

North Somerset SEND Partnership

SEND Improvement Board Minutes

Monday 13th November 2023, 10.30am to 12.30pm

Present

Cllr. Catherine Gibbons (CG) Executive Member & Chair
Shane Devlin (SD), Chief Executive for Integrated Care Board for BNSSG
Anthony Webster (AW), Head of SEND, NSC
Jo Walker (JW), Chief Executive, 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
Anthony Webster (AW), Head of SEND, North Somerset Council
Grainne Rogers (GR) on behalf of Lorraine McMullen
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
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
Shelley Smith (SS), Engagement and Participation Officer, NSC
Anna Clark (AC), Senior Performance Manager, ICB
Mandy Plumridge (MP), SEND Manager, NSC
Jacqui Scott (JS), Interim Head of Virtual Schools
Rebecca Pinder (RP), Minute Taker, Agilisys Limited

Apologies

Pip Hesketh (PH), Assistant Director for Education Partnerships, NSC
Justin Humphries (JH), Secondary Head Representative, St Katherine's School
Emma Bray (EBra), Headteacher Christ Church Primary, representing Primary Headteachers

1.0 Welcome and Introductions

1.1 CG welcomed members to the SEND Improvement Board for November.

2.0 Minutes of Meeting of Friday 20th October 2023

2.1 The minutes of Friday 20th October 2023 were approved.

2.2 Action Log

2.2.1 Lines 4, 11 and 12; Update on public health contribution; Meeting with head teachers and school mental health; and Additional analysis to the Forward Plan. **AW to follow up with PH and send updates with the minutes. ACTION.**

2.2.2 Line 14. Complete.

2.2.3 It was agreed further actions will be deferred to December's Board because of the short timeframe between October and November.

2.3 Risk Log Review

2.3.1 AW has reviewed the Risk Register to assess what was still relevant, the scores remain similar. AW is working with AC to get updates on Health risks, and ADHD has been added. He is working on the SEF document to detail an action plan and will break down into 12 areas. AW is meeting tomorrow to outline details, confirm who's leading on which item, and what the KPIs need to be. **AW will bring to the December Board for comment. ACTION.** Risks will be tied into this register for the next 12 months.

2.4 Forward Plan

2.4.1 The Annual Health Report is due in December. **Housing for SEND families and improvement throughout different agencies, AW will take offline with CF and PH. ACTION.**

2.4.2 Discussions are required around what the January Board will look like. SD suggested it would add value if the Board had a workshop approach. JW agreed. JW suggested

a 10-minute breakout discussion around emerging risks.

3.0 Feedback on SEND Day

- 3.1 KM thanked everyone for making the day a huge success, it was very well attended with over 700+ people, 80 stall holders, 60 training sessions and drop-in clinics. Initial feedback is that 80% have better understanding of how to help their children. KM put forward whether this is the model we want in future or whether smaller frequent events would be better? Some feedback to work on for next year; is the layout and size of the venue; the need for more signposting; improvement on acoustics, with calm spaces being available would be beneficial; some stall holders packing up early, which late arrivals missed; and professionals manning stalls didn't have the opportunity to engage in the day. KM was able to access funding to make the day work, it's a huge cost in terms of staffing to organise such an event and there was talk around how to include additional professional development during the day. It was positive to have leadership attendance.
- 3.2 JH highlighted the positive feedback, and wondered whether the January session is an opportunity to link with some parents/carers? JW found it a positive event; it was hugely beneficial networking for various professionals and for them to meet parents/carers. JW suggested Senior Leaders being available for questions/answers would be better pitched at lunch time or earlier in the day.
- 3.3 CF would like to ensure there's a connection between the day and the Local Offer, there's a piece of work to establish that the Local Offer has live updates to make sure it's accessible throughout the year for our parents/carers to be able to connect with what's available. CF agreed with SD that the January session should be used to connect parents/carers with this group. **KM to discuss with CF. ACTION.**
- 3.4 SD asked one parent how they navigate around all the information, the reply was "I don't". They said, it would be useful if somebody could "help navigate them through all of this". SD was surprised by the sheer amount of information in the room, and questioned who the co-ordinator is and how we help parents/carers navigate? KM said that peer support and the Local Offer isn't close to the demand needed to signpost effectively. Consideration needs to be made to the parents/carers who have needs of their own and providing advocacy for them to access what's available is needed. EBR shared that Special Schools often take on the role as 'middleman' connecting families to services. **KM to explore further over the coming months. ACTION.**
- 3.5 KM advised the remit from DfE is 0-25, though if young adults over that age need advice, there's likely to be resources that can be tapped into. We should still be connecting with Adults Services and making sure that's properly represented at this event.

- 3.6 KM has an opportunity to book the event again for October 2024. JW thought it difficult to decide without understanding the overall financial implication and would be helpful to understand the funding envelope around PCF. **SD, JW, and CG to be sighted on the what the overall commissioning implication looks like and what's being delivered. To be overseen by CF. ACTION.**
- 3.7 JW would also like to push the digital point and maximise the opportunity to ensure our offer is live and dynamic as possible to support people.

4.0 Young People's Council

- 4.1 Kieran, Priory Community School; Eduard, Nailsea School and Elise, The Voyage Learning Campus introduced themselves. They will be speaking about activities are available and what should be available.
- 4.2 Elise said that if you're a certain age, there's nothing to do, nothing to keep young people engaged and no youth clubs to socialise in. For people with SEND there's nothing with a friendly/enclosed environment to interact and make friends; you already need to know someone to meet someone else. There's no community in general, nowhere for art activities or sports or for those who prefer a different environment where there are trained staff. Elise would like to see a variety of things to do where everyone can join in, she could find things she'd like to do but the environment isn't right.
- 4.3 SS shared that Eddy attends mainstream, he's severely sighted. Eddy likes to be independent and would like to do activities without his mum but finds there's few services which could help him manage that. Eddy is feeling excited for next year when he might go to college and become more independent. Eddy was going to the gym, but the person helping him last year left so doesn't go anymore.
- 4.4 Kieran said it's hard to find activities and find things close to home, most people make friends through sport, and he doesn't do sport. Kieran goes to scouts.
- 4.5 JW thanked Elise, Eddy, and Kieran for sharing their aspirations. JW asked what kind of spaces they envisage, explaining the challenge for her is how to use current buildings in a flexible way; and if those spaces were created, the types of activities you'd like to do? Elise said she likes quiet spaces like libraries, but you can't talk, she suggested some sort of centre, a place for teenagers with SEND, where they don't have to explain themselves, a sense of community. In mainstream making friends is harder because of social rules. Elise suggested a survey to find out what young people wanted.
- 4.6 KE spoke to the young people about music. Eddy likes to compose, play, and listen to music, he used to be part of a choir and now plays guitar. Eddy doesn't have time to be in a choir anymore, the teachers and environment felt good. Kieran has been involved in music groups but had to go along with the group and didn't get a chance to learn the acoustic guitar, there was no individual choice. Elise likes listening to

music, she likes the idea of theatre and learning piano.

- 4.7 JH asked how the partnership routinely gets feedback from children and young people, as we're having today; and how are they involved in co-producing services to meet their needs? There may be an option for 1:1 support, with the idea of community workers. JW was interested to have an update on progress on the area of co-production across SEND. **ACTION.** This links to joint commissioning which SD and JW are assessing as well as how it's co-produced. **JW to feedback the conversation to the Senior Leadership Team about how to link areas and how to make those spaces more accessible. ACTION. To be discussed in January's Board. ACTION.** CF referred to Mind of My Own (MOMO) to reach broader groups of young people. EBR suggested working with the voluntary sector; the cohort has become more complex and varied over the years and organisations need to be upskilled and educated.
- 4.8 JS stated that lots of children and families are concerned about the lack of opportunity available outside of school. JS is trying to work with the local church about creative activities. JW highlighted this is a national problem, most authorities have had to cut funding for Youth Services.
- 4.9 DN is working towards extended hours family hubs and opportunities to offer to older age groups, she is working at getting the buildings right to meet a variety of young people's needs. KM said that 37% said access to social community groups was poor or very poor; there are significant needs and how current clubs are made more accessible, needs to be addressed. **KM advised that NHS England can support work on co-production and suggested that could be explored at one of the Boards. ACTION.**
- 4.10 BN would like to discuss how to make the offers reach further, there's a very different level of need across SEND. She asked how our services measure across the region and referred to the space and how we co-produce, hearing what young people have told us today and how as a system we work with them. BN suggested quick wins could be established with the voluntary sector. CG and PH have talked about having a buddy system to have someone of a similar age for young people to attend groups with. BN has some buddying in the (SEND Clubs and Activities Service) SENDCAS, feedback is, it helps avoid the stigma of having to go with an adult.

5.0 Data Dashboard

- 5.1 ED highlighted some key points from the dashboard. As at the end of October, there is an ongoing increase with the largest primary needs around SEMH. For the SEND cohort, SLD and SEMH are the 2 key areas, showing an increasing cohort, though reasons remain stable. There continues to be a higher proportion of males with

EHCP. JW asked whether the gender balance is reflected as national statistics? **ED will ask Hannah to find out the gender balance, will do a review and send out. ACTION.**

- 5.2 35% of EHCPs are being issued within the time frame; that's below target. MP shared that because top up funding isn't being provided through moderation, an assessment needs to be completed, that will explain some of the increase in numbers and schools now need to put in an assessment request. AW said there is a 20-week compliance on his and MP's radar, they meet weekly with the SEND Team to scrutinise it. The waiting list is coming down, last time was 86 and is now into the 70s, AW is working with Guy from the Education Psychology Service to tackle that further. ED said performance is challenging nationally, not just for North Somerset. AW stated a key thing is to reduce the waiting whilst maintaining quality, AW to add as KPI for the SEF.
- 5.3 Since March this year, the number of children in Elective Home Education (EHE) is decreasing and those aged 16 to 18 have also been decreasing, that dips over the year and ED will keep an eye on data in the coming months. ACTION. CF has a breakdown of reasons behind EHE, there's a system around trying to make sure there's the necessary quality assurance on those arrangements, the numbers make that a challenge and additional resources have been put in to manage that. It was agreed that further data and information on performance on ages 18 to 24 would be useful. AW updated that Becky Yallop, EHE Officer is looking at reasons. PH and AW are looking to work with schools in early intervention in inclusion, a piece of work taking place behind the scenes. JS added the 16 to 18 age bracket is recognised by the government as a growing area of concern, they are using their grant to enhance staffing.
- 5.4 ED noted that different cohorts are overseen by the Business Intelligence Team there are data dashboards that exist for all, and they're updated daily. The adult data exists and sits within the Adult Services dashboard, including progress into employment, suitable accommodation etc. **ED will ask Hannah to look whether transitions data can be included. ACTION.**

SD left the meeting.

6.0 Quality of EHC Plans

- 6.1 MP focused on social care and quality of plans. Despite interviews on 31st October the Family Support Worker's role remains vacant, the job description is being reviewed to ensure candidates are aware of the nature of the post; there needs to be a shorter turn around between advert and interview as some candidates had already found work. MP said that not everyone going through statutory assessment requires a full social care assessment though evidence is needed to show the information we hold on them has been considered; that will be the role of the Family Support Worker when appointed. BN and Gail have worked on a training package with SEND legal

experts to deliver training to Social Workers so they're aware of their duties and the law.

- 6.2 Gail has provided feedback to a Social Worker who had provided advice but needed improvement, she's going to share that with the rest of her team.
- 6.3 JH didn't understand why the quality of the plans hasn't been addressed. MP advised they've had to make a strategic decision not to quality assure 100% because Gail's time wouldn't cover that task. It's about training packages for Social Workers. MP explained they're also working with the region to plan an independent review; it was noticed that some of the social care advice wasn't lawful. JH wanted to understand why? BN referred to the social care advice; it sits across the child's journey and the ring fenced post is needed to look at some of the consistency and quality, there's been an increase in timeliness but quality is a concern. Sometimes a one-off bespoke training isn't going to be enough, and the designated post will have tighter grip on quality. The post is being regraded to ensure they have the right level of expertise.
- 6.4 It has been raised across leadership by BN in terms of being a priority and how we all buy into that process of making sure that staff attend training, making sure a designated position in each area have an interface with the Family Support Worker. There's a wider issue about bringing the Local Offer into the Social Care space and how we plug that with social care advice.
- 6.5 AW met with Keith before he retired, it was clear from that conversation, we have improved but social care and health advice could be tighter, this is on the agenda for the SEND Engine Room. AW assured the Board there is a plan to fix it and ideally by early next year he'll be able to report its complete; they'll pick up those that haven't been given the right advice for Social Care and Health and unpick that through the Annual Review process. AW committed to the Board that this will be in the SEF and Improvement Plan.
- 6.6 KM said this is a crucial frustration within our families that some processes seem to take forever, from the past survey the connectivity with Social Care isn't always as we'd hope it to be.

It's important to get the connectivity and positivity to families and ensure they're tapping into support and to stop the frustration of delays in the system. There's work to do around the hub for EHCPs and making sure that's working more smoothly, for parents/carers to see where they are in the process and to easily access that information.

- 6.7 **JW was reassured by AW's input; she will pick up with CF to ensure AW and his team have support to achieve the ambitions they have. ACTION.** AW added that performance has dipped because they've gone back to review again. Keith said that plans have come a long way but there's still further to go with Health and Social Care which is why we wanted to highlight the issues and what's being done about it.

MP was concerned because even if the advert goes out this week no-one will be in post until February because of the HR process. MP asked if anything could be done as an interim measure from colleagues; she was mindful of having evidence of significant improvement for any inspection. **JW agreed it can't wait 3 months and will pick up with CF and copy MP.**

- 6.8 MP updated on the scripts for assessments. They will be having follow-up calls with parents who have received those conversations to find out how they feel supported. Regular conversations are happening with parents at each stage of the assessment process, the next stage is to introduce the Annual Reviews. There are 2000 reviews so officers have huge caseloads which will be a challenge but is something that needs to be addressed. This has been running since September, so next month will be a good opportunity to start phoning parents who have had the calls. **MP to feedback a snapshot at the January Board. ACTION.**
- 6.9 Education Strategy Update. JS can provide detailed feedback in the January meeting. A few meetings back we were keen to have KPIs and milestones we could update in real terms, those are being worked on. There's a spreadsheet where incremental updates can be given as things progress. The strategy has been launched with primary and secondary schools, there are 6 pillars with an owner for each; there are KPIs for how many schools sign up and there are enquiries from schools around the booking process. The training will finish at the end of the academic year and JW will want to see schools implementing change around trauma practice. Once the pillars are running, JS will be able to report to the Board monthly. There will be rolling KPIs, open access to spreadsheets, and sharing with partners. **JS to speak in January about who is allocated to which pillar so the Board can monitor against progress. ACTION.**
- 6.10 Impact of SEND Strategy. AW spoke about out the impact of SEND, our strategy is the SEF document. AW's team are meeting to do the action plan, put names against those, and set KPIs to bring to the Board.
- 6.11 SEND Inspection update. AW is ensuring they've gone through Annex A and is working with Hannah Batts to make sure they've got the data, what's missing and how we follow up with the right teams.

Helen Caldwell and Tina from Strategy and Policy are doing that piece of work. Everything is on track in terms of the SEND Inspection, AW is learning from various inspections and referred to Hereford's which is an interesting read.

- 6.12 The Safety Valve. The LA has to report again into the Safety Valve in December, there's lots of work going on behind the scenes. Emma Whitehead and the Education Funding Team are pulling all information together to advise us where we are in terms of finance. We are making sure it's clear what we are doing as an area, it's a difficult project to manage, with high needs funding as its around supporting children while at the same time looking at how to use the funding in a more effective way; so AW is

working with our Strategic Schools Forum at what we do around mainstream top-up funding; modelling has been done and has gone to the sub-group. SSF papers need to go out later this week and then a formal consultation will be done on the outcomes. AW is having some good conversations and will provide a more formal update for the December Board. The Graduated response is great, but impact won't be seen for a few years.

7.0 Update from DFe Advisors

- 7.1 Keith has retired, and EB has been in contact with North Somerset about how the SEND advisors are allocated. EB is meeting with PH on Thursday to talk about support the Safety Valve Advisor offers. EB asked the Board to continue to use her as the link into the department and for support. A local area monitoring meeting is currently being scheduled.
- 7.2 GB has replaced Mark Tucker and will be the key link into NHS England as advisor. The co-production training is on offer to North Somerset, it was delivered in Devon and was a success. A self-advocacy group for children across the region has been set up which is run by the Unstoppables in Somerset, it would be good to involve young people from North Somerset to link their ideas with the Board on how to raise the profile of young people's voices. EB to link with Shelly Smith.

8.0 Any Other Business

- 8.1 **JW, SD, and CG to discuss how January's Board will be spent. ACTION. Members to send views to JW about what they'd like included. ACTION.**
- 8.2 **JW would like to spend 10 minutes discussing health data and the 3 papers to be deferred until the next meeting. ACTION.**

9.0 Date of Next Meeting

- 9.1 Thursday 14th December 2023 – 10.00am to 12.00pm