



Will Quince MP

Minister of State for School Standards

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Phil Norrey, Chief Executive
Devon County Council
County Hall
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Cllr John Hart, Leader of the Council, DCC
Cllr Andrew Leadbetter, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills, DCC
Lisa Bursill, Head of Children's Social Care, DCC
Melissa Caslake, Director of Children's services, DCC
Jane Milligan, Chief Executive, Devon CCG

29 July 2022

Dear Phil, John, Andrew, Lisa, Melissa and Jane,

**DEVON : LOCAL AREA SEND SERVICES - OFSTED AND CQC REVISIT
REPORT (PUBLISHED ON 11 JULY 2022)**

I am writing following Ofsted and CQC's revisit to Devon to assess progress made in improving services for children and young people with SEND, and their families. I was very disappointed to hear that Devon has failed to make sufficient progress in any of the four areas of significant weaknesses identified during the initial inspection in December 2018.

The issues raised in the revisit report are serious. The following findings were particularly concerning: *"that the strategy fundamentally fails to address the significant weaknesses that were apparent at the previous inspection and are still evident now" and that "there are 1,600 delayed annual reviews outstanding"*. Even more concerning is the following, which highlights a decline in services: *"Communication remains poor. In fact, in many cases communication has got worse"*. The pace of change in Devon over the past three years has been too slow and is significantly affecting the lives of children and young people and their families.

We need to be confident that you are now taking the right actions to secure swift and sustainable improvement.

I can therefore confirm, on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education, that I am minded to issue Devon Local Authority with an Improvement Notice. A draft Improvement Notice is attached, and you will have the opportunity to provide any representations to officials in writing in advance of, and to inform, my final decision.

Should an Improvement Notice be issued, I consider that it should be in place for a minimum of 18 months. Formal reviews will take place at 6 monthly intervals, or sooner if required. This is to reassure the Department for Education that sufficient progress is being made, or indeed to reflect quicker progress than expected.

In the meantime, I expect the Council to continue to work closely with Clinical Commissioning Groups and partners in education, health and care and alongside parent and carer groups. In taking the swift and decisive action required to address the areas for improvement identified by Ofsted and CQC, it will be vital that the local area accepts collective responsibility and accountability for delivering the agreed actions. This will require a relentless focus on improvement across all service providers so that children, young people and families are able to access the support that they need.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of Devon's Parent Carer Forum, Keith Thompson (DfE Adviser), Lorraine Mulroney (National Specialist Advisor–SEND, NHS England), Mark Tucker (NHSE Improvement Adviser), and MPs for Devon.

Yours sincerely,

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Will Quince', written in a cursive style.

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