



The Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP
Secretary of State for Education

Liz Leffman, Leader of the Council
Lisa Lyons, Director of Children's Services
Dr Nick Broughton, Executive Lead, ICB

15 April 2026

Dear Cllr Leffman, Ms Lyons and Dr Broughton,

Local Area Partnership SEND Improvement Notice: Ofsted and Care Quality Commission Area SEND Monitoring Inspection findings and ongoing progress

Following the Area SEND inspection undertaken by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission in July 2023, an Improvement Notice was issued to Oxfordshire County Council with the expectation that urgent action be taken to improve services for children and young people with SEND.

Following the Improvement Notice being issued, I am pleased to hear of the progress that has been made. I have been reassured to read the findings from the Area SEND monitoring inspection which concluded on 1 October 2025, alongside insights and data from my Departmental officials in your region.

Since entering intervention, I understand that key improvements have been made leading towards positive change for children and young people, and that you have:

- Strengthened how the views of children and young people with SEND, and parents and carers, are gathered and used in strategic planning.
- Improved communication and information sharing across the partnership, including monitoring the impact of the partnership's actions.
- Enhanced the timeliness of EHC plans.
- Made significant progress in jointly commissioning services and reducing waiting times for critical support.

I have therefore taken the decision to lift the Improvement Notice on the understanding that the provision of SEND services will remain a priority for the council, and for all others in the local area partnership. I understand that this improvement work has taken significant commitment, determination and hard work, and I am grateful to all the staff who have made this possible.

To continue to support this journey to a reformed and improved SEND system both in Oxfordshire and nationally, in March 2026, we commissioned each local area partnership to develop and submit a Local SEND Reform Plan by June 2026, underpinned by a Local Partnership Maturity Assessment. We expect these

documents to be used to clearly set out how you will further improve and strengthen your system.

During the period in which Local SEND Reform Plans are being delivered, we expect your Local Area Partnership to show continuing progress on your Priority Action Plan.

If your Local SEND Reform Plan does not meet all the minimum requirements stated in the guidance, the Department will work with you to re-submit a plan that does meet these requirements, and may consider use of further intervention measures at that stage if we do not see sufficient progress and engagement.

During this period, you will continue to receive support from your DfE-provided SEND Adviser and Finance Adviser. The Council and its partners should continue to work with these advisers in producing and submitting a Local SEND Reform Plan. The Department, alongside regional NHS England colleagues, will also continue with their formal monitoring and engagement approach with the local area.

Thank you for the continued commitment and hard work of your council, ICB and local area partners. I look forward to seeing the continued improvement of services for children and young people with SEND in Oxfordshire.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bridget Phillipson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP
Secretary of State for Education