

27 July 2020

Mr Ian Dodds
Director of Children's Services
London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
44 York Street
Twickenham
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Email : ian.dodds@achievingforchildren.org.uk

Dear Mr Dodds

**Investigation into complaints against London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
Reference numbers: 18 001 501, 18 003 307, and 18013 211**

Thank you for your letter of 12 June 2020 providing my office with details of the action that you have taken to act upon my findings in these cases.

I have reviewed the 'Independent Audit of Education, Health and Care Plans' that you commissioned in line with my recommendations. As a result, I can confirm that I am wholly satisfied with the action you have taken to respond to my investigation.

The report is an impressive piece of work, and I am satisfied that it represents a comprehensive, thorough, and independent audit of all the relevant matters that I wanted you to consider. The findings in the report are well evidenced and echo many of the issues identified in my own investigation. I am also content that the recommendations and actions set out in the report, if fully implemented, represent a credible programme of improvement for the service as a whole.

I welcome the efforts that have been made to identify other children who have suffered an injustice due to problems with the EHCP process. I also appreciate the work that you are now doing to restore services to these families and to provide a remedy that puts them back in the position that they should be, as far as is possible, in the circumstances. The 'Guidance on Remedies' used by my staff is available on the LGSCO website and might be a useful reference point in that regard.

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I am pleased to see that the report has been presented to elected members, and that the service improvement programme will be subject to ongoing scrutiny by councillors. Public accountability is an essential component of effective local government, so it is always welcome to see learning from complaints being fed into the local democratic process for consideration and oversight.

Thank you for the constructive way you have engaged with this case and with my recommendations. The value of listening to complaints, lies not just in finding a remedy for those directly affected, but also in reflecting on how similar problems might be avoided in future. I feel that the mature and thoughtful manner in which the council has engaged in that process is a welcome example of that principle in action.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. King', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michael King
Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman for England

Encs