions are required of the Council, working with Greater Manchester Integrated Care Board (ICB), and its other local partners ("partners"), as set out in section 28(2) of the Children and Families Act 2014.

Improvement plan

3. The Council's improvement plans should deliver appropriate and sustainable improvement, taking account of the views of parents, children and young people, school and education leaders and wherever possible, putting co-production at the centre of improvement activity. Plans must cover the following areas of priority action and improvement areas identified in the Ofsted and CQC inspection report of 7 May 2024:
 - a. Leaders across the partnership should ensure that the SEND strategy continues to be implemented to improve the lived experiences of children and young people with SEND. This should be overseen by shared strategic governance to ensure that the pace of improvement is maintained.
 - b. Leaders across the partnership should work collaboratively and effectively to improve the early identification of children and young people's SEND as part of the graduated approach. In particular, they should urgently improve:
 - children's access to support from Education, Health and Social Care to improve the early identification of needs
 - children, young people's and professionals' access to an effective, well-resourced educational psychology service.

- c. Leaders across the partnership should improve the quality and availability of support for children, young people and their families while they wait for specialist assessments. This includes:
 - children and young people waiting for a speech and language therapy assessment and subsequent intervention
 - children waiting for a community paediatric assessment and subsequent intervention
 - children and young people on a neurodevelopmental pathway for an assessment of ADHD or autism.

Leaders across the partnership should also ensure that young people aged up to 25 years old have access to a locally agreed neurodevelopmental diagnostic pathway.
- d. Leaders across the partnership should improve preparation for adulthood from the earliest ages for all children and young people with SEND in Bury. This should include a well-understood and co-produced strategy to embed preparation for adulthood effectively across the partnership.
- e. Leaders across the partnership should establish and implement a strategic approach to high-quality transitions for children and young people with SEND from birth to 25.
- f. Leaders across the partnership should further improve the quality of the statutory Education Health and Care (EHC) plan process. This should include:
 - improving the quality of advice received from professionals as part of the needs assessment process
 - improving the timeliness and quality of updated EHC plans following annual reviews
 - improving appropriate social care contributions to EHC plans so that children and young people's social care needs are reflected more accurately
 - improving the focus on preparation for adulthood in children and young people's EHC plans so that their experiences and outcomes improve.
- g. Leaders across the partnership should improve communication to professionals, parents and carers and children and young people so that their strategies, actions and impact are better understood and that trust in the SEND system improves. The partnership should ensure that the local offer is updated regularly to provide parents, carers and other stakeholders with sufficiently accurate information.
- h. Leaders across the partnership should continue to develop the range of suitable AP available to children and young people in Bury. Leaders should further embed the improved oversight of AP and EOTAS packages in Bury. They should publish the refreshed policy for EOTAS, providing support so that this policy is clearly understood.
- i. Leaders across the partnership should work collaboratively to create a partnership wide workforce development strategy. This should focus on coordinating training, support and guidance to improve health, social care and education professionals' ability to identify, assess and meet the needs of children and young people with SEND, from birth to 25.

4. The improvement plans should also include any further recommendations from the Department as a result of ongoing support and intervention.
5. To ensure there is clear evidence of progression:
 - a. the Council must ensure there is an improvement board, with an independent chair agreed by the Department and attended by key leaders across Education, Health and Care services, including the Chief Executives of the Council, the ICB and the Children's Trust, the Children Services Accountable Officer, the ICB Accountable Officer, and appropriate Elected Members of the Council to a timetable agreed with the Department;
 - b. the Improvement Board must have clearly assigned accountabilities for all actions agreed, along with clear and measurable targets covering the areas of priority action and improvement areas identified in the Ofsted and CQC report;
 - c. those accountable for the actions in the improvement 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;
 - d. reports to the Improvement Board should include data, analysis and evidence of the impact of improvements on the lived experience of children and families;
 - e. 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.
6. Invitations to Improvement Board meetings must be sent on each occasion to the appointed DfE adviser, NHS England adviser and to the Department's case lead.

Improvement against the above measures will be assessed as follows:

7. The DfE adviser and NHS advisers will provide regular updates to the Department of progress or concern against the areas set out in this notice; improvement against the Ofsted and CQC requirements; and any other such information relevant to the improvement journey.

Department for Education Stocktake Reviews

8. Officials or advisers from the Department will undertake reviews of progress against the improvement agenda at least every six months and more regularly where appropriate.
9. Reviews, including areas of priority action deep dives, may cover but are not exclusive 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 and engagement with children, young people, families and carers.

10. Prior to any reviews, the Council should provide to the Department its own assessment of improvement. This may include, but is not limited to:
 - a. progress against improvement plan objectives;
 - b. feedback from parents and carers;
 - c. clear information about local accountability and governance structure;
 - 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 and improvement area;
 - 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.
11. From time to time, the Department may require that a diagnostic review or assessment is undertaken by a party agreed with the Department.
12. 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:

13. The Council should aim for the impact measures set out in the Improvement Plan to be evidenced by the agreed target dates. The Council should also aim for actions included in the improvement plan to be delivered by the end of January 2026 or sooner. However, the Improvement Notice will not be stepped down until sufficient progress has been evidenced, and the Minister agrees.

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

14. 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:

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Date: 24/07/2024

Senior Civil Servant in Department for Education