

North Somerset SEND Partnership

SEND Improvement Board Minutes

Monday 18th September 2023, 11:00am to 1:00pm

Present

Cllr. Catherine Gibbons (CG) Executive Member & Chair
Jo Walker (JW), Chief Executive, NSC
Carolyn Fair (CF), Interim Director of Children's Services, NSC
Shane Devlin (SD), Chief Executive for Integrated Care Board for BNSSG
Anthony Webster (AW), Head of SEND, NSC
Lisa Manson (LM), Director of Performance & Delivery, BNSSG, ICB
Alison Stone (AS), Head of Children's Commissioning, NSC
Kenton Mee (KM), Chief Executive for North Somerset Parents Carer's Working Together & Parent Carer Forum for North Somerset
Hannah Batts (HB), Principal Business Intelligence Lead
Helen Caldwell (HC), Strategic and Policy Development, NSC
Anthony Webster (AW), SEND Team Manager, North Somerset Council
Mark Tucker (MT), SEND Advisor for the Southwest, NHS England
Grainne Rogers (GR) on behalf of Lorraine McMullen
Mark Hemmings (MH), Performance Manager with ICB
Ed Bowen-Roberts (EBR), Headteacher, Baytree and rept for special schools
Riccardo Enoch (RE), Strategy & Policy Development Officer, Children's Services, NSC
Emma Brown, (EBro), Vulnerable Children's Unit, Case Lead, DfE
Mandy Plumridge (MP), SEND Manager, NSC
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

Apologies

Pip Hesketh (PH), Assistant Director for Education Partnerships, NSC

Jane Humphreys (JaH), Children's Improvement Advisor within the Local Government

Association

Mr J Humphries (JH), Secondary Head Representative, St Katherine's School

Matt Greenhalgh, Interim Service Improvement Lead for Children's Social Work

Emma Bray (EBra), Headteacher Crockerne Primary, representing Primary Headteachers

Bally Nagra (BN), Head of Service for Children with Disabilities in North Somerset

Anna Clark (AC), Senior Performance Manager, ICB

Lorraine McMullen (LMc), Interim Deputy Director of Operations for Children's Community

Emma Diakou (ED), Head of Business Insight, Policy & Partnerships, NSC

1.0 Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1 This is the last meeting for LM. CG thanked her for everything she has done and wished her all the best in her new role.
- 1.2 CG welcomed members to September's North Somerset Improvement Board. CG, JW, and SD have agreed the Board should meet in person in January and June or July, to discuss the future direction of the Board.

2.0 Minutes of Meeting of 15th August 2023

- 2.1 Member's accepted the minutes of 15th August as a fair and accurate reflection of the last Board.

2.2 Action Log

- 2.2.1 Inspection guidance and support. Item is in place and is discussed in the SEND Engine Room. Item closed.
- 2.2.2 KM to provide PCF feedback. On today's agenda. **AW to close. ACTION.**
- 2.2.3 North Somerset Partnership Strategy Governance Chart. Completed and in the SEND Inspection documents. AW added completed date.
- 2.2.4 Mobilisation. Same as inspection guidance, item complete but being kept under review.
- 2.2.5 Parent Carer Survey. Item on today's agenda. AW closed.

AW to add item numbers to the spreadsheet for ease of reference. ACTION.

2.3 Risk Log

- 2.3.1 AW has highlighted the directions of items which have changed with arrows. Items relate to previous areas of improvement; some are ongoing, and AW will continue linking relevant professionals. **AW to update log. ACTION.**

2.4 Forward Plan

- 2.4.1 The Education Strategy has been shared. The Parent/Carer survey and Safety Valve are on today's agenda. October's Board will consider, Update on Attendance and Exclusions, Independent Schools Monitoring Report and Progress and Attainment results from JS.

3.0 Di Osbourne Greenwich, Strategic Lead for SEND in Greenwich

- 3.1 DO, who was the LANO, gave a brief overview of Greenwich's experience during the area SEND Inspection. The Lead Inspector was from Education, there were 5 Inspectors on site and 2 officers doing quality assurance. They were looking at children and young people with both EHCPs and those receiving SEND support. They were looking at the experiences of children, young people, and families and wanted to know the impact of arrangements put in place and how the area collectively works together to meet needs. The inspection was very much around the practitioners working with children and young people daily. Greenwich had a Project Team in place the October before and started focusing on development and documentation. During inspection the Project Team worked for 3 weeks non-stop with 6 officers and 2 project supports officers. DO advised not to underestimate the involvement of Social Care colleagues in the process. Greenwich did a lot of preparation around documentation and had a summary of what was in each folder, they were quality assured and signed off ready. Inspectors pulled a list of 6 children with varied needs, the biggest pressure point was the vast amount of information needed and getting documents together from that list. **DO to share their template. ACTION. Complete and passed to HC**
- 3.2 They wanted the professionals involved with the children and young people to take them through the system, files, and case notes, and the impact on those children and young people. It was intense for colleagues and there were pre-meetings for those being seen by inspectors who will want to triangulate everything that's been said. In future there will be an annual SEND discussion with DfE. DO advised to put information on the Local Offer for families, they were accommodating and happy to contribute and engaged in the process.
- 3.3 The partnership was always about the local area, and they presented as a partnership. During preparation, they worked with partners delivering workshops, and co-produced collaboratively.
- 3.4 Greenwich have a SEND Senior Leadership Team Meeting weekly with Health, so

have a strong relationship. They were asked to identify leads from Health colleagues who can work alongside CQC inspectors and arrange those kinds of meetings, the person who works alongside in Health will be key. **SD to reflect on the point because of turnover in ICB. ACTION.**

- 3.5 SD reflected on whether North Somerset are there yet around multi-agency relationships. DO said that one challenge in recognising the areas of development. From the 12 inspection criteria they ask you to identify areas you'd like to develop over the next year. From those criteria, our strengths formed our action plan of areas for development. It was important when the inspectors came, there were no surprises, and they were aware of what we were and weren't doing and knew our plans. **SD highlighted that North Somerset need to be honest and reflect on what we know we're good at. ACTION. DO to share information feedback. Attached with minutes**
- 3.6 DO has had discussions at the SENCO Network, they have a Head Teacher/SEND Partnership Group for those discussions and a weekly bulletin sent to schools. As part of the inspection, they did a presentation and DO went to meetings with Heads and SENCOs. This was on agendas and spoken about constantly. When the inspection was notified, DO met schools, and gave presentations to give pointers to ensure they felt comfortable with the whole process, it's important they know it's a Local Area inspection. It was having the channels of communication constantly open and if it's not been spoken about already, to add as an agenda item. They had a generic presentation tweaked for different audiences.
- 3.7 DO advised the weekly SEND Leadership Team has an extended meeting that the Parent Representative Group come to regularly and DO goes to as many events as possible. The group have been involved in producing part of the Day 1 presentation and were very much involved as an equal member of the partnership. One strength was about participation with children and young people via the ACE Network, they were prominent in terms of the evidence we put forward.
- 3.8 Interviews for senior staff involve parents and children and young people. It's not about, rolling them out for the inspection, but about how they are truly involved in day-to-day decisions. DO felt Inspectors would want to know which systems schools have identified, particularly around how they're working with other professionals and the timeliness, but it's particularly about their experiences.
- 3.9 DO confirmed there's not much opportunity to influence which schools are chosen. They knew they'd want to visit a Special School so Greenwich did specific work with them and provided mini workshops.
- 3.10 Councillors were involved at the Day 1 presentation and for feedback. The Chief Executive was at the feedback. We made sure the Director and the Director for ICB were there to give a partnership approach. The Inspection didn't focus on scrutiny and its role.

3.11 DO was happy to have a follow up conversation or share further information.

4.0 Parent/Carer Survey

4.1 The survey is still in draft, there's a few updates before it's shared publicly. The survey will be interrogated within the different areas of provision to look at parent/carers experiences. It's important the survey is contextualised within the self-evaluation framework, so we understand where the issues are in the system.

4.2 The summary overview looks at those key questions, there's been little change from previous years in terms of the response. It shows areas that are working well and those that need improving, but it gives a chance to interrogate some of that information and see what the experiences are. There's a huge similarity which highlights inconsistencies across the board, showing some families are having good experiences whilst others not. A huge part of KM's work is to reduce those.

4.3 KM reflected on the survey and thought the key is communication and what's important as an Improvement Board. If communication had been better, the provision could have been personalised, had better understanding across the system, and reduced frustration. There's a piece of work in each area to understand how personalisation is working effectively, and to reduce pinch points of frustration. Further unpicking is needed around identification of need and the neurodiversity pathway where the biggest impact is in terms of parents/carers experiences.

4.4 52% of respondents said they didn't have enough social contact or felt socially isolated and 73% reported moderate to extreme anxiety, which highlights the importance of getting communications working well and needing to be understanding of people's different situations. It's important to feedback to parents/carers. KM would like commitment from the Board between November and January to have a campaign to get messages out to parents of 'You said, we did'. Communication is key in helping parents feel more confident about the system.

4.5 KM thought that Resource Bases and Nurture Groups in mainstream will make a significant difference to how parents feel around the mainstream experience and having early identification and the correct support to keep children in mainstream. We know our Special Schools are doing well so we need to share good practice and upskill staff across the board.

4.6 EBR said that if communication was poor in his sector and being done well in another, he would communicate and speak to others. There's an element of risk around the portal, where a virtual barrier is being added and isolating families. EBR's families are understanding because dissatisfaction is quashed and doesn't escalate over time.

4.7 JW raised whether there is anything else we need to be doing, or are there aspects of the Improvement Plan we need to put emphasis on because of the survey feedback? **Colleagues to take away an action to reflect on the action plan and**

system to understand whether greater emphasis needs to be considered, or whether there is anything missing. For example, raising pace and emphasis around communication and how we close the loop. ACTION.

- 4.8 CG said the emails she receives from parents tend to focus on communication. AW has already started talking to the SEND Engine Room about the survey and what to do differently. Regarding the EHC Portal, that's been heard and implemented into the SEND Team; work and scripts have been introduced for officers to have those conversations with parents. **MP to provide an update to show the work that has been done to improve communication with families. ACTION.**
- 4.9 SD thought the depth of information from the survey is fascinating. In mainstream, there's as many people who think it's poor, as it's good, which suggests people in different schools are getting different experiences. **SD suggested going deeper into the data to identify, where people are saying mainstream is good and why. If true actions are going to be identified, we need to see where good practice is, and make sure that's learned from. ACTION JS.**
- 4.10 MP added, the script started early September and that will be rolled out for Annual Review cases as well, especially for those reviews we can't attend. A Parent/Carer Liaison Officer has started and a role for her will be to contact parents for feedback. **MP to do an update for the Board in January. ACTION.**
- 4.11 LM wondered whether the survey could become a focus of the response at The Meet Your Counsellor Event in October. KM agreed, it's an important part of being prepared to meet with parents/carers and practitioners to get a feel for things. KM added a link for the day of SEND. <https://www.nspcwt.org/events-1/event-a-day-of-send>

4.1 Headteacher feedback

- 4.1.1 JS updated. In April, conversations were had with Headteachers about how well they were doing in SEND, part of that was inspection preparation and JS fed back to Heads by 'You Said, We Did'. There was positivity around EP Services, the Portal, and support received; ECHP waiting time remains an area for improvement. There is work in the pipeline that people are unaware of. Parents don't feel we're communicating enough, and some teachers want better communication. JS would like to find more diverse ways of keeping communication open.
- 4.1.2 Not all SENCOs are part of the Senior Leadership Team within schools, though it is a government recommendation. JS thought the SENCO should be involved and it's prevalent enough across all schools. CG hoped to push the whole school approach to SEND again. JS is keen on Head Teacher Briefings and Breakfast Meetings, to push the messages and over communicate about what's best practice.

KM was interested to know how many Heads have responded from primary and secondary, and whether a similar piece of work could be done with SENCOs, where good practice is happening. **JS to roll out to SENCOs and SENCO line managers**

to get their views. ACTION.

- 4.1.3 Attendance at EHCP Reviews remains a challenge, and JW thought it incumbent on us to ensure those professionals are available to attend.
- 4.1.4 JS asked Heads for feedback at the end of last year, so that should be coming through now. There's some level of acceptance that not all colleagues can get to annual reviews and alternative means of representation is being considered. Priority needs to go to children who need support which is why MP is doing the phone calls. **AW to check with SEND team around whether we can see which professionals have been invited to a review and who has attended or not attended. Will give a further update. ACTION.**

5.0 Education Strategy

- 5.0.1 This has been circulated and is ready to go live. JW has seen the Strategy and is keen to understand how strategic intent is moved into actions, to try and close the gap. One challenge is statistics from recovery post Covid are slightly worse than other neighbouring local authorities. JS said, in terms of it being an operational strategy, each of the 6 pillars has an aim. KPIs will be set against each action and reviewed 3 times a year, this will create a dynamic document. JS has discussed the 5 years strategy and whether that will be built into the Education Strategy, the best way to do that is have the monitoring document. JS is in talks with Karen Triseman and working with schools and EBR to bring Trauma Informed Practice into schools, that won't start until 2024 but colleagues are making a commitment to buy into Trauma Informed Practice.
- 5.0.2 Pillar 3 shows outcomes for children in care, JS noted that the gap is too big for SEND children, children with Social Work and disadvantaged children.
- 5.0.3 JS, Alison Fletcher, and PH are working with the Teaching School Alliance and are looking at CPD that can be put in schools. Schools need to look at closing the disadvantage gap themselves as well. JW was reassured to hear about the kpi's, but thought milestones and actions needed more detail and perhaps this Board isn't the appropriate forum for governance. **CF thought this needed to sit within both the Social Care Improvement Board and Children and Young People's Partnership to have a few lenses on it. ACTION. JS to feedback on milestones and kpi's in December. ACTION.**

5.1 The SEND Hub (Local Offer)

Access is through the new SEND Hub (Local Offer) via the following links:

www.n-somerset.gov.uk/localoffer

www.n-somerset.gov.uk/send

www.n-somerset.gov.uk/sendhub

For any questions or feedback on the new local offer, contact:

Or, complete our feedback form on the SEND Hub: <https://n-somerset.gov.uk/my-services/children-young-people-families/send-hub-local-offer/send-hub-feedback-new-local-offer>

- 5.1.1 RE wants to push support for the SEND Hub locally. The Local Offer has been redesigned to be more user friendly, in line with feedback from professionals and parents and carers. Feedback received was the Local Offer wasn't liked and has been changed to The SEND Hub. This is the first step of getting The SEND Hub running and it's into the first round of consultation. The Hub will be organic, offering continued feedback, updates, and improvements. Opening lines of communication with parents/carers has been suggested and phone contact is being considered. RE addressed information for professionals is being developed, please pass any **resources to add. ACTION.** RE will be attending the SEND Day and demonstrating how the Hub works.
- 5.1.2 JS added that RE has been a huge help with the Education Strategy and they will work together on the mechanics of milestones and KPIs.

5.2 Success Stories

- 5.2.1 MP has started gathering 'good news' stories as part of an ongoing project and shared some examples of children and young people who have overcome their personal challenges. MP confirmed there will be a body of evidence, explaining context, barriers to learners, support they've received over their journey, and what outcomes they've achieved. AW has made a request to various services and therapies, for them to record positive outcomes and send them in. HC and Tina will collate as evidence for the SEND inspection. KM has some good information which can be drawn out from the survey but thought there's more to do as a system around collecting positive stories and identifying good practice. **Item to be added to the Community of Practice agenda. ACTION.**

5.3 Safety Valve Update

- 5.3.1 The second monitoring report is being submitted to the DfE on Friday, this is a piece of work done by the Education Finance Team and AW. It's a large job trying to balance a high needs budget and ensuring continued needs of children and young people are being met. A high proportion of funding goes to independent schools and the vision is to support as many children as possible in our local services. We are on track to keep top-up funding in line and need £600k to ensure we balance at the end of the financial year. The impact of Nurture Groups, Resource Bases and Baytree in February will increase the amount of support in North Somerset.

It's a 5-year plan, though some projects will take longer for the impact to hit. There is a high level of scrutiny with senior members in the Council reviewing the plans.

5.3.2 JW highlighted the significant inflation challenge which is running higher than expected when the plan was produced, JW is escalating that issue and the challenge beyond us dealing with the Safety Valve to the DfE. This is a large project for Local Authorities across the board. AW thought we're on track, there are numerous meetings with himself and the Finance Team to discuss numbers and look at progress with streams. AW and Guy from the EP Service are meeting with Special Schools to discuss Outreach.

6.0 SEND Inspection Verbal Update

6.1 Documentation is being prepared already. AW has a meeting with Business Intelligence next week to quality check data, PH is working on the SEF to identify strengths, weaknesses, and planning. Shared good practice from Greenwich and Hartlepool has been used.

7.0 DFE Feedback

7.1 KT is retiring at the end of next week, he expressed his best wishes to everyone in North Somerset on their successful journey to improve the SEND system. CG thanked KT for all his hard work and valuable influence. In transition EB will be supporting as needs arise and will continue advice and support on Safety Valve work. Please use EB as first contact, she will be staying up to date with MHe and Team.

8.0 Any Other Business

8.1 KM brought attention to Neuro Diversity Pathway work that's been agreed by ICB. The Project Group is due to start tomorrow with the discovery phase and pulling all partners together. AW has asked Guy Clayton Principle Educational Psychologist to represent North Somerset at that group, there will be some wide stakeholder engagement sessions to understand challenges around the Neuro Diversity Pathway to bring the whole system together to drive change across the system to support children and young people. It's a large piece of work and huge commitment from ICB. SD reflected that in context we know resources can't meet demand, it's a massive change for us. LM said the PCF has worked with us, it's not an easy problem to resolve and collective work is needed to look at what is happening both nationally and internationally in terms of supporting children with ASD.

9.0 Date of Next Meeting

Friday 20th October 2023 from 1.00pm to 3.00pm