

North Somerset SEND Partnership

SEND Improvement Board Minutes

Thursday 14th December 2023, 10.00am to 12.00pm

Present

Cllr. Catherine Gibbons (CG) Executive Member & Chair
Shane Devlin (SD), Chief Executive for Integrated Care Board for BNSSG
Pip Hesketh (PH), Assistant Director for Education Partnerships, NSC
Jo Walker (JW), Chief Executive, NSC
Anthony Webster (AW), Head of SEND, NSC
Jane Humphreys (JaH), Children's Improvement Advisor within the Local Government Association
Carolyn Fair (CF), Interim Director of Children's Services, NSC
Kenton Mee (KM), Chief Executive for North Somerset Parents Carer's Working Together & Parent Carer Forum for North Somerset
Anna Clark (AC), Senior Performance Improvement Manager, ICB
Kathy England (KE), Interim Head of Learning and Achievement, NSC
Bally Nagra (BN), Head of Service for Children with Disabilities Service in North Somerset
Alison Stone (AS), Head of Children's Commissioning, NSC
Helen Caldwell (HC), Strategic and Policy Development, NSC
Grainne Rogers (GR) on behalf of Lorraine McMullen
Ed Bowen-Roberts (EBR), Headteacher, Baytree and Representative for Special Schools
Dawn Newton (DN), Head of Front Door and Family Wellbeing, Children's Social Care, NSC
Anna Clark (AC), Senior Performance Manager, ICB
Mandy Plumridge (MP), SEND Manager, NSC
Riccardo
Jacqui Scott (JS), Interim Head of Virtual Schools
Rebecca Pinder (RP), Minute Taker, Agilisys Limited

Apologies

Justin Humphries (JH), Secondary Head Representative, St Katherine's School
Emma Bray (EBra), Headteacher Christ Church Primary, representing Primary

Headteachers

Lisa Manson (LM), Director of Performance & Delivery, BNSSG, ICB
Gemma Blackmore (GB), SEND Manager & Advisor, NHS England Southwest
Emma Diakou (ED), Head of Business Insight, Policy & Partnerships, NSC
Emma Brown, (EBro), Vulnerable Children's Unit, Case Lead, DfE
Wendy Packer (WP), Head of Inclusion, NSC
Shelley Smith (SS), Engagement and Participation Officer, NSC
Jane Anstis (JA), Assistant Director Children's Social Care

1.0 Welcome and Introductions

CG introduced the final Board of 2023 following an interesting year. The Board has said goodbye to Sheila Smith and welcomed Carolyn Fair as interim Director of Children's Services, this is now Carolyn's last SEND Improvement Board and CG thanked Carolyn for everything she's done and wished her well. There's been an election and a lot of new Councillors, and there's a great deal of engagement, interest, and concern around SEND. The Improvement Notice has also been lifted. 2023 has been challenging but there have been many positives and CG hopes as The Board moves forward greater improvements for SEND will come. **AW to update the meeting link on the agenda. ACTION.**

2.0 Minutes of Meeting of Monday 13th November 2023

2.0.1 The minutes were approved as an accurate representation of the last meeting.

2.1 Action Log

2.1.1 Item 4 – Health Services. Matt Lenny is happy to join the Board when he needs to contribute to public health issues. **AW to mark as complete. ACTION.**

2.1.2 Item 11 Mental Health Support. JS has organised a 6-day trauma training with schools scheduled to start in March. Item complete.

2.1.3 Item 12 – Added to the Forward Plan. Item complete.

2.1.4 Item 15 – Health Services. JW reassured The Board the item is going to the ICB Executive on 21st December, this will cover the whole of BNSSG. SD added that Sirona and ICB are bringing a much wider conversation about Community Paediatrics and Neuro Diversity and the work Sirona are doing; that's across the board but very relevant to North Somerset.

2.1.5 Item 16 – Annual Review. The Business Intelligence Team are working on the data warehouse to link information from the portal with Capita and Liquid Logic to show key children's data and to be able to run reports, they're doing a lot of soft tests, looking to fix errors so it's moving in right direction. AW is hoping to have a report early next year.

- 2.1.6 Item 17 – AW, AS and AC are meeting on 18th December to go through the SLA and funding conversations, that's ongoing and moving in the right direction. AW is hoping to have this signed off at the meeting on 18th December.
- 2.1.7 Item 18 – Item on agenda.
- 2.1.8 Item 20 - Pathway to Adulthood. AW has attached the action log from the Pathway to Adulthood Governance Group showing project plans and what they intend to do with those. AW will have further conversations in January around governance and linking the two groups together.
- 2.1.9 Item 21 – Item completed and being discussed between BN and Martin Hawketts. Support is in place for a conversation between the Governance Group and practice professionals. CG shared she has agreed with Roger Whitfield, Member for Adults Social Services to meet to discuss areas of crossover in portfolios, particularly in Pathways to Adulthood.
- 2.1.10 Item 22 – JS put together an Ofsted Summary Report; that has been shared.
- 2.1.11 Item 23 – On today's agenda for KE.
- 2.1.12 Item 24 – Discussed at the Community of Practice and agreed to revisit. Item ongoing because conversations with young people and schools need more work in terms of what words are used. **AW to set new date. ACTION.**
- 2.1.13 Item 25 – Health. Item on agenda. This is being fed into the engagement work with the Neurodiversity Transformation Project, **AC and GR will feedback. ACTION.**
- 2.1.14 Item 26 – Annual Reviews. AW is working with getting our independent schools using the portal, work is being done with Business Intelligence to support report writing to pull out the right data. **AW to bring back to the February Board. ACTION.**
- 2.1.15 Item 27 – Item complete.
- 2.1.16 Item 29 – Engagement. Feedback is starting to come through from parents on SEND Officer scripts, the feedback has been positive and has helped parents through the system. AW is speaking with KM on 18th December about how to follow up with the Parent/Carer Forum to do some snap surveys. The scripts are working, and the positive feedback has been shared with the SEND Team.
- 2.1.17 CF was expecting to see Social Care input into the EHCP process; there's an ongoing piece of work where AW, BN and JH are looking at the data, and there's a duty worker filling the gap. BN agreed this needs to be kept on the action plan. It's a key area on the inspection that needs to be observed. A good response has been received to the advert and BN is hoping to have someone in place by the new year. **AW to update Line 39. ACTION.**

2.1.18 PH noted the Quality Assurance measures are affected by the extent to which all three agencies are participating in the assessments; if one agency hasn't contributed or provides an unlawful contribution to those plans it can't be marked green. When looking at the quality of plans, that will have a direct impact.

2.1.19 BN did some joint training with external legal colleagues around social care advice being lawful and quality needed. Dip sampling done last week showed there had been positive effect and we're seeing increased lawful advice. There's another training session in January and the session will be re-run to a larger audience in Children's Services. BN has agreed with SEND colleagues not to include any advice that isn't lawful and through the quality assurance stage it cannot go in. BN has written to all Heads of Service about paraphrases that can no longer be used. Further updates to come.

2.1.20 PH highlighted a risk of potentially missing the needs of a child who has a social care or health requirements that hasn't been factored into the plan and if the advice isn't correct and the plan is wrong, that will directly impact the support the child gets.

2.2 Risk Log Review

2.2.1 The log has been updated recently. From a Health perspective AC is working with colleagues to update the various health risks, and education was completed in previous months.

2.3 Forward Plan

2.3.1 AW has used the Forward Plan to record annual events and has wrapped around the items/events due for the coming year. PH asked for an item around March/April for Home to School Transport, CG added that the Scrutiny Working Group on Home/School Transport may have information for us to feed up by March. PH has met this morning with a subgroup discussing effects of screen use/social media on children's mental health, PH would like to report back in May. **AW to add items. ACTION.**

3.0 Support around School Attendance from GPs

3.1 School attendance data should be reported live to the Authority from schools, but that's on hold as they've bought proprietary systems that don't talk to our systems, so that's in a state of flux and PH only has partial reports. PH shared extracts of what she has in terms of known attendance issues for children with SEND, the limited picture was a concern. Schools are starting to feed data into the system and full reports should be available by January.

3.2 PH shared headlines. Overall, the picture for attendance is poor for the Southwest compared to rest of the country, although there are concerns with attendance UK-wide from Central Government and the Children's Commissioner. The Southwest fall out of sync around authorisation of absence. PH has met with a group of Assistant

Directors, and Directors of Education with the Regional Director to look at the approach. The DfE is talking about issuing guidance on when to authorise and doing a national campaign on attendance; and regionally an attendance alliance between authorities is being considered. PH has argued for the multi-academy trust to be part of that. Persistent absence for children with SEND is very different to those without, which is a worry and some children at the far end of the scale will have been withdrawing from school for some time, and will end up in independent provision, because we haven't been able to support them to get back to school.

- 3.3 AW and WP are doing a lot of work with colleagues to try to get these children back into school, they've had a high success rate. PH meets three times a week with colleagues from Children's Social Care to plan for each of these children and colleagues from CAHMS and School Nursing are supporting this. PH would like to get some targets together, focus for 3 months on a particular issue and move to the next one. Non-attendance is a concern because those children may not be supervised and may be at risk, overall, all are at risk of missing their full entitlement of education.
- 3.4 PH highlighted the challenge of families being given varied advice and will speak with health colleagues. The National College of Physicians has issued attendance advice to GP's. Colleagues in Health and Social Care are advising parent's/carers that children with SEMH shouldn't be going into school; this is sometimes to do with mental health needs and anxiety. KM advised that children find it distressing when their needs can't be identified or met in school and start to build that resistance to going in the first place.
- 3.5 The schools involved are difficult to determine when there's only a partial picture of data, which exposes real risk. Some data has been collected manually for comparison. PH will be looking at monthly school league tables and all schools have an attendance meeting with PH's team. SEND figures are in the 100's but overall, they're into 1000s and part of the problem is the difference in how they're authorised. Another dynamic is where the Council downsized the Education Welfare Service some years ago and Multi-Academy Trusts have been taking their own approach to welfare advice. PH is looking to start trading services to provide better quality and consistent advice. The DfE advisor is about to give the authority a positive report for January; though PH stressed there is still a problem that needs working on. PH assured the Board that her team have been meeting termly to review the Safeguarding risk in the interim; it places a burden on the team, so PH is keen to start reducing this rather than bearing the cost to the Council. In May 68% of children subject to a Child Protection Plan had persistent absence, an 18% reduction was made in one month by focusing on those figures.
- 3.6 EBR said Special Schools are yet to attend meetings, he's been reassured that's happening early January but not all schools have had that input. Secondly, common practice identified through the Inclusion Panel are that children going through the EHCP process are put on reduced timetables; EBR suggested that work with the SENCO's on an agreed approach is needed to avoid damaging attendance figures

and attribution to school refusal in the long term. From January PH is starting the Attendance Alliance to agree a consensus on a child's entitlement to full time education and safety; those two factors drive the whole of the attendance conversation.

- 3.7 JW asked if there is anything the Board could help with e.g., a letter to schools about the importance of timely data and interface? PH said it would be helpful to have consistent messages coming from Health and Children's Social Care about good attendance; where North Somerset fall out of sync with the rest of the country is the authorisation of absence and parents/carers have GP letters excusing absence rather than taking steps to help them attend; that will affect data. BN agreed and thought it's being alerted to care issues as they arise, BN has attended recent meetings where there's a good joined up approach with Social Care and Education and that partnership and collective triangulation is integral to combat the various presentations of why a child can't be in school.
- 3.8 KM would appreciate some thought on how to best navigate a clear route for peer support to direct families as a system, to avoid inconsistency and for children and young people to be supported into placement as quickly as possible. **SD didn't know the Royal College of GPs had agreed a set of principles for this and will speak with the Chair of the GPCB (GP Commissioning Board) to get space on their agenda to discuss as a professional issue. ACTION.** SD suggested that PH and someone from his Primary Care Team could work on those theoretical and practical conversations highlighting hotspots. **AW to add to the action log. ACTION.** Data covers a percentage of the schools; PH doubts data for schools we haven't got would show an improved picture and would welcome ideas.
- 3.9 PH would welcome a conversation around North Somerset's position on whether children and young people with suicidal ideation are safer at school or at home, a decision on an agreed decision on how to protect those children would be helpful for families.

4.0 Update on Education Strategy

- 4.0.1 KE thanked everyone who has contributed to these plans and explained the relationship between the Educational Strategy and the Key Performance Indicator spreadsheet, it will be revised annually, the document is work in progress. The 6 pillars have three objectives which are principal actions for each kpi. The targets for April and July will be used to track and monitor kpi's over the remainder of this academic year and establish targets for 2024/2025. KE talked through each Pillar and their objectives.
- 4.0.2 JW thanked everyone for their efforts and questioned how the Board will monitor key times scales? PH thought kpi's needed to be checked termly and the Board need to check in with parent/carers via KM for the qualitative response, whether things are changing on the ground and the Board can have young people join to hear about their lived experience; that conversation will feed into our readiness for inspection. **AW to**

put on the Forward Plan. ACTION.

- 4.0.3 SD asked whether there are specific KPI's which are more relevant to the SEND agenda, and should we be looking at those on a regular basis as opposed to the overall Education Strategy? AW has been working with KE to ensure kpi's from the Education Strategy are linked into the kpi action plan for the SEF, there are 180 actions on the plan and **AW will reduce to a more manageable document; that includes kpi's which relate to SEND and AW will add a strategy to ensure its reported on a termly basis. ACTION.**
- 4.0.4 JS is leading the work on SARI in schools but work with Race Equality North Somerset (RENS) in Children's Services has been powerful. In areas that are more diverse than North Somerset there are varying views about SEND and disabilities and cultural groups may need supporting differently, so an alternative route needs to be made to see those families. RENS are interested and PH would like to make progress. JS agreed; RENS will have incorporated that into planning, but SARI offer all schools in North Somerset free input and work in schools with perpetrators and victims.

4.1 SEF Action Plan Update

- 4.1.1 Discussed in previous item.

4.2 Safety Valve Update

- 4.2.1 This is the DfE's way of helping us recover a balanced budget for our expenditure in the high needs block for SEND. We have agreed with the DfE they will right off £23 million overspend in this budget; the Council until now has been bearing the financial risk of increased demand in schools and the amount it costs them to support child effectively. In exchange we have placed some measures to recalibrate the budget to get back on track, it's challenging. North Somerset have managed to secure two payments this year following the successful agreement with DfE in March, our report is being submitted tomorrow which states that at the end of the financial year, we'll be £500,000 adrift on our financial targets; this gap could be closed but isn't in the best interest of children. This can be consolidated over the next 3 months to allow progress from 1st April 2024 differently.
- 4.2.2 Positives that form part of the Safety Valve are the new site for Baytree, Lime Hills, with planning achieved yesterday; the Resource Bases and Nurture Groups, which were mentioned in the Educational Select Committee by the permanent Secretary for Education (Susan Acland-Hood visited our Nurture Groups last week and was very impressed); using the Graduated response and work being done in schools to support children on a global level. There's a lot of work being done to try and keep those children in school.
- 4.2.3 There are problems, mostly with Top-Up Funding; rates need to be changed and things need to be done differently. PH is trying to pull children from the independent sector to get them supported in local schools. A Chief Executive meeting yesterday

considered what could be done within parameters of the law to ensure children's needs are met in schools effectively within the available budget; five workstreams have been decided, to move forward with the financial position by 1st April. An inflation rise of 8% has made the situation much worse and the DfE haven't accounted for inflation in their model. Fundamentally the Council need to ensure that support is distributed evenly across all schools.

- 4.2.4 EBR shared that yesterday's meeting was solution focused and the group had a handle on the shared issue, there was a collective energy about doing something different; there's a need to meet schools individually to align the offer for each child with SEND throughout the county. AW agreed, it's having conversations about what can be done differently to support children and create opportunities all schools can access in a fair way. KM would like conversations around the challenges of Top Up funding and how that's delivered. The Board need to be aware about how that impacts Springboard and to give them assurance on how early identification is supported. AW is comparing the Safety Valve with DVB work and researching different models around the country to suggest to schools. KM welcomed support from PH going forward.
- 4.2.5 PH referred to the specificity of Section F, and the need for a conversation with our heads for us to be the first choice for children with SEND and not the independent sector. Confidence needs to be built amongst parents/carers where they're sending their children, that dialogue needs to be had in a meaningful way that when they apply for a North Somerset School their needs will be met, their children will be happy, and they will go somewhere in the future. KM agreed, having that confidence there will relieve pressure. PH has taken on that workstream and will need to work at pace to head towards some kind of charter. **PH to update periodically. ACTION.**
- 4.2.6 MP shared positive feedback following Assessment Officers being given the script and how amazing one parent's experience had been with North Somerset SEND with communication. PH acknowledged the work the team are doing and when there is positive feedback from families, we know things are improving.

5.0 SEND SUPPORT DATA

- 5.1 KE updated the Executive Summary today and has shared to members with the Educational Strategy and the KPIs. JS prepared the North Somerset SEND Partnership Improvement Board Report using a quantitative approach, it showed the disadvantage gap is too big and the need for progress, achievement, and attainment standards at all key stages. **PH and KE to take to CYPP as it applies to a wider group of vulnerable children. ACTION.**

6.0 Mental Health Support Teams

- 6.1 AC updated on progress now the Mental Health Team has been in place for a year in

North Somerset. There's been a large change in senior management across all organisations and a system working group has started which is attended by AWP, Off the Record, The ICB, and Local Authority colleagues. An increase in referrals, and caseloads should be seen from January, with availability to 38 schools and a coverage of approx. 16,000 children. Caseloads are starting to increase now staff are fully trained.

- 6.2 There's been a new allocation from NHS England, so we'll be getting 2 additional teams in BNSSG. North Somerset are part of Wave 12 and have been doing some systems work to identify areas those 2 teams will look at health inequalities across BNSSG.
- 6.3 **PH would urgently like a conversation in January to join up the Trauma Informed Practice work with practitioners in schools to maximise value to schools, children, and families. AC to email PH. ACTION.** JS suggested someone from the MHST could attend the 6-day training. JS is looking to set up Trauma Informed Training with support of the Educational Psychology Service and is happy to discuss offers on the table, so the work isn't done in silo. **AC to contact JS. ACTION.**
- 6.4 EBR asked whether there is an increase in engagement with online platforms e.g. Kooth during the school holidays? **AC to get data to share with the group. ACTION. AC to share a copy of slides with members. ACTION.** CG hears from families that any mental health provision for young people has huge waiting lists and they're not getting the help they need. **AC to get feedback from teams on feedback they've received from parents/carers or young people. ACTION.**
- 6.5 AC would like to do some targeted work across North Somerset around what those waiting lists look like now compared to 2020, the wait has come down considerably with Mental Health Services provided by AWP, when she hears feedback from parents/carers the lists are so long, it's not representative of current service provision; there have been big improvements with services inside and outside of CAMHS. The waiting list has come down from 18 months to 9 months, and although it's still a long wait, it's a huge improvement.
- 6.6 KM is still hearing that families can't access CAMHS; and when that's unpicked it's about poor signposting, GPs are signposting direct to CAMHS as opposed to OTR and Mental Health Teams in schools. More unpicking of experiences of families and journeys is needed to show where signposting is right, without being pushed from pillars to post. **SD to raise at the GPCB. ACTION.**
- 6.7 JW reflected on AC's offer and suggested future updates go to the CYP Board and particular subsets can be brought back to this Board. **AC to take to the CYP Board ACTION.** JW asked how impact is being measured? AC has a national matrix around outcomes; Services have a lot of feedback from service users and schools themselves, data is both quantitative and qualitative and they're using that to inform where to target next. **AW to share data with minutes**

and slides. **ACTION.**

7.0 Update from DfE Advisors

7.1 Apologies from the advisors

8.0 Any Other Business

8.1 Feedback shared by MP.

8.2 **Members to email suggestions for the next Board. ACTION. CG and KM to discuss parent/carer involvement. ACTION.**

9.0 Date of Next Meeting

9.1 Tuesday 23rd January 2024 – 11:30am to 1.30pm

DRAFT