

Improvement Notice

To: Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council ('the council')
Tameside One
Market Place
Ashton-Under-Lyne
Tameside
OL6 6BH

This Improvement Notice is issued to Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council on 27 March 2025 as a result of poor progress against the actions and deliverables in the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Written Statement of Action (WSOA), produced by Tameside local area SEND partnership in response to the Ofsted and CQC SEND inspection published on 11 January 2022.

1. This notice is given to address the ten areas of significant concern identified in the report of the inspection published on 11 January 2022.
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 and ICB's revised improvement plan, including an updated strategic plan, 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. These revised plans must cover the areas of significant concern identified in the Ofsted and CQC inspection report of 11 January 2022, including revised activity to address:
 - a. the endemic weaknesses in the quality and timeliness of EHC plans, which lead to poor outcomes for children and young people with SEND across education, health and care
 - b. the high level of dissatisfaction among parents and carers with the area's provision
 - c. the local offer not being well publicised and not providing parents with the information that they need
 - d. the placement of some children and young people in unsuitable education provision
 - e. the unreasonable waiting times, which lead to increased needs for children and young people and their families
 - f. the lack of contribution from social care professionals to the EHC plan process
 - g. the limited oversight of the quality of SEND provision for children and young people's education
 - h. the inconsistent application of a graduated approach across different settings, leading to weaknesses in meeting needs across the area
 - i. the poor transition arrangements across all stages of education
 - j. the lack of strategic direction in the support for children and young people to prepare them effectively for adulthood.

4. The revised improvement plan should also include any further recommendations from the Department for Education (DfE) as a result of ongoing support and intervention. The revised plan must be kept up to date with owners, actions and impact measures to evidence the improvements made on the lived experience of children, young people and families.
5. To ensure there is clear evidence of progression:
 - a. The Council should look to strengthen the existing Improvement Board arrangements, which the partnership are responsible for, to ensure its effectiveness and keep the arrangements under review. A review of the terms of reference should be undertaken, ensuring appropriate attendance by all key partners and leaders who are clear on their roles and responsibilities;
 - b. An independent chair, as agreed by the Department and the Board, should remain in place along with key leaders across Education, Health and Care services, Parent/Carer Forum and appropriate Elected Members of the Council as identified attendees and decision makers. It is expected that the Chief Executive of the Council and the Chief Executive of the ICB, the Children's Services and ICB Accountable Officers are held to account for the improvements required. This should be made through effective engagement with the Board and escalation/resolution of matters arising as the Board identifies;
 - c. the Improvement Board must have clearly assigned accountabilities for all actions agreed, along with clear and measurable targets covering the areas of significant weakness identified in the Ofsted and CQC report, and subsequent actions recommended by the DfE. Those accountable for these actions should 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 DfE appointed SEND advisor, NHS England advisor and to the Department's case lead as external attendees, rather than members of the board.

Improvement against the above measures will be assessed as follows:

7. The DfE appointed SEND advisor and NHS advisors 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 from the Department will undertake reviews of progress against the improvement plans at least every six months and more regularly where appropriate.

9. Reviews, including areas of priority area 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, carers, children and young people;
 - c. clear information about local accountability and governance structures;
 - d. the documentary evidence used to plan, track and evaluate the impact of actions. This may include:
 - i. A progress update against each priority area and DfE recommendations;
 - 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 plans to be delivered by the end of July 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:

Date: 27 March 2025

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

Mark Taylor

Senior Civil Servant in Department for Education