

# SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy & Partnership Board

29 April 2025, 10.00 – 12.00

Main Conference Hall, County Hall North, Horsham

## Chair

Brian Pope, Independent Chair

## WSSC

Andrew Parker, Manager Pupil Entitlement Investigation  
 Claire Hayes, AD Education & Skills  
 Claire Prince, Head of SEND & Inclusion  
 Derry Richardson, Head of Commercial & Contracting  
 Grace Hall, Early Years SEND Lead  
 Graham Olway, Head of Organisation and Planning  
 Jade Fellows, Practice Development and Improvement Lead  
 Karen Furse, Head of Standards & Effectiveness  
 Kathryn Kellagher, SEND Development Officer  
 Laura Tomlin, Schools Planning Officer SEND  
 Lois Haywood, Project Manager  
 Marielle Norris, Team Manager Transforming Care Keyworker Service  
 Nadia McGarry, SEND Improvement Lead  
 Natalie McNeill, Designated Social Care Officer  
 Sharyn Wall, Project Manager, SEND Sufficiency  
 Vicky Richardson, Head of Practice, Improvement & Inspection  
 Vince Clarke, Director of Children's Services

## Education and schools

Mark Wignall, Head, Downlands Secondary  
 Zoe Gordon, Head North Mundham  
 Phillip Potter, Head Oak Grove College  
 Liz Mellor, Head, Horsham Nursery

## NHS Sussex ICB

Rachael Prim, Designated Clinical Officer, for SEND

## Parent Carers

Rowan Westwood, West Sussex Parent Carer Forum  
 Clare Eeles, West Sussex Parent Carer Forum

## Apologies

## WSSC

Marie Foley, Head of Data, Projects and Systems  
 Kieron Lyons, AD Children's Social Care and Early Help  
 Loretta Rogers, AD Adult Operations  
 Heidi Farr, Head of Assessment & Family Safeguarding Central  
 Fiona Mackison, Public Health Strategic Commissioning Lead  
 Daniel Ruaux, AD Corporate Parenting  
 Andy Thorne, Delegate for LA Finance Director  
 Toby Wilson, Young Voices  
 Stephen Humphrey, Head of Commissioning  
 Sarah Clark, Head of Virtual School  
 Charlene Hornsey, Head of Early Help  
 Rebecca Turner, SEND Strategic Commissioning Lead

## Education and schools

Doug Thomas, Head APC  
 Simon Brown, Head of SEND, Chichester College  
 Nicky Smith, Governors Association  
 Gillian Santi, Governors Association

## Parent Carers

John Clifton, West Sussex Parent Carer Forum

## NHS Sussex ICB

Caroline Tozzi, Joint Director for Children and Young People and Strategic Lead for SEND  
 Toby Silverman, SEND Improvement Manager

## Councillor Representative

Jacque Russell, Cabinet member

## NHS England SE SEND Advisor

Adeline Gibbs

## Department for Education

Liz Flaherty

## **1. Action Log**

See Action Log

## **2. Ofsted visit feedback and rag rating of Strategic Improvement plan**

The Ofsted visit went well and we should receive a letter from them shortly, which will be circulated to the Board.

The next DfE monitoring visit will be on 4 June.

Discussion:

- There is a high degree of scrutiny from the DfE and Ofsted, which can get repetitive. We're in a much better position now than we were a year ago: improvements to this board, better engagement with partners, the SENAT restructure. But there need to be changes in national policy to address the underlying problems in the SEND system, including inequity of funding.
- There are concerns around the impact of required savings in health and how these will affect our colleagues in the ICB and the services delivered.
- We're waiting to hear if we will be able to go ahead with schools that have been promised but not delivered.

At the previous DfE monitoring visit, we were challenged around rag rating of the improvement plan and how this was monitored by the board.

- It was agreed that the rag rating should first be agreed with partners at the Area SEND Partnership Improvement meeting and then brought back to the board for approval. This should incorporate WSPCF input which currently is missing.
- It would be helpful to have clearer definitions around the impact categories – we all need to agree that we know what eg "Impact is felt at a system level" means.

## **Action**

2.1 Rag rating of strategic improvement plan to be brought back to the May Board after it has been agreed with WSPCF and discussed at the Area SEND Partnership Improvement meeting.

## **3. SEND Strategy Update**

We have set up a small co-production group to work on the vision, the three principles (to guide the way we will work) and the six priorities. This group has looked at the feedback from the public consultation which had 270 responses. The timeline is tight with key dates set by democratic process – the strategy is scheduled to be discussed at DLT, Transformation Board and scrutiny.

- We are establishing groups to work on each of the priorities.
- We have aligned the vision with the CYPL vision tag line "We listen, we care, we act".
- Following feedback in the consultation, we have amended the third principle to reflect the need for a stronger training offer for the workforce.
- We are working with colleagues in health over the priority on emotional health and wellbeing.

Discussion:

- It was queried whether this is a strategy about the inclusion of children with SEND or if it is a strategy about the inclusion of all children, which includes those with SEND and other vulnerable groups.
  - We agreed it was for inclusion of all children and will tweak the vision to more clearly reflect this.
- The phrase “brighter future” was chosen over “improved outcomes” as the latter was seen as too education focused and wasn’t language used by parents and families.
  - We clearly describe within the outcomes framework what a bright future would look like.
  - The feedback from the consultation revealed a high level of scepticism that we would be able to deliver the earlier iteration of the vision. We need to balance being aspirational with being realistic about what we can achieve.
  - It was suggested that we amend the vision to be: “By listening, caring and acting, our partnership will create a bright future for all children and young people”. Changing “brighter” to “bright” seems more ambitious.

## Action

3.1 The strategy is to be brought back to the board for further discussion.

## 4. Update from West Sussex Parent Carer Forum

The WSPCF presentation provides impact data taken from a range of events and projects such as PINS and Autism in Schools. The aim was to provide answers to the question “Are SEND families (children, young people and parent carers) in West Sussex accessing appropriate, effective, quality services that are responsive to their needs and which improve their quality of life?”

The same feedback form was used for all projects and events.

- The vast majority of Parent Carers with the **highest scores** and **most positive** statements **did not have** a physical disability, or a mental health difficulty, or a neurodevelopmental difference or learning disability.
- The vast majority of Parent Carers with the **lowest scores** and **least positive** statements **did have** a physical disability, as well as a mental health difficulty and a neurodevelopment difference or learning disability.
- Most of the lower scorers didn’t have a child in a setting and the majority felt their child didn’t have sufficient support.
  - It’s possible that the parent carers’ own health issues are affecting their perceptions.
- Support from health has the greatest impact, followed by education, then social care.
- PINS schools (all primary and all Thoughtful schools) rated education significantly higher.
- What would make a difference and increase confidence:
  - Communication and being informed – there needs to be greater transparency around waiting lists which can be years long.
  - Being listened to and not being blamed
- It’s clear that some of our families are accessing appropriate, effective, quality services that are responsive to their needs and which improve their quality of life. The problem lies with those families where it’s clear the system isn’t working for them, and we need to address this inequality.

Discussion

- We need to be more open with parents around the problems of funding and resources.
- One way of achieving this would be for families to be more involved at an earlier stage in commissioning services. The service specifications should have a KPI that shows there has been coproduction with the families they support.

## **5. Focus: Supporting children not in structured education**

See attached presentation.

- Children Missing Education (CME) is defined as a child not registered at a school. It's not a static number and changes every day.
- Every child has a legal right to education which is usually achieved by enrolling in school. If not enrolled, then parents have a legal duty to educate.
- The reasons for Elective Home Education (EHE) are changing: the top reason used to be lifestyle/philosophical choice but now it is the mental health needs of the child or young person. Parents choose EHE to protect their child from the rigours of the education system. We don't have data or understanding of parental needs.
- There is no direct correlation of a safeguarding risk if EHE – but we don't fully know.
- Where EHE is deemed to be ineffective, the child is passed to the CME team with the primary purpose to get the child back on roll at school. This can be a hard, elongated process with families.
- Static cases are those where a family has left one county and moved to another, but they don't have to tell either local authority. These tend to be from the traveller community or from the lifestyle EHE community.
- There are concerns where a child moves abroad. The Border Force only lets us check where there are high level safeguarding concerns, with significant social care involvement. We have just agreed a new data sharing process with the Border Force, to let us check if people have left the country when we think they have.
- The Wellbeing bill is very much welcomed and is an opportunity for clarity from the DfE over issues such as reduced timetables.
- There should be a greater focus on attendance within West Sussex and we need to work with schools to improve it. The Bromcom system gives us improved attendance data and we now need to agree how to use this to empower conversations with schools around those pupils at or nearing 90% attendance.
- Health services such as SALT is offered through schools and it is a challenge for them to reach children and young people who are not on roll.
  - They should contact the CME team for guidance.
- With regards to EHE, defining "effective" can be challenging for what is a small local authority team.

## **6. SEND Sufficiency quarterly focus**

See attached presentation. NB work is ongoing on post-16 destination data and will be brought to a future meeting.

- The work in SEND Sufficiency will align with the SEND & Inclusion strategy.
- We are now talking openly about the need for more money – the significant increase in EHCPs was not anticipated at a local or national level.
- Slide 11 – we have a budget of £12 million which isn't enough to deliver the current capital project plan. We need to think about how we can deliver provision differently – see Slide 13.

- We're now at a point in the DBV projects where we're getting impact data, can identify what is working and how to build on that.
  - The DBV case studies are just one element in a range of data and information that is informing this work.
- We are considering giving a budget of up to £50k for schools to manage small scale projects to adapt their environment, such as creating a specialist space or a quiet room, to enable them to keep children in mainstream provision.
  - WSPCF has case studies where parents have worked with schools to successfully adapt the environment.
- Locality learning centres: these would involve schools joining forces in their local areas to enable a wider spread of therapeutic provision such as SALT, or alternative provision.

## **Action**

6.1 Rachael to take this back to health colleagues and work with Graham's team around how they could build in therapeutic support in localities.

## **7. Thanking Claire**

Brian closed the meeting by thanking Claire who is retiring from her role as Head of Inclusion. She has had a phenomenal impact and there has been a lot of positive change under her leadership. Claire thanked everyone; she has enjoyed being a part of this board and hopes the good work continues so we do see bright futures for our children and young people with SEND.