

North Somerset SEND Partnership

SEND Improvement Board Minutes

Thursday 13th July 2023, 09:00 to 11:00

Present

Cllr. Catherine Gibbons (CG) Executive Member & Chair
Jo Walker (JW), Chief Executive, NSC
Pip Hesketh (PH), Assistant Director for Education Partnerships, NSC
Shane Devlin (SD), Chief Executive for Integrated Care Board for BNSSG
Sheila Smith (SS), Director of Children's Services, NSC
Anthony Webster (AW), Head of SEND, NSC
Lisa Manson (LM), Director of Performance & Delivery, BNSSG, ICB
Jane Humphreys (JaH), Children's Improvement Advisor within the Local Government Association
Alison Stone (AS), Head of Children's Commissioning, NSC
Lorraine McMullen (LMc), Interim Deputy Director of Operations for Children's Community
Kenton Mee (KM), Chief Executive for North Somerset Parents Carer's Working Together & Parent Carer Forum for North Somerset
Anthony Webster (AW), SEND Team Manager, North Somerset Council
Mark Hemmings (MH), Transformation Manager with ICB
Ed Bowen-Roberts (EBR), Headteacher, Baytree and rept for special schools
Emma Diakou (ED), Head of Business Insight, Policy & Partnerships, NSC
Mandy Plumridge (MP), SEND Manager, NSC
Bally Nagra (BN), Head of Service for Children with Disabilities in North Somerset
Anna Clark (AC), Senior Performance Manager, ICB
Jacqui Scott (JS), Head of Learning & Achievement for Education Partnership
Keith Thompson, (KT), SEND Professional Advisor for the Southwest, DfE
Rebecca Pinder (RP), Minute Taker, Agilisys Limited
Mallory Freeman (MF), Minute Taker, Agilisys Limited

Apologies

Emma Brown, (EBro), Vulnerable Children's Unit, DfE
Mark Tucker (MT), SEND Advisor for the Southwest, NHS England
Grainne Rogers (GR) on behalf of Lorraine McMullen
Mr J Humphries (JH), Secondary Head Representative, St Katherine's School
Becky Hopkins (BH), Assistant Director, Children's, Family Support & Safeguarding
Hannah Batts (HB), Principal Business Intelligence Lead
Helen Caldwell (HC), Strategic and Policy Development, NSC
Matt Greenhalgh, Interim Service Improvement Lead for Children's Social Work
Julie Sharma (JS),
Emma Bray (EBra), Headteacher Christ Church Primary, representing Primary
Headteachers

1.0 Welcome and Introductions

1.1 Introductions and welcome to Bally Nagra, Head of Service for Children with Disabilities in North Somerset and Anna Clark, Senior Performance Manager, ICB.

2.0 Minutes of Meeting of 12th May 2023

2.1 Changes made to Item 6.2 '59.9%' and Item 4.17 'place'. Minutes otherwise agreed.

2.2 Action Log

The Action Log, Forward Plan and Risk Log have been merged into one document.

2.3 Independent School Report – There's a pre-paper in the Board papers to explain the current situation. **AW recommended a paper is brought back to the October Board once the SEND Commissioning has embedded into the team and a strategy has been worked on. ACTION.**

2.4 SEND Strategy Quiz – **AW to meet with Ricardo to go through the Council's survey system to devise questions for the public as to whether they're aware of the SEND Strategy. ACTION.** A deadline is proposed for the October Board.

2.5 Exclusion data – Item coming back to the October Board; JS has that under control.

2.6 Transition data – MG and MH have a Power Point presentation for the August Board.

2.7 Inspection Guidance and Support – HC and Tina are making sure there's clear understanding of roles and responsibilities when the Inspection call comes through, they are hoping for completion for the August Board.

2.8 Independent Schools lowering thresholds risk – This will be raised in the October Board.

- 2.9 Good Success Stories – MP is working with the team and looking to speak to parents and evidence case studies. There is a story board to share with Islington and they recommended services/teams use that format and centralise to show good practice and what's happening in each area.
- 2.10 Parents Voice – The Pyramid of Participation presentation from Islington has been received. Discussions are needed to implement and build co-production of parent's voice from different groups. **AW to complete item and update with new outcome. ACTION.**
- 2.11 Annual Reviews – **Paper shared at this board around Annual review timeliness ACTION.**
- 2.12 Parent/Carer Funding – AW, AS, AC and KM met 2 weeks ago and have updated the SLA. **There's further work between them and the PCF to propose a core offer. Item to be discussed in the October Board. ACTION.**
- 2.13 Mental Health Support - PH and WP are liaising with Sean Cheesman.
- 2.14 Joint Commissioning – Papers have been distributed to the Board today and have been sent to the Department of Education. AW is meeting with Sirona next Wednesday to discuss what it would look like in reality and ensure it's a flexible system going forward so Sirona can assess recruitment and numbers needed. **AW to mark as complete. ACTION.**
- 2.15 Board Members meeting with parents/carers, children, and young people – A discussion is needed on how information is gathered. One idea is to set up a Teams form and centralise the information. In Greenwich's Inspection outcome, they were clear about young people and children being part of those discussions with senior members of the Council. **AW to look at how that's captured. ACTION.** SS updated this is part of the Inspection Readiness work that includes compliments/feedback from individual families, although in the ILACS there was limited interest from inspectors.
- 2.16 Ofsted Templates – **AW has assigned to the October Board and will send to schools in September. ACTION.** It's worth having conversations with families around how SEND fits into schools to get information back before the real Inspection.
- 2.17 Update the Strategic Governance Charts – **To be updated by September HC and PH. ACTION.**
- 2.18 Mobilisation Plan – Duplicate item. **AW to remove. ACTION.**
- 2.19 PH shared that Islington do an assurance visit on 2-year rotas to every AP provider and independent provision. **PH and AW to take opportunities from the learning to push to a different level and report back in the Autumn. ACTION. JH to link**

with Greenwich. ACTION. Nurture UK are keen to publish our report and PH is talking to schools and making sure we have consent to do that.

2.20 Risk Log

- 2.21 The log hasn't changed since the last Board. There was an error on Area 4 and the wording has been updated to reflect that change. Once the letter has been received from the DfE the Risk Log will be reviewed in terms of any comments.
- 2.22 LM updated they have successfully appointed Saba Hussain to the North Somerset Consultant vacancy who will start on 6th September 2023. Saba will be joining the North Somerset team with 2 permanent Consultants, which will increase capacity to support children and young people in North Somerset.

3.0 Forward Plan

- 3.1 Independent Schools monitoring process report has moved to the October Board and there will be a deep dive in November on the SEND Strategy Impact. JH advised the current strategy is around alternative provision and has heard the next theme will be preparing for adulthood. **AW to pick up with MH and MG in August to discuss streams from that piece of work. ACTION. PH to create a Local Inclusion Plan and start to involve key people over the summer and bring back in the Autumn. ACTION.** Following discussions of engaging with Town and Parish Councils, CG is planning to take to Weston Town Council. **CG and PH to discuss learning taken from workshop on community building and engagement. ACTION.**

4.0 Presentation from Hartlepool on SEND Inspection Experience

- 4.1 Danielle Swainston from Hartlepool Council joined the Board to reflect on the presentation in terms of the process or whether there are specific questions about the inspection. Inspection Teams can differ, and Leads may have a particular interest for their key lines of enquiry.
- 4.2 DS confirmed that neither the Chief Executives for Hartlepool nor ICB were spoken to. The last framework was about having the right documents in place, doing focus groups and leadership groups. This Inspection was much about children, young people's and families' experiences and drilled towards what their feedback was.
- 4.3 The Local Authority Nominated Officer (LANO) needs to be 100% available for 3 to 4 weeks, they are the link to the Inspection Team, and they need to be able to respond quickly and understand the system.
- 4.4 The Director of Children's Services wasn't included but attended Keeping in Touch Meetings throughout the 3 weeks. Inspectors are off site during the 1st and 2nd week but that still needs to be counted into the inspection timescales. Everyone was invited to feedback on the Friday, Managing Director, Lead Councillor, Lead Member, ICB and The Trust but they weren't involved in discussions during the inspection.

- 4.5 Hartlepool have done a lot of quality assurance around EHCPs, however, the inspection was based around EHC plans and whether a difference is being made to children and young people as a system. DS advised there's a need to be very mobile in terms of timescales, everything needs to be uploaded to the portal by Friday. Review meetings were held for each of those cases from across the system, Social Care, Health, and Education. They didn't have an audit process, so **DS wrote an audit tool on the Wednesday night and will circulate. ACTION.** A Leadership Audit Group was pulled together quickly, chaired by DS and Thursday was spent auditing cases. A chronology was written in the audit sessions. DS advised that once the audits have been done, they are sent to everyone who is the team around the child. The team need to be prepared for conversations they are going to have with Inspectors.
- 4.6 The Parent Carer Forum Leads are on the Operations Group and preparation and discussions on the new framework has been taking place since October. Preparatory work wasn't done with parents, the professional who had the best relationship with them explained what was going to happen. They are meant to talk to inspectors on their own, however, a few didn't feel comfortable doing that and were able to have a worker sitting in.
- 4.7 KM was interested to hear more around the experiences and involvement of parent carers in the wider context. DS explained in the first Inspection they had a phone call with the DCS, the LANO and the ICB Lead, and then a phone call with the Chair of the PCF. Letters were sent to all parents through schools and settings to ask if they wanted an opportunity to speak to Inspectors. Inspectors don't like to find information that hasn't been reflected to them already. The first day a whole session is done around the SEF and if it's honest, hopefully feedback from parents won't cause a problem. The parents were very involved, and they had an opportunity for a voice. There are meetings with Inspectors in terms of how things are dealt with, and PCF were involved in each of those meetings.
- 4.8 DS advised the LANO will need to have access to practitioners very quickly and their questions need to be dealt with straight away and teams need to be very responsive.
- 4.9 BN asked how any escalations raised for children and young people were dealt with in the Inspection? DS explained everything comes through the LANO and advise North Somerset to be responsive, if they think you're scrabbling around for information they won't have confidence that you are understanding your children.
- 4.10 From the 6 cases chosen by Hartlepool there were 4 with EHCP's, 2 with SEND support, 2 in Social Care, 1 was with Child Protection, 1 in Social Care as a Child in Need and 1 Looked After. Inspectors will sit with Social Workers and Practitioners and track cases through that process. **DS to share the Inspection timetable. ACTION.**
- 4.11 PH thought going through drills with teams who will be in front of Inspectors would be

useful. DS didn't have a specific list of subjects covered; each Inspector had their own interest. It's about being confident in the cases and knowing them well to be able to answer questions fully and potentially take challenge.

- 4.12 JH referred to the key lines of enquiry and the LANO rule and suggested North Somerset needed to reflect on having someone to be able to respond in a timely way. DS thought that if North Somerset are responsive and have a responsive system across health colleagues and local authority in terms of key lines of enquiry it would be adequate. They didn't have specific key lines and it was an Inspection that meandered, and you never knew if anything had been boxed off until Friday. They wanted actions to be very tight and SMART and wanted to know what's being done and by when. They base a lot of the inspection on the SEF. They will look at other cases apart from the 6 in other ways.
- 4.13 DS advised EBR that Inspectors would talk to TA's supporting those individual 6 children; and suggested that would be whoever the best person at the school to understand the plan for the child. Teachers, SENCO's, and TA's have been involved in case tracking. Inspectors chose which schools to visit. Hartlepool asked Head Teachers to ensure they had cases ready, and if possible, cases where children and young people would talk to the Inspectors. They aren't coming to see the setting but to understand School's contribution in the bigger system and how a difference is being made to children and young people. Those involved need to be prepared and have cases ready.
- 4.14 LM stated that from a health perspective the waiting times nationally mandated for therapy is 18 weeks and wondered how that was dealt with in the inspection. DS shared there were lots of discussions and debates in terms of 18 weeks, because parents will say for the EHC assessment the 18 weeks shouldn't stand, if a multi-agency decision has been made, they shouldn't have to wait. We advised Inspectors that we would attempt to look at the individual needs of the child in terms of any potential escalation.
- 4.15 JW picked up on the role of LANO, who is Helen Caldwell, Policy Manager. **PH will have the ultimate decision today whether Helen is best placed for the role. ACTION.** JW was taken about the boxes and the speed of which information needed to be presented. JW thanked DS for being open with their experience.
- 4.16 JS will be working with AW directly with headteachers, it would be prudent for Heads to ask SENCO's to select EHCP and SEND support students to study their files and talk to those students themselves to get a real understanding. DS advised it's not always as simple as going through the prepared cases. DS did Head Teacher briefings about the new framework and the experiences of the children and young people. **JS to continue with the momentum in the new term. ACTION.**

- 4.17 DS thought this framework is better, she was the LANO in the first framework and it was very much about documentation, this is the actual reality of how we jointly commission pathways and show families are at the heart of that. The inspector was challenging but fair. DS is happy to receive queries by email.

5.0 Improvement Plan

5.1 Area 2

- 5.2 At the last Board, members asked for more information on Mental Health Teams in schools and facts and figures have been circulated. **Leslie Leadbetter, Manager of Mental Health Teams in schools is expecting to see an increase in the number of young people accessing treatment, progress is worth comparing in the new year. ACTION.**

- 5.3 There's good news about the paediatric appointments, that will improve quality and parents will get continuity when substantive staff are in place. There are still issues around paediatric appointments that will take time to work through. There's still a problem around OT but other areas are performing well. The key metric around Education, Health, and Care requests for information from Health within 6 weeks, that target is 100%; what's making the difference across BNSSG are the Health Advisors for SEND.

- 5.4 MHe is changing roles but is happy to work with AC to ensure there's good representation in North Somerset. MHe will still be keeping an overview of SEND across BNSSG's regional work and will continue to work closely with KM and colleagues. JW thanked MHe for all his support.

- 5.5 LM gave feedback on the impact felt from parents/carers and young people. The situation remains difficult whilst there are challenging complaints and concerns from families with specific individual child needs. Relationships in schools are better, with more structured conversations at source. There's increased involvement with the Parent/Carer sub-group and Barnardo's to ensure services designed meet needs.

The team are feeling overwhelmed, it's clinically challenging when we have the stress of higher levels of clinical complexity and still haven't understood the extent of challenges from Covid. **PH added that unmet developmental needs are significant for children coming through in Early Years and intensive work needs to be done in partnership. ACTION.**

5.6 Area 3

- 5.7 JS shared comparison SAT data between North Somerset and National which shows North Somerset is on par with national. JS is hoping to get GCSE results in their entirety on 24th August to see those SEND gaps. JW acknowledged the good news that North Somerset is in line with national in the overall average score and was reassured about the faster speed of receiving GCSE data. JW thanked JS for her

commitment.

- 5.8 The Nurture Group report speaks for itself. Guy has put an offer together to roll out the groups if numbers increase. Trauma Informed is still ongoing which runs alongside Nurture. There was a blip in terms of the Education Strategy and they're talking to Trauma Informed Specialists and that will now start in October. Everything is moving at pace in the right direction.
- 5.9 PH went to a Secondary Head Teachers' Forum which was convened to look at fixed term exclusions of children with SEND in Secondary Schools which is what's holding data back. Schools have started to self-organise, one has been reflecting on their practices and have re-written the behaviour policy, that will be shared with the Trust to sign off and then shared with the Council. The partnership is strong, and positive discussions are taking place. **JS to pick up at the October Board and data will be shared. ACTION.**

5.10 Area 4

- 5.11 Compliance is 20 weeks with new assessments; it's low at 35.6% compliance, obviously with issues shared with other Local Authorities around lack of EPs. The Southwest regional average is 35.2% and the national average is 50.7%, there are significant capacity issues in the team being caused with issues with DBS. There are 2.5fte officers and an additional 2 which will make a significant difference. The team have been phoning parents giving them an indication of when the EP will see their child and when the report is due, everyone was really understanding. The Team have been impacted by the Top Up review, 92% of requests were within 2 months and schools couldn't apply for Top Up funding in March or June.
- 5.12 Compliance with Annual Reviews is a vastly improving picture and towards the end of June there was 100% compliance. Annual Review training has been provided for schools to use the portal. PH thanked the Team for taking the initiative to contact parents. Capacity has been impacted by shifting to not being able to access top-up funding unless there is an EHCP which aligns with the rest of the country.

There are resources coming in which have been agreed by £1million injection of cash to an Implementation Plan signed by JW and Section 15 Officer. North Somerset still have the only fully staffed EP Service regionally and one of the few nationally. The pressure on the SEND Team is considerable and PH thanked them for keeping going. **MP to supply the number of cases each officer holds to PH. ACTION.** JW has escalated issues around DBS delays to the Assistant Chief Constable.

- 5.13 MHe advised that now Community Health Service records are electronic, Annual Review attendance data can be captured.

5.14 Area 5

- 5.15 AS updated the only area outstanding for the DfE is the OT and SaLT offer, it was

distributed by AW. PH has responded to the DfE with an outline plan in relation to OT and SaLT and given our next steps in terms of an agreed Service Level Agreement with Sirona by the start of the academic year. AS, AW and AC are working on this over the summer. JW clarified there is lots of work underway and they will have a detailed update in September.

5.16 AS updated the SLA has been signed off and the implementation underway, that will include some time to allow to recruit for extra OTs and SaLTs for the new piece of work with Sirona. **LMc will assure the Board on progress with recruitment. ACTION.** There is provision and that's being unified in one place but there may be some gaps; continuity of funding will give an opportunity to patch the gaps.

5.17 **Data Dashboard**

5.18 The intention is that additional clarity is given on what the data means several times a year. **ED will circulate after the meeting for comments. ACTION.** ED shared the dashboard with the group. The SEND Cohort shows the number of children in ACP and children with SEN support is going up every year. The SEND support cohort has been stable over the last few years and the ECHP group is seeing the increase.

5.19 The largest primary need is around SEMH followed by ASD and Speech and Language. JW highlighted the undiagnosed females and wondered whether there's any proactive work from Health. LMc updated that Health needs to focus on local relationships between therapists at Schools, Public Health Nurses, SEND, and Education colleagues to concentrate on behaviour that's being considered. Greater understanding across the spectrum and review of neuro diversity is a challenge and there's a need to work harder to find those young people and make sure they get into the system. PH would like to get to grips with additional needs brought about from having SEN from families who are BAME and would like some intelligent insight into how these children are supported. **ED would like additional analysis to the Forward Plan and suggested a demographic deep dive with a focus on neuro diversity. ACTION. PH and ED to discuss. ACTION.**

ED to distribute the data analysis. ACTION. Questions can be emailed to ED and HB. **AW advised ED the Attainment deep dive is due in October and to link with JS. ACTION. AW to add SEND 2 to the November Board. ACTION.**

5.20 MHe provided a link on support for girls with neurodiversity [NeonDaisy | Neurodivergent Girls | Bristol.](#)

6.0 **NSPWCT Annual Survey Update**

6.1 KM gave a brief overview of the parent carer survey feedback. SS was disappointed at the increase of parent/carer's response and challenged that moving into the future feedback needs to be considered from a wider perspective. Feedback will be available from Ofsted Inspection reports, surveys from schools, and compliments and complaints. SS was concerned focus was on 6.6% of parent's experiences and more

is needed to be done on getting other parents and carers' views to find out whether communications have had a greater impact on just the 6.6%. **PH and KM to have a conversation about whether the opening descriptor and narrative can be put into context of the overall cohort. ACTION. KM to get this live at the end of the summer. Board members to feedback to KM. ACTION. CG and KM to discuss building a community training CG recently attended. ACTION.**

6.2 **JW asked for slides to be distributed and looked forward to a longer session on at the next Board. ACTION. KM to provide an understanding of the survey feedback numbers as a percentage of all parent/carers and an indication of how many parent/carers had children and young people over 18. ACTION.**

6.3 AW has added a 20-minute slot for KM for the August Board.

7.0 Any Other Business

7.1 This is Sheila's last Board, CG thanked her for everything. The Board wished Sheila all the best.

7.2 The SEND play area in Castle Batch opens on officially on Saturday.

8.0 Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 15th August 2023 from 3.00pm to 5.00pm