

North Somerset SEND Partnership

SEND Improvement Board Minutes

Tuesday 19th March 2024, 3.00pm to 5:00pm

Present

Jo Walker (JW), Chief Executive & Chair, NSC
Cllr. Catherine Gibbons (CG) Executive Member
Shane Devlin (SD), Chief Executive for Integrated Care Board for BNSSG
Pip Hesketh (PH), Assistant Director for Education Partnerships, 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
Georgie MacArthur (GM), Consultant in Public Health for NSC
Alison Stone (AS), Head of Children's Commissioning, NSC
Ed Bowen-Roberts (EBR), Headteacher, Baytree and Representative for Special Schools
Emma Diakou (ED), Head of Business Insight, Policy & Partnerships, NSC
Emma Brown (EBro), Vulnerable Children's Unit, Case Lead, DfE
Emma Bray (EBra), Headteacher Christ Church Primary, representing Primary Headteachers
Jacqui Scott (JS), Interim Head of Virtual Schools
Huw Thomas Jones (HTJ), Integrated Transport Unit Manager, NSC
J Smith (JSm) Headteacher Clevedon School,
Claire Bullock (CB), North Somerset Parent carers working together
Rebecca Pinder (RP), Minute Taker

Apologies

Justin Humphries (JH), Secondary Head Representative, St Katherine's School
Wendy Packer (WP), Head of Inclusion, NSC
Anna Clark (AC), Senior Performance Improvement Manager, Children's Services, ICB

Rosie Shepherd (RS), Chief Nurse, ICB
Martin Hawketts (MH), Head of Service, Adult Social Care, NSC
Gemma Blackmore (GB), SEND Manager & Advisor, NHS England Southwest
Bally Nagra (BN), Head of Service for Children with Disabilities Service in North Somerset
Helen Caldwell (HC), Interim Head of Learning and Achievement, NSC
Grainne Rogers (GR) on behalf of Lorraine McMullen
Mandy Plumridge (MP), SEND Manager, NSC
Dawn Newton (DN), Head of Front Door and Family Wellbeing, Children's Social Care, NSC
Jane Antis (JA), Assistant Director, Children's Services, NSC
Ed Bowen-Roberts (EBR), Headteacher, Baytree and Representative for Special Schools

1.0 Welcome and Introductions

CG sent apologies for the first half of the meeting; JW is chairing on her behalf.

2.0 Minutes of the Improvement Board 19th February 2024

Minutes approved.

2.1 Action Log

- 2.1.1 *Update on social care and health advice.* Item complete and on today's agenda. Paper was shared ahead of the meeting.
- 2.1.2 *Report on screen use and social media impact on mental health.* Georgie MacArthur is joining later. There was an Ofcom report last week on the subject and in addition to the action **PH is doing a report back to scrutiny; once that's completed outcomes will be provided to the board. ACTION. AW to update the action narrative. ACTION.**
- 2.1.3 *Engagement from January board.* AW sent a summary of key themes from the board to KM last Friday;. From the "you said we did" feedback from NSPCW survey, NSPCT has identified proposals to share on social media with context around what's been happening and what's planned; there's also the parent/carer workshop which is a separate piece of work.
- 2.1.4 *Case studies on health services to be shared.* AW spoke with AC; Health is aware and are pulling information together; Bristol and South Gloucestershire have had a similar request. Inspectors want to know that those on the waiting list are supported, and **AW is following up with AC on Friday to discuss providing case study evidence. ACTION.**
- 2.1.5 *KM to work with AW and GR concerning key messages from you said we did.* As above.
- 2.1.6 *Case review.* This is part of our Ofsted and Area SEND inspection preparation for CQC. Conversations have been started about how that will look, and conversations

have started with schools. **The next multi-agency audit day will be a program supporting people to be ready for inspection, CS will keep the board updated. ACTION. AW to edit the action narrative. ACTION.**

2.2 Risk Log

2.2.1 **AW and SD are meeting next Tuesday to go through and update the log, there are no further changes since the last board. ACTION.** JW thanked SD for taking the lead.

3.0 Schools, screen time/social media and engagement with children and young people

3.1 GM was asked to provide a summary of work around initial impact of social media on mental health. At least a fifth of children have a probable mental health condition and there are various factors and inequalities associated with that. Findings gave a mixed picture, some studies showing some screen time is beneficial for mental health, in reducing social isolation and others showing an impact on depressive symptoms, anxiety, low self-esteem, disordered eating, exposure to hate or harmful content; and association with poor sleep, less healthy diet and being less active. It seems there may be impact of seeking peer comparison on brain development. Studies gave a view to taking a more cautionary principle in thinking about what type of action can be taken. GM focused the analysis on adolescence rather than Early Years. Feedback from young people themselves gave a similar picture. There is guidance from the Chief Medical Officer and the Children's Commissioner.

3.2 PH noted professionals were expecting an 80% negative impact on children and young people but have found it's a more balanced picture and it's about how it's managed. **Paul Cox has started looking at policies in schools, they are quite variable in their approach to social media; Paul will make suggestions on what to do next in terms of findings to the children and young people board.** There are studies looking at screen time and autism and one study in paediatrics shows a potential increase in risk; the evidence base is growing but sometimes the studies aren't fully robust. This suggested there's more work to be done and **GM will investigate the evidence base for children with SEND further. ACTION.** KM would like advice to parents and carers on how to navigate screen time. As students on the autistic spectrum struggle with face-to-face relationships, gaming is hugely important, and parents have difficulty limiting screen time and create healthy boundaries; further work around this would be welcomed. **GM to expand her research and to ascertain what guidance/framework is available on healthy ways to manage screen time. ACTION.**

3.3 North Somerset's Parenting Team have courses for families, these themes are common for families who have children on the autistic spectrum;

families have learnt valuable strategies about how to set boundaries in a way that

feels supportive and caring.

- 3.4 **PH to connect with the team about what can be done to help parents. ACTION.** The differing types of social media/gaming and internet use need to be defined. **Previous research has been done on erosion of relationships and children's sense of responsibility and continuity to those; a more balanced view in the longer term would be helpful; GM to add to research task. ACTION.** There's a need to prepare children for adulthood and empower them to make the right choices, KM thought work could be done through schools, the Young People's Council, engaging parents and finding young people who are willing to engage with this, finding out what would support them and how would they like to be involved. **KM to put messages out in our parent/carer forums to ask for expressions of interest for young people to become involved. ACTION. CS to take discussions to the Southwest regional and work with the children's and young people's voice. ACTION.**

[Internet-Matters-Changing-Conversations-Report.pdf \(internetmatters.org\)](#)

[Internet-Matters-Report-Vulnerable-Children-in-a-Digital-World.pdf \(internetmatters.org\)](#)

4.0 Update on SEND Provision in North Somerset

- 4.0.1 EHC plans total 2032, so there's been a sharp increase in requests this year, some of that is due to changes in top-up funding. A deep dive is being done to understand where requests are coming from and if there are concerns from schools; the team are looking at data to give further insight. AW wants to make sure the graduated response is followed, and schools have the right support with early intervention work.
- 4.0.2 Future provision work continues with Nurture; and Vicky, EP is working with schools to produce an updated report. The previous report was positive, that's continuing and making sure pupils are tracked through the system, pupil numbers will increase as the project expands to ensure evidence is available. Two new resource bases are coming online in September 2024, some of which is being funded by the safety valve. There's a Speech and Language base at Hannah Moor and an Autism base in Priory. A joined-up piece of work was done on 4th March for "SEND and You" for parents to engage with the SEND Team, that was well received. Lime Hills is being split into two sites a secondary temporary site in September, that increases capacity for SEMH and AW is hoping to get the permanent site by 2025/2026. An additional 5 Nurture Groups are targeted for September. The next step is how to embed nurture throughout schools and work is being done with EPs to transition that into habitual practice. At the recent engagement event for SEND pupils planning numbers, parents gave feedback that they don't trust the Council and felt let down but they did appreciate professionals taking time to speak with them.

The key message was this needed to be right because moving children through different schools don't work. AW to continue with future planning and upskilling in mainstream and special schools.

- 4.0.3 KM thanked AW and the SEND team for engaging with families around school places, this is the second year this has been done, and it's appreciated by families and helps break down barriers. The SEND Team attended training around emotional based school avoidance, engaging with parents/carers, seeing lived experiences; a real difference has been made connecting the SEND Team with parents/carers. KM would like messaging around the safety valve reassessed to come away from the negative press around the change in top-up funding; the positives of the safety valve and investment into the area need to be highlighted. **AW to feedback KM's and the board's thanks to the team. ACTION.**
- 4.0.4 **PH to refine our narrative around the safety valve; KM to offer support. ACTION.** CS agreed it's important to highlight what's happening in North Somerset rather than the national narrative. **KM and CS to pick up a longer conversation to discuss what trust looks like and how we move forward to build trust in the whole system. ACTION.**
- 4.0.5 There is further training open that professionals can access alongside parents/carers to join up the lived experience. The view of the safety valve is system wide, including through organisations and professionals as well as parents and carers. There's a need to look at how to deliver better quality whilst maintaining budgets. There is a high degree of confidence that North Somerset will be back within benchmark within the next 3 to 5 years. Work on the safety valve and SEND strategically is about creating the environment in schools in which parents want those schools to be the first choice for their children with SEND. PH has seen some really encouraging work on closing the education gap on children with SEND, there's training, talking to the children, extra resources on pedagogy.
- 4.0.6 CS reassured the board it's not about moving children unnecessarily or removal of parental choice. A parent and child led approach needs to be taken; to identify the right children to be at that provision; to sell it to parents; and getting out the communication and engagement plan around the work being done. It's important to share photos, videos, and profiles of teachers; that's what will bring North Somerset back to benchmark.

4.1 Home School Transport

- 4.1.1 HTJ shared slides and gave an update on workstreams using a child centred approach, how pressure and demands in the service is managed and how that will be sustained going forward.
- 4.1.2 Home School Transport monitor growth closely and report to the management team monthly.

Growth in the service has plateaued on mainstream and SEN continues to grow, that has afforded the opportunity to realign the budget. The authority is under huge pressure around Home to School transport, there are challenges and open dialogue

with KM is taking place about how the next steps are shaped. There are several authorities already in consultation on the Post 16 policy.

5.0 SEND Inspection Update

- 5.1 PH shared the presentation slides. JW questioned how the strategic leaders of the system will demonstrate how they are meeting the leadership criteria and suggested that herself, **CG and SD prepare a short briefing note to support their own personal preparation to speak as one voice about what role they have and the journey travelled by the board, for the next meeting. ACTION. PH to bring back a detailed mobilisation plan to the Board. ACTION.** CG would like to find a way to formalise cross directorate conversations in terms of Health and Housing involvement and how that impacts children with special needs, and to demonstrate as political leaders that work is being done across directorates to define a whole council approach. PH thought the extent to which we're learning as an organisation is going to be a key test of the inspection, and we need to demonstrate how we have learned from complaints, which is why we need to start practicing.
- 5.2 PH will be pulling Health, Housing, and other services together through the Family Hubs to connect and get a better view of what's happening for families and how services can support them together. KM wanted the briefing not to just be the positive messages, but to understand what needs improving and to articulate what is going to be done about it. Also demonstrating that Health is in equal partnership and are fully involved.
- 5.3 CS highlighted the inspection framework is different from before and reminded the board the inspection is covering the area, not the local authority which means deep diving into children's lives as well as looking at strategies to move forward. **A position statement from the whole system is needed on what's working well, how we're engaging and how we're moving forward. ACTION. JW to facilitate a SEND preparation update on where we think we are against the evaluation criteria and what the Board needs to do, to BNSSG's executive session. ACTION.**
- 5.4 **SD is due to discuss neurodiversity on Thursday at the Systems Meeting and will suggest coming back in a month to discuss the wider SEND agenda and the role that everyone: primary care, hospital, and Sirona at a senior level. ACTION. Equally important for SD, there's no other health representatives which is frustrating, a senior executive conversation is needed as to why Sirona or SD's Team aren't here today. ACTION.**
- 5.5 PH advised that following discussions at Board, it's critical to get papers into the Annex A quickly otherwise systems will be updated at different stages of development. PH reflected that it's intensive work when under an Improvement Notice and advised if that if we put that level of intensive hard work in now, everything will be easier afterwards; and wants the hard work that's gone on in North Somerset

to be truly reflected in the Inspection.

6.0 Update from DfE Advisors

- 6.1 JW shared proposed changes to the Board. A session was convened with SD and KM to review area focus for 2024/2025. The areas were assurance on inspection activities; SEF; preparation for inspection; deep dive; and engagement with parents and carers. Frequency of the board was reflected on, and bi-monthly boards were proposed to reduce work levels for members; this also reflects that the board feels it has matured in the last 18 months. CG wanted to close the loop on the parent/carer sessions that took place 6 weeks ago clarify the top 3 commitments from those which was communication and support; early intervention; and assessment and training; and workforce development. We can then hold ourselves to account at what is being done following that session. SD clarified these are area priorities for health and social care.
- 6.2 JW reassured the board that holistic deep dives have been done into health and Sirona's performance, EHCPs, and the area managed by MP over the last 12 to 18 months. PH reflected on learning taken from parents/carers and colleagues gather people's back stories has made a world of difference and will take us a lot further.
- 6.3 EB was interested to hear the positive conversation and echoed JH's comments around learning. Many of the challenges are regional and national and it's great that AW attended the network event yesterday. EB thought that if the board is assured the bi-monthly meetings allow for the governance pace built it sounds reasonable. EB hears the commitment with lifting the Inspection Notice and that seems a reasonable place to be to look at the next steps for the partnership. **AW to consider dates for the July review. ACTION.** It's been useful to link with AW monthly on the EHCP data to see how that fits with in the safety valve and how the board is looking at framing that information; EB would be interested to hear more about that and how that's working. **AW to plan feedback. ACTION.** EB was reassured to come back after the gap to hear progress and real ambition.
- 6.4 The next meeting will remain in April with the focus on SEF preparation and the priorities on the parent/carers session which we have captured from the local authority perspective. **KM and SD to provide their views. ACTION.** CS, PH and AW to continue with pace of drafting papers and provide feedback this side of Easter. CG was keen to ensure we had effective feedback link for the parent/s carers.
- 6.5 **MP to bring a detailed report on quality of EHCP plans and local area view. ACTION. Attendance and exclusion paper will be brought to the April board. ACTION.** CG, PH and SD will be evaluating the performance of the board's new way of working.
- 6.6 KM is keen to involve the same parent/carers to feedback and to produce a narrative to get clear deliverables. KM is working with AW, PH, and health colleagues to do

some co-produced work.

6.7 **The board to reflect and review the new board process in September. ACTION.**

7.0 Any Other Business

7.1 KM highlighted conversations needed urgently around funding for the Parent/Carer Forum. **SD is engaging strongly with Dave Jarret, ICB's Chief Delivery Officer and will get back to KM quickly on that, the Parent/Carer Forum is a fundamental part of our SEND journey. ACTION.**

7.3 **CG and PH to co-ordinate discussions with GM on screen time. ACTION.**

7.4 CS, PH and AW to look at a 12 month forward plan in line with priorities to ensure we're confident to satisfy the quarterly performance, it would be helpful to make sure we've got the timings in place. JW reassured the board, the deal is to have papers out a week before, so everyone has more time to produce papers and will give everyone time to study the papers. **AW to organise a standard reporting format. ACTION.**

8.0 Date of Next Meeting

8.1 Tuesday 16th April 2024 at 9.00am to 11:00am