

SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy & Partnership Board

25 March 2025, 10.00 – 12.00

Downlands Community School, Hassocks

<p>Chair Brian Pope, Independent Chair</p> <p>WSSC Claire Hayes, AD Education & Skills Claire Prince, Head of SEND & Inclusion Nadia McGarry, SEND Improvement Lead Vicky Richardson, Head of Practice, Improvement & Inspection Jade Fellows, Practice Development and Improvement Lead Karen Furse, Head of Standards & Effectiveness Rebecca Turner, SEND Strategic Commissioning Lead Natalie McNeill, Designated Social Care Officer Gemma Humphrey, SEND & Inclusion Advisor Aaron Swain, Operational Lead, SENAT Andrea Morgan, Principle Educational Psychologist Kathryn Kellagher, SEND Development Officer</p> <p>Education and schools Simon Brown, Head of SEND, Chichester College Mark Wignall, Head, Downlands Secondary Lisa Harris, Head Rumboldswyke Gillian Santi, Governors Association Liz Mellor, Head, Horsham Nursery</p> <p>NHS Sussex ICB Caroline Tozzi, Joint Director for Children and Young People and Strategic Lead for SEND</p> <p>Department for Education Liz Flaherty</p> <p>Parent Carers John Clifton, West Sussex Parent Carers Forum</p>	<p>Apologies</p> <p>WSSC Vince Clarke, Director of Children’s Services 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 Grace Hall, Early Years SEND Lead Charlene Hornsey, Head of Early Help</p> <p>Education and schools Phillip Potter, Head Oak Grove College Doug Thomas, Head APC Nicky Smith, Governors Association</p> <p>Parent Carers Rowan Westwood, West Sussex Parent Carers Forum</p> <p>NHS Sussex ICB Toby Silverman, SEND Improvement Manager Rachael Prim, Designated Clinical Officer, for SEND</p> <p>Councillor Representative Jacquie Russell, Cabinet member</p> <p>NHS England SE SEND Advisor Adeline Gibbs</p>
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1. Action Log

See Action Log

2. Focus on SEND Support in Schools

Pupil voice (secondary school)

Lorenzo was thanked for his valuable contribution, included in the attached presentation, where he celebrated strengths of the school but also areas where things could improve.

Discussion:

- School / SEND Councils: Lorenzo reported that the SEND Council didn't carry as much weight as the School Council. VC to look into this – one suggestion was that SEND Councillors are also School Councillors.
- Subject knowledge / Teaching Assistants (TAs): TAs sometimes have insufficient subject knowledge to be able to support pupils, an example given was a chemistry lesson. Ideally the school would try to build subject knowledge by having a regular TA per subject, but this is not always possible.
- Plans for after school: Lorenzo has plans to become an F1 engineer and is working towards this by studying higher maths at GCSE, with ambitions to attend college afterwards.

Vicky Cornish, SENCO at Downlands Community School

See attached presentation which details triumphs and challenges.

Discussion:

- The challenges faced by SENCOs in secondary schools are echoed in primary schools and FE Colleges. SENCOs are passionate about their job and it can feel overwhelming at times, as they juggle the needs of pupils against available staff.
- Recruitment and retainment of Teaching Assistants is an ongoing challenge and cuts across all settings.
 - Salary is a key factor.
 - COVID proved that many roles can be carried out from home, which can fit in better with family life. Being a TA is no longer regarded as one of the most flexible options.
 - The TA role can be intense and special schools need to give staff enhanced support so they feel comfortable doing it.
 - Chichester College offers TA Apprenticeships, which are taken up by a lot of staff already in post doing professional training.
 - There are some 16-18 year olds who can take on a TA role but they would need additional supervision and support to do so.
- There is a lot of pressure around EHCPs but Downlands also has 280 students on the SEND Register. The work on adaptive teaching has improved provision for students; Pupil Passports and BromCom also make a difference, as has the work with parent carers.

3. Update from West Sussex Parent Carer Forum

John asked for information about a paper produced by the local Change Programme Partnership. He'll forward the link to Brian.

4. Quarterly Focus on EHCP timeliness

See attached presentation, which includes an additional slide on Age Phase Transfers (Slide 19)

This shows an improvement in the data around finalising placements by 15 February: 98.5% compared to 82% last year. It is a sign that the reconfiguration of SENAT is successful, with smaller teams having an impact by focusing on specific areas. Data is looking similarly positive for the post-16 placements, deadline 31 March.

- With regards to post-16 placements, it was queried how realistic 31 March was when GCSE results are in August.
 - It's a statutory deadline which gives a longer timeframe for transition planning and time for parents to appeal.
 - In practice it is difficult to manage and results in a flurry of new consultations in August.

Discussion:

- It's now been 6 months since the SENAT reconfiguration. Are we likely to meet the 50% deadline?
 - We are still seeing numbers of requests increasing and are currently doing a representation about staffing levels, volumes and what we can achieve.
 - The EPS is seeing an increased number of assessments coming through, which is more than it can complete with the current internal and commissioned out resource.
 - The cost to the local authority is already significant.
 - If the OAIP is applied properly, this should reduce the numbers of requests.
 - The updated EHCP forms include the wording "The provision listed below will be implemented to meet the range of needs described in Section B. This will be in place alongside any recommendations in line with Ordinarily Available Inclusive Practice".
 - There are only about 3 Local Authorities which don't have high deficits; these are small authorities and not comparable to West Sussex.
 - There has been a slight increase in parental requests but not a significant one.
 - The ongoing issue around lack of parental confidence in the system is a factor in the increase in EHCNA requests. Parents' confidence will only increase when they see that their child's needs are being supported. An element of this is to increase understanding of ordinarily available inclusive practice and we are planning a parent carer friendly version of the OAIP. There are also 4 workshops planned with the WSPCF.
 - The OAIP can help with conversations with parent carers where schools disagree with the need for a child to have an EHCP and want to raise awareness of what is embedded in everyday practice.
 - The feedback from young people and their parent carers when starting at FE college is that they felt there wasn't sufficient resource in schools to meet needs, and they needed an EHCP to ensure funding, which fuels demand.

- We need to start including Cease to Maintain numbers in our SEND data and analyse the ages these happen.
- It would help if local authority services such as the Educational Psychology Service could work alongside schools to support them with more complex situations. Early intervention is best practice and we need to evidence it is effective.

ACTION

4.1 Include Cease to Maintain numbers in our SEND data and analyse the ages these happen.

5. Quality Assurance Audits of EHCPs

- We're seeing more EHCPs graded as good than we did this time last year which is reassurance that while we're focused on timeliness, we are also conscious of quality.
- We plan to align the reporting of EHCP audits with social care and will have a focus on capturing outcomes and impact of the learning.
- The audits are being used to inform training for SENAT and contributors to EHCPs.
- The EHCP needs to be flexible and to balance the desire to create a perfect EHCP with specific provision, while making it realistic for a mainstream secondary to provide it. Eg if a plan says specifically that a child needs 10 hours out of classroom and a school just can't do it, they will say no to the consultation.
- Another challenge is how to write SMART targets for a three-year-old child that will still be meaningful by the end of KS1, when children's needs change so much.
- Within the newly updated EHCP form, we have separated out OAIP and other needs, to make it clearer what additional support will be needed.