UK Government

To: Paul Thorogood, Chief Executive, Bexley London Borough Council
Stephen Kitchman, Director of Children's Services, Bexley London Borough Council
Andrew Bland, Chief Executive NHS South West London and NHS South East London Integrated Care Boards

cc. Ross Brown, Chief Financial Officer, Bexley London Borough Council

2 October 2026

Dear Paul, Stephen and Andrew

Re: Local SEND Reform Plan Assessment Outcome

Every child and young person deserves the opportunity to fulfil their potential, whatever their needs or circumstances. Delivering that ambition depends on strong local leadership and effective partnership working across education, health and care. As local leaders, your role in setting that direction, strengthening those partnerships and securing better outcomes for children and young people with SEND is critical. Thank you to you and your teams for all the work you are doing in this important area.

This government's programme of SEND reform presents an important opportunity to improve support for children, young people and families, and to build a more inclusive, responsive and sustainable system. It was against this backdrop that, in March 2026, this government commissioned your local area partnership to develop and submit a Local SEND Reform Plan, underpinned by a Local Partnership Maturity Assessment.

Thank you for the commitment and effort that you and your partners have demonstrated in developing your Local SEND Reform Plan. We are pleased to confirm that your plan has been approved.

This approval reflects the government's view that your plan has met the required threshold and provides a sound foundation from which your local area can move into delivery. It also recognises the commitment that your partnership has shown to reform, the progress made in strengthening local leadership and relationships, and developing a shared plan for improvement.

While your local area partnership has demonstrated commitment and some momentum in working collectively across education, health and care, the government's wider assessment is that your partnership is still developing and has not yet demonstrated consistently the maturity, grip and assurance that will be needed to deliver reform successfully. Further action is needed to strengthen capability, governance, partnership working and delivery disciplines so that the plan translates into sustained improvements for children, young people and families.

Further feedback on your plan is attached at Annex A. You should consider this feedback carefully and address the areas identified through your delivery arrangements. We expect this to be reflected in your local governance, implementation planning and reporting to the government. If our officials can help you to do this in any way, please do get in touch. We stand ready to work together to support you.

We are also aware you had an Ofsted and CQC Area SEND Monitoring inspection from 2-4 February 2026. We were encouraged to read that effective action had been taken in relation to all areas for priority action. We have therefore taken the decision to lift the SEND Improvement Notice for Bexley. While the Improvement Notice is being lifted, it remains important that the partnership continues to build on the progress made. We ask that you update your local area partnership SEND Strategic Plan (usually within 50 working days from the date that you received the report intended for publication). I understand my officials and NHS England colleagues are already supporting you in this process. Once updated, the Strategic Plan must be published on the local authority's website and those of relevant partners, ensuring it is accessible to parents, carers, children and young people. The plan must be regularly updated to reflect progress and maintain transparency. If you choose to treat your Local SEND Reform Plan as your Strategic Plan then it is this document that will need to be updated to address the ongoing improvement areas. Whether you update the Reform Plan, and/or a separate strategic planning document, we require that plans for improvement align with your plans for reform.

As you move into delivery, it will be important to build on the progress made and strengthen the maturity of your partnership. Successful delivery will require clear collective ownership, effective oversight and a sustained focus on measurable outcomes. We expect the partnership to move purposefully from planning into implementation, with clear senior accountability, robust and proportionate performance monitoring, and early evidence that delivery is leading to improved experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND and their families.

Government officials, health regional SEND leads, and your assigned SEND and Financial Advisers will continue to engage with your partnership as you implement your plan and maintain a close focus on your progress. Quarterly review meetings will provide an opportunity to consider progress against the commitments in your plan, assess emerging risks and challenges, and identify or agree any further support, challenge or improvement activity that may be required. Where appropriate, these review meetings will be consolidated with existing improvement engagement. Further details on available support and monitoring arrangements are set out in Annex B.

Your local area partnership is expected to submit quarterly data returns as set out in the guidance you received in August 2026, to enable the government to understand the emerging impact of implementation. The Department for Education will, in turn, use your submitted data to provide quarterly data reports with visualised analysis and benchmarking to support your local delivery, monitoring and evaluation.

As your local area's Local SEND Reform Plan has been approved, you are now eligible to receive a High Needs Stability Grant covering 90% of your DSG deficit accrued up to the end of 2025 to 2026. The indicative High Needs Stability Grant allocation for Bexley is **£18,710,915.** Your allocation will be confirmed in writing in due course, with payments expected on 30 November 2026. Your allocation remains subject to change as a result of final audited outturn. If any overpayment is made under this grant or any amount is paid in error, the Secretary of State may reduce, suspend or withhold grant payments or require the repayment of the whole or any part of the grant monies paid, as may be determined by the Secretary of State and notified in writing to the recipient authority.

For deficits that arise in 2026–27 and 2027–28, local authorities can expect that we will continue to take an appropriate and proportionate approach, though it will not be unlimited. Future support will take into account LAs' successful delivery of their approved Local SEND

reform plan, including appropriate use of investment funding to establish an Experts at Hand offer.

Once again, we would like to thank you and your partners for the commitment that has gone into developing your Local SEND Reform Plan. Approval is an important step and reflects the progress your partnership has made, but it is only the beginning of the next phase. It is important we see continued progress as you translate the commitments in your plan into delivery, supported by appropriate support, challenge and oversight where needed. The task now is to strengthen the maturity of your partnership arrangements and demonstrate that commitment is translating into sustained improvements for children and young people with SEND and their families.

We recognise that this will require continued collective effort across local government, health services, education providers and central government. We are committed to working with you to realise this ambition, providing the support, investment, challenge and national leadership needed alongside your local efforts. We are asking your local area to maintain a clear commitment, focus and leadership as delivery progresses. Together, we can build a more inclusive, responsive and sustainable SEND system that earns the confidence of children and young people with SEND and their families, and enables every child to achieve and thrive.

Information on your outcome will be shared with MPs whose constituencies fall within your local area.

Yours sincerely,



Georgia Gould

Minister of State for School Standards
Department for Education



Alison McGovern

Minister of State for Social Care and Mental Health
Department for Health and Social Care