

6 January 2022

James Thomas
Corporate Director, Children and Culture
Tower Hamlets Borough Council
Mulberry Place
Tower Hamlets
E14 0BG

Selina Douglas, Managing Director, Tower Hamlets Clinical Commissioning Group

Dear Mr Thomas and Ms Douglas

This letter is written in accordance with The Children Act 2004 (Joint Area Reviews) Regulations 2015¹ to inform Tower Hamlets Borough Council and Tower Hamlets Clinical Commissioning Group, as principal authorities, that Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission have jointly evaluated the written statement of action submitted to us on 24 December 2021.

The statement of action is deemed to be fit for purpose in setting out how the area will tackle the significant areas of weakness identified in the published report letter.

I welcome the involvement of parents and carers, children and young people, in both the development and the delivery of the written statement of action. This, in itself, will contribute to work towards the fourth bullet point, the improvement of communication between area leaders and parents. However, leaders may wish to consider how they will explain to the wider parent community what difference the actions they take will make to the lives of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Appropriate actions are planned to tackle the significant weaknesses found at the time of the inspection, and these actions are set into a suitable timeframe. The written statement of action demonstrates a commitment to joint working between partners, with professionals from both the council and health partners involved in leading the planned work. Suitable governance processes are described.

Plans to address the weakness relating to the poor quality of education, health and care plans, including the annual review process could be further strengthened by

¹ The Children Act 2004 (Joint Area Reviews) Regulations 2015
www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/1972/regulation/4/made.

placing more emphasis on the improvement of existing plans. For example, actions 1.1 and 1.2 identify measurable success criteria relating to the proportions of newly issued plans that accurately reflect professional advice, and that meet the quality threshold. There is no similar ambition set out for amended existing plans.

In addition, while the ambition for all young people who require transition plans to adult services to have these in place before their 18th birthday is suitable, this may be too late for some young people. In some cases, plans will need to be made well in advance of the young person's 18th birthday so that implementation is smooth.

It is pleasing to read that leaders have already secured additional capacity to address waiting times for autism spectrum disorder assessments. However, given that the previous plan from Barts health trust did not demonstrate long-term sustainability it would be helpful if the written statement of action included an indication of how sustainability in this new plan will be secured.

The written statement of action must be published on local websites², so that parents, children and young people can understand the actions you are taking to improve the effectiveness of the area in identifying and meeting needs, and improving outcomes for children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Yours sincerely,

Mike Sheridan HMI
Regional Director, London

² Regulation 4 (5); www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/1792/regulation/4/made