

North Somerset SEND Partnership

SEND Improvement Board Minutes

Friday 23rd February 2024, 9.00am to 11.00am

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
Claire Shiels (CS), Director, Children's Services, NSC
Jane Humphreys (JaH), Children's Improvement Advisor within the Local Government Association
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, Children's Services, 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), Interim Head of Learning and Achievement, 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
Rosie Shepherd (RS), Chief Nurse, ICB
Emma Bray (EBra), Headteacher Christ Church Primary, representing Primary Headteachers
Martin Hawketts (MH), Head of Service, Adult Social Care, NSC
Gemma Blackmore (GB), SEND Manager & Advisor, NHS England Southwest
Mandy Plumridge (MP), SEND Manager, NSC
Jacqui Scott (JS), Interim Head of Virtual Schools
Rebecca Pinder (RP), Minute Taker, Agilisys Limited

Apologies

Jim Smith (JS), Secondary Head Representative, Clevedon School
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
Hannah Batts (HB), Principle Business Intelligence Lead

1.0 Welcome and Introductions

1.1 CG opened the meeting. This is Kathy's last meeting; the Board thanked Kathy for her work at North Somerset Council. JS is the substantive Head of Learning and Achievement and has been helping with resource challenges on Virtual Schools, Kathy has been supporting, but Helen Caldwell has been recently appointed as the Interim Head of Learning and Achievement; JS will continue to focus her attention on Virtual Schools.

2.0 Minutes of the Improvement Board 23rd January 2024

2.0.1 The meeting was a valuable experience; feedback has been written up and will be validated with parents and carers to come to an agreement about what do next. KM said it would be helpful to get further feedback from parents/carers who came, to avoid losing sight of the engagement; parents and carers felt really listened to and that showed strongly in their feedback. A suggestion that feedback to parents should be in a digestible format showing clear actions; and to have feedback from professionals about their experience of the day with some of their commitments.

2.0.2 PH suggested having a smaller conversation with parents/carers online to talk about the next steps. CS agreed it's important to work with those parents around priorities and to give them opportunities for them to get involved in existing work to co-produce engagement. SD thought the event must now become a process of continuous engagement. The event highlighted traumatic life events parents are going through and there's a need for professionals to understand that; consideration also needs to be given to the roles of fathers and the wider family.

2.0.3 BN referred to the Think Family approach, the role of young carers and the extended family network and community. There's a piece of work to be done around the impact and trauma SEND has on families and what that means for the Board around feeding back and closing the loop; parents and carers don't want to keep retelling their stories. The burden often falls on mums and the parent carer forum finds it easier to engage with them, however, they are working hard to bring together a community of male carers and they are open to ideas of how to engage them.

2.04 JW reflected it must be clear what action is going to be taken and the impact that will have, it must have a tangible benefit to the traumatic element of sharing. JW suggested capturing experiences by video or podcast to help staff understand the

impact on families. The work needs to be action focused and to strongly evidence that parents/carers have been listened to and what action has been taken. KM has plans to supply different modes of communication from parents/carers sharing their experiences to others, and for professional pod casts. **KM to consider resources and bring together.** PH suggested that sessions for fathers could be advertised on correspondence to families and community messages could be done periodically across the partnership; she was keen to have more face-to-face based work with parents/carers. There are some very clear messages for us on the need for greater workforce development and integration, CS asked how do we compassionately listen and identify needs and strengths, understand what is going on for parents/carers and how do we as practitioners/clinicians/leaders make sure we join up more effectively?

AW to co-ordinate the quotes from the January board, please send to AW by 5th March, so he can write up and share to capture the impact of the session as well as outlining the next steps and how this is built on. ACTION. JH to check for any good examples elsewhere and will ask CIA colleagues on Monday. ACTION.

2.1 Action Log

- 2.1.1 Area 1 – Completed. Follow up conversations due.
- 2.1.2 SEF Action Plan. On today's agenda.
- 2.1.3 Parent Survey. See agenda item.
- 2.1.4 SEND Inspection. MP fed back on a survey of the scripts used with parents, this has been slow because of staff sickness, MP hopes to do another 20 next month. CS wanted to make sure feedback on the portal from the listening event is responded to and addressed to help bridge parents/carers understanding. Ruth, in the new parent/carer role has attended various coffee mornings, The Day of SEND, and a Bridging the Gap event on a Saturday which was really appreciated by working parents. Ruth is supporting parents in the early stages of the system, can resolve things quickly and feed that back into the system.
- 2.1.5 EHC Needs Assessment conversations are being done by SEND Officers to allow them to build relationships with parents, this is paying dividends and difficult information is received more positively because staff have improved relationships. KM was pleased to see communication in action within the SEND space and would like to consider lessons learned and how that's embedded long term.
- 2.1.6 Schools are now referring cases to Ruth, and she's done a good job with providing reassurance to parents of children on the EP backlog. In 4 months, Ruth has spoken to 200 parents/carers plus 100 parents on the back log, she's regularly checking in with 20 parents who require additional assurance. Following transfer on 15th February, there's a coffee morning on 4th March at the Firs; professionals are attending for those parents/carers who haven't got a Special School placement. **MP**

to bring a detailed report to a future Board. AW to forward plan. ACTION.

- 2.1.7 Mind of Your Own. The app is being used and embedded. An ongoing piece of work is being done to extend to different parts of the Council.
- 2.1.8 Speech & Language and OT. Ongoing. GR, AS and AW are currently meeting, and AW is meeting Special School Heads in person next week to draw up contracts.
- 2.1.9 Day of SEND. A date has been put in the diary for 2024, conversations are needed around how that is going to look and whether to extend to professionals.
- 2.1.20 It was agreed that ongoing actions on the log should be closed with an engagement paper to follow within 3 to 4 months and then actions would arise from those. **CS to speak with AW and AS around bringing a Commissioning plan back to the Board to assess milestones and whether the project is on track. ACTION. AW to add Commissioning to the Forward Plan and to look at items in progress and advise the Board virtually of closure and proposals to clear before the next Board. ACTION.**

2.2 Forward Plan

- 2.2.1 **AW to add Engagement Sessions and Commissioning to the Forward Plan. ACTION.** The SEF is on today's agenda, PH and AW have discussed the need to bring the item for a fuller discussion to the Board periodically. **AW to plan in a detailed SEF discussion. ACTION.**

2.3 Risk Log

- 2.3.1 The log hasn't changed since the New Year and most items are still relevant. **AW will refresh following today's conversation around inspection readiness and contact SD to spend in depth time on the plan. ACTION.**

3.0 SEF Action Plan and You Said We Did Documents Discussion

- 3.0.1 At the last Board meeting a summary of self-evaluation through the lens of Ofsted and CQC was presented. During Friday's Engine Room, AW has been discussing what's being done through the lens of the SEF and has been going through self-evaluations and catching up on priorities and created an action plan. The SEF document is a working document rather than a final report. **The Board agreed that having a bespoke session for SEF was required, AW to add to plan. ACTION.** Other Authorities have chosen a small number of cases and gone through them forensically across the system; JW didn't feel sighted on this system for North Somerset and asked whether there are any issues herself and SD need to resolve to have a level of confidence in the process?
- 3.0.2 AW chairs a monthly multi-agency audit meeting, they select a handful of cases and go through them together looking at what should be changed; PH drops in to check

whether it's going well and there's a good audit trail, the process needs to be in order. The DfE will be looking back at our audit trail and whether it's embedded in our DNA, both tests will be live. The multi-agency audit is pulling actions into Annex A, a quality document showing evidence for future inspections. AW is meeting with CS and PH after the next Board to go through Annex A to gauge progress, update HC and team, and to bring further conversations to the Board. **AW to add Annex A discussions into the Forward Plan; tracking needs to show what was done because of the audit. ACTION.**

- 3.03 JH thought it would be helpful to link into the SEF session about individual cases e.g., Child Looked After, SEN Support and Transition to show the Inspection Team are considering all needs. **JW would like separate discussions with CS, JH, PH, KM, and others around what kind of sessions, what questions will be asked, and to do a training session as a collective group for those being interviewed. ACTION.** Health is using regular 'dry runs' of tracked cases, each time learning something new that has been missed. GR suggested structure around the tracked cases, making sure the right information is going through a central point.

JH asked whether there is qualitative data on the quality of the appointments, not just how quickly a child is seen? JH noted that PFA is an area tripping up a few SEND area inspections and PFA is a current theme for Ofsted CQC. JH has recently spoken with DCS/DASS in London who's just had the real CQC adult inspection and is happy to put North Somerset in touch. *CS shared a link for North Somerset's SEND Hub - Preparing for Adulthood.* <https://n-somerset.gov.uk/my-services/children-young-people-families/send-hub-local-offer/send-hub-preparing-adulthood>

3.1 You Said We Did Document

- 3.1.1 AW has led a piece of work looking at how we respond to the parent/carer survey and is reflecting on what has been done and future intentions. KM would like to have a document to refer to, but also some short social media posts to highlight the positives coming through; that was appreciated by families, last time. **KM to work with AW and GR concerning those key messages and to show because of their input, that something different will be done by Health and the Local Authority. ACTION.**

4.0 Data Dashboard – SEND 2 Data

- 4.0.1 AW updated on behalf of Emma and Hannah. The biggest need is South of Weston Super Mare; there's a larger number of females with EHCP compared to the national picture and an increase in EHCP requests at Secondary transfer. In terms of minorities, there's a need to ensure we're as inclusive as possible; the SEND Team are working well with parents who haven't got English as their first language, providing translation services for Review Meetings and EHCP Planning. SEMH is the highest need and LD and Speech & Language are close to the national picture. AW is discussing with the SEND Team how to track secondary need to show a better level

of data. AW and MP are monitoring initial requests and this year numbers are hitting 100 requests a month up from 80 the same time last year.

- 4.0.2 Compliance data is tracked monthly and shared with PH and the DfE; our compliance overall is at 38% with the target to hit 70% by the end of this calendar year; AW and MP are carefully monitoring that, with PH to ensure progress. **MP to provide a deep dive on Tribunals and Mediations at a future Board meeting to help understand the increase in numbers. ACTION.**
- 4.0.3 AW has been doing a large piece of work with WP and PH to get a handle on attendance data and working with schools. AW meets with colleagues 3 times a week to work through those children who aren't at school. North Somerset's overall absence is higher than the national average, the authority are working with the DfE on attendance and action plans to address that. The vulnerability is the consistency across schools in when to authorise absence and when not to, there's a push from DfE to work on attendance for all children and there's a targeted plan in North Somerset which is being reviewed at other Boards. DfE are pleased with the work being done, but it's a substantial challenge for everyone to get children back to school and is being addressed by multi-agencies.
- 4.04 Members suggested an insight report into the data would be helpful to highlight what needs improving. PH noted the data had been recently received and hasn't had the chance to look at what it means and what should be done differently.

4.1 Update on Waiting Times for Community Paediatrics

- 4.1.1 The monthly dashboard has been included into the health pack which outlines all services. GR shared data for community paediatrics. At the end of January 2024, numbers in the waiting list are static at 4444, large numbers of children are being accepted and a small number being rejected. Waiting lists are continuing to grow and the team are working on the long waiters who are now being given the same priority as the highest need children, NHS England are supporting the process.
- 4.1.2 Sirona are looking at resources which sit behind the service and looking at creating a Single Point of Access for all children, so they are triaged and put into the right service at the right time. The website is being addressed to ensure resources are available to support families whilst they're waiting, such as Therapy Services and making sure our families are informed and signposted. EBR questioned whether there is qualitative data on the quality of appointments? **GR will see if there are any case studies on feedback and submit them. ACTION.** JW also highlighted the need for insight into future data and asked for a cover sheet outlining the key issues, forecasts, whether they are trending up or down, what the mitigations are from the audit trail, how they're performing, and what areas the Board need to focus on. **GR to action, and to add and note whether they are local or national challenges. ACTION.**

4.2 Pathway to Adulthood

- 4.2.1 MH highlighted that Adult Social Care will be inspected by CQC, there is a different inspection framework for that and Pathways to Adulthood fall into what CQC are referring to as Theme 3 which is Safe Transfers of Care. It's analysing our processes and how we safely move people between different services and has been placed alongside Hospital Discharge. MH has been doing a lot of work around analysis and various members of the Board will be drawn into that; there's a lot of synergy between the various audits which prevents having to double up. There has positive success with the administrative process of transferring between Children and Adults Social Care. MH and BN have discussed the creation of a formal panel process to start introducing Year 9's to formalise communication between the two Directorates in the next few months. A piece of work has also started around designing a Pathway to Adulthood Strategy which will need co-production.
- 4.2.2 Regarding Commissioning and the need to bring in a wider report, MH said the biggest challenge is the quality and capacity of the market for those individuals with the most acute needs. Recent analysis indicated over the last 3 years there were 13 individuals in transitions with a combined annual cost of £3m. There's thinking within Commissioning about how to start working with the market, providers, and accommodation to build something sustainable.
- 4.2.3 JH asked what children and young people and parents and carers would say about the Pathway to Adulthood. CG has contacts from families who have felt confident with Children's Services but then don't know how to negotiate the next stages. MH has conducted satisfaction surveys which have come back positive, though it's a small group of people being sampled. MH thought a piece of work both Directorates need to get to grips with is early identification in Year 9. **JW would like a paper on Pathway to Adulthood that clearly sets out work underway, key milestones, the impact of the work and whether work is on track. MH and BN to complete. ACTION.**
- 4.2.4 BN reminded the Board this straddles several areas and partnerships are needed to set how work will be completed and clear collective was needed around key priorities. Legislation is different between Children's and Adults Services and a priority is to work with Year 9 children across Education, Social Care and Health to prepare for transitions earlier; parents/carers will be key in the engagement. The pathway into adulthood for young people is part of a bigger picture and the Board needs to articulate the different strands of work being undertaking which is focusing on the remainder of children with SEN who are expected to live independently without the support of Adult Social Care; the work that goes into supporting them is as important. From 5200 children and young people who have had an EHCP, only 25 were moving into Adult Social Care, so moving forward into proper pathways is where we need to focus our future discussions as a Board as well; concern needs to be about everyone in this space and where they are heading.
- 4.2.5 Parents/carers have a lot of confusion about what is available for the Pathway to Adulthood, and KM didn't think families would say their children and young people

have had the support they need in achieving their individual levels of independence.

5.0 Safety Valve Update

- 5.1 The first headline is one of our main strands was to create capacity in local schools and EBR opened a new site in Clevedon on Monday and took in a new cohort of 19 children. Other news is the Nurture Hubs and Resource Bases are on track so that's good news and Lion Hills is now our new SEMH provision; DfE are moving slowly, and the pressure needs to be kept up.
- 5.2 Our biggest area of overspend is in Top-up funding due to increase in demand and increases in prices and rates. PH has been in consultation and conversations have been going on for a year, the budget is never enough from the Government. There were 100 requests for statutory assessments in January, which is significantly higher than before. PH is trying to analyse where these requests are coming from and for which age groups, it's unlikely demand has increased so much in a month; if they do continue to grow at this rate this will be unsustainable. Independent providers are applying increased rates now and inflation risk isn't wholly accepted by the DfE. The Top-up Funding consultation closed on 21st February and goes to SSF on Wednesday 6 March.

6.0 Any Other Business

- 6.1 CG shared concerns from The Warwickshire Council meeting around their attitude and type of language they were using, and suggested work could be done to ensure North Somerset Council are using the correct language.

7.0 Date of Next Meeting

- 7.1 Tuesday 19th March 2024 – 3.00pm to 5.00pm