

# MINUTES

<b>Title of Meeting:</b>	SEND Accountability Board
<b>Date:</b>	02 February 2024
<b>Place:</b>	Microsoft Teams Meeting
<b>Times:</b>	10:00 – 12:00
<b>Membership:</b>	<p>Cllr Chris Chambers (CC), Assistant Cabinet Member for Ed, SEND &amp; Skills (Chair)</p> <p>Cllr Rachel Hood (RH, Cabinet Member for Education, SEND and Skills</p> <p>Nicola Beach (NB), Chief Executive</p> <p>Garry Joyce (GJ), Assistant Director Transformation</p> <p>Sue Willgoss (SW), Chair of Suffolk Parent Carer Forum</p> <p>Claire Smith (CS), Vice Chair Suffolk Parent Carer Forum</p> <p>Cllr Jessica Fleming (JF), Chair of Health Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>Cllr James Reeder (JR), Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services</p> <p>Nicki Howlett (NH), Service Lead, SENDIASS</p> <p>Julia Ilott (JI), Engagement Hub Manager</p> <p>Suzy Joyner (SJ), Interim executive Director CYP</p> <p>Ros Somerville (RS), AD Inclusion</p> <p>Wendy Allen (WA) – Programme Manager</p> <p>Kate Dodd (KD) – Communications Manager</p> <p>Rebecca Hulme (RH) – Director ICB Waveney</p> <p>Lisa Nobes (LN) – Director ICB SNEE</p> <p>Robert Ward (RW) – Expert by Experience</p> <p>Corrina Bielby (CB) – SEND Improvement and Case Lead</p> <p>Helen Chester (HC) – DfE Advisor SEND</p>
<b>Minute Taker</b>	Kate House

Item No.	Item Description
1.	<p><b>Apologies &amp; Introductions</b></p> <p>Apologies</p> <p>Wendy Allen</p> <p>Louise Warren</p>
2.	<p><b>Ofsted and CQC Inspection Report</b></p> <p>RS and EM presented</p> <p>RS explained the Ofsted report was published on Tuesday 30 January. The identified areas for improvement came as no surprise and most had been identified in the self-evaluation.</p> <p>RS reiterated SCC's apology to the children and their families and explained plans are already in place for improvements, especially around governance structure and timeliness of responses.</p> <p>SCC also announced on Tuesday the additional investment to ensure SCC can attend to the actions. Prior to the Ofsted inspection, planning for this had already begun.</p> <p>EM explained that when the Council drill down to big ticket items for children and families, the Council are looking at timelines and quality of plans. Along with a reduction of permanent exclusion rates. SCC also looking to improve SEND children's Employment Education and Training plans which sits within "Preparing for Adulthood)</p> <p>Q – Is funding for Children and Young People that are NEET going to be cut?</p> <p>A – Within the budget proposal there was a reduction to core funding to the Skills team which coordinates programmes that improve Employment Education training whether they have SEND or not and provided skills to support young people to find employment or need help getting back in. For those with SEND, the Council will still have in place support and signposting for the young people who need it.</p> <p>The Skills team are looking at how to change the business model to leverage use of external grant funding from local Partnerships, to fund some work so it can continue to deliver some programmes.</p> <p>Q – The Ofsted report highlights the general theme of communication. Families feel they want to know where they are in the process of the EHCPs and will stay on the agenda as an ongoing discussion?</p> <p>A – Teams are working hard to communicate with families. The teams have very high volume of work. The Council is looking to utilise available IT systems to support. The additional resource will increase the number of people in the teams which will increase the capacity to respond. The teams are engaging with families all the time, however,</p>

	<p>there are not currently enough people to cope with the increasing volume of work. The Council want to remove the feeling of families feeling forgotten.</p> <p>Q – can we have assurance that The Educational and Children’s Services Scrutiny Committee will be keeping a close eye on SEND?</p> <p>A – Yes and it is important to ensure the Scrutiny Committee has oversight of everything in the Council, not just SEND.</p> <p>Q – 17% increase may be considered good but what is the quality? Need assurance of quality of plans.</p> <p>A – The Council are committed to improving quality and timeliness.</p>
3.	<p><b>SEND Partnership draft Governance proposals</b></p> <p>Presentation is an update on work the Local Area Partnership has been doing to refresh the governance arrangements (identified before Ofsted) to be incorporated in the future Improvement Board under the Improvement Chair. The Local Area Partnership came together to think about what this could look like in December 2023.</p> <p>Structure slide shown on screen and talked through. *NH asked for slides to be circulated</p> <p>*LN confirmed EG (CEO SNEE) would want to be on Improvement Board.</p> <p>Q – Should Health Providers, NSFT and Community Paediatrics be on Programme Board?</p> <p>A – Yes this is part of the considerations still required. Need to determine many providers the Council.</p> <p>Q – Is there representation for both 0-18 and 18-25s within social care?</p> <p>A – Yes</p> <p>Q – How does the work fit in with new suicide prevention policy?</p> <p>A – All plans and strategies need to align.</p> <p>Q – Is there representation from early years on the proposed Board?</p> <p>A – Not specifically but could be looked at. However, the Assistant Director with early years their portfolio is part of the Board.</p> <p>The Local Area Partnership needs to ensure we have right people at Programme Board but important to guard against the Board becoming too big to become effective. This is a difficult balance. The Local Area Partnership really wants to deliver against the outcomes of the new strategy and to be able to do that, needs to ensure governance and operational arrangements allow a laser focus on the key things that will make a big difference.</p>

	Independent Chair is required by Department for Education. The Local Area Partnership has reached out to individuals with track record of improvement work and experience in SEND, DfE have made a recommendation and EM has been in touch with the individual.
4.	<p><b>Draft Priority Action Plan</b></p> <p>The draft Priority Action Plan must be shared with Ofsted by 7 March. The Local Area Partnership is working on it. There is no set format for it.</p> <p>The Plan needs to dovetail into the Local Area Partnership's SEND Strategy. There is a lot of work underway to coproduce the SEND Strategy in Suffolk.</p> <p>Ofsted identified the SCC or LAP? needs to evidence the impact of any future Strategy. DfE will monitor this as well.</p> <p>Q - Does SCC need to reach outside of SEND to other colleagues within the organisation to be a "critical friend" and look at Priority Action Plan to make sure we are looking at it with fresh eyes?</p> <p>A – There is no resistance to doing that and always helpful to get fresh eyes on things. SCC do also have Corrina Bielby, Helen Chester and Louise Warren who are connected into the ongoing work.</p>
5.	<p><b>SEND Strategy</b></p> <p>Requirement is to submit refreshed Strategy by same date as Priority Action Plan, 7 March 2024</p> <p>There are meetings across the partnership planned.</p> <p>The LAP wants to go back out to the system with the draft for consultation. This will be from 19 February.</p> <p>Q - Are there many differences between new strategy and previous strategy? Need something in the foreword to say what worked and what didn't work well.</p> <p>A – Yes there are similarities and differences in what we can see emerging. The previous strategy was all encompassing, and some areas have worked better, and the new strategy needs to build on the strength. The new strategy must be focused and ensure there are measurable impacts. Must have very clear priorities with dedicated actions to demonstrate progress.</p> <p>Q – As such a short window for consultation, is there any pre-communication to get bigger response.</p> <p>A – The output of the previous consultation and dates for the next consultation will be communicated this week.</p>
6.	<b>Update on SEND Financial Investment</b>

The Council will address capacity in the system, increasing the number of people to do the volume and level of work which is ever increasing. Experiences for families will therefore improve and ensure quality remains.

Slide shared

Q - How would you oversee young people who have a placement named but not attending?

A – SCC has identified additional resource. Training has gone out to CYP services around section 19, to ensure when colleagues meet children who are not attending, they let the Inclusion teams know that. There is a group that meets on a weekly basis to review and see what actions need to be taken.

Q – Would the portal be able to highlight when a plan needs to be reviewed?

A – Yes

Q – If an annual review goes over 12 months, what will SCC do to get school to do the annual review? How does SCC hold schools to account?

A – There is not one simple solution. Implementing annual review training, reiterating everyone's role and responsibility. Specialist Education Services are going into every school each term, and this will be on the agenda. The Services are providing more training to schools and will work with schools which have difficulty. Tracking of those children not on a school roll will also be improved with the increased investment.

Q – With Independent schools, should members of SCC be joining annual reviews?

A – There is not a blanket policy, if it is required SCC is invited, but would not attend every review. Attendance is identified at an individual child level based on need.

Q –Lack of Educational Psychologists is a continuing problem, how confident are you/how many have you now got onboard with private contract?

A – Procurement is time consuming. SCC awarded contracts and they have gone live since the start of the year. 3 agencies were in a position to provide the EPs but one has not engaged. RS doesn't have exact figures at the moment, but advice is being allocated to new staff. It is happening but there is a permanent high risk around it as only so many EPs in the country.

7. **SEND Data update**

7b spreadsheet: Summary of what SCC are measuring and tracking at the moment. A new system for reporting data has been developed and will be shared at the next meeting.

Data shows an increase in EHC assessments which leads to increase in volume of work for everyone in the system.

With new EP contracts, we would expect to see an increase in number of EHCP assessments completed within 6 weeks. Currently they are being completed but not within the 6-week time frame. We must address / We are addressing? both ends of the list to ensure there is a chance of getting the timeframe down for completing assessments within 20 weeks.

Direction of travel is in the right direction with 17% being completed within 20 weeks.

7a spreadsheet:

w/c 8<sup>th</sup> Jan data.

20 plans being issued a week, want that figure to climb. Average time has decreased, from peak of 40 weeks.

Q – Do you have a record of how many children don't have placement and are not getting an education?

A – There is work around the cohort of children that are not on a school roll. New system will record exact provision.

There have been challenges in the West team with sickness and absence and issues with the Resolution and Tribunal team, it is very small team and now two members of the team are not able to work. Temp capacity being used where possible. But is an ongoing challenge, the North team had previous challenges but that's now resolved. Operating on a very lean system at the moment.

Complaints are higher than we want them to be, issues around timeliness. Average days need to come from 32 to 20. Focusing on doing Stage one well. There is no intention to prevent parents from accessing a good complaints process or the Ombudsman.

Tribunals may increase as coming up to Phase Transfer dates (15 Feb and 31 March). On track for 90% plus for 15 Feb. Consequence of this is a spike in tribunals if the preferred school is not named in the plan, this is nationally the case.

Exclusion data – rates are still high. This is an absolute focus for the Suffolk Education Partnership, they want to work as a system, and this is their priority. There is also work at DfE to look at this within Suffolk. SCC are bringing all these elements together and developing a Working Party to see how we can support schools to look at all other options. Since September 2023, The Education Access Team, have taken 479 calls about possible exclusion, only 13 pupils have been permanently excluded. 87 calls led to direct intervention from the team rather than just a conversation. 21 permanent exclusions were rescinded in Autumn term compared to 10 the year before. SCC recognise the need to stop permanent exclusions and are working preventatively.

Q – Is this the new complaints dashboard? Need communication to families on complaints not going to stage 2 when they want them to be escalated

	<p>A – We need to follow up on the dashboard. It is recognised that if Stage 1 is done well, you don't need to go to stage 2. SCC are not denying anyone Stage 2 or delaying. The focus is on Stage 1 being done well.</p> <p>Q – Regarding exclusions, is it telling you interventions are not working? Any schools worse than others?</p> <p>A - This is what the working party is looking at, it is being worked on.</p> <p>Q - How much have SCC been work with (School name withheld) on its Managed Intervention Centre?</p> <p>A – SCC recently become aware of this. SCC do want to work closely with them. SCC's understanding is it is DfE funded and based on good practice.</p> <p>Q – We need to look at how we use data differently going forward during these meetings. We need to look at how we use data for improvement rather than focusing on numbers, process and activity. For example, complaints, only interested in number upheld with Ombudsmen. What are the key metrics, how does it demonstrate impact and what are the improvements?</p> <p>A - The LGSCO upheld doesn't mean the complaint process hasn't worked. SCC want to change how this is reported. RS to ask Harriet Wakeling to come and talk through how we report data going forward and ensure we've got what we need.</p> <p>We need to determine what level of data comes to Board so we've got more detailed data in the right place. At Improvement Board, we need to make sure we've got key metrics to evidence if the Priority Action Plan and Strategy are effective.</p>
8.	<p><b>Review of last meeting</b></p> <p>CC – There are a few outstanding actions on the Action Log which were due to be completed by now. Is it worth looking at those and circulating with amended notes? RS to provide an update.</p>
9.	<p><b>Forward Plan</b></p> <p>Proposed governance structure. EM: need to bring governance structure back to SEND AB for finalisation. We need a separate agenda item around transition from this Accountability Board to the new governance arrangements.</p>
10	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>SPCF – There are a high level concern from parents at one High School regarding a staff member. Alarming images have been sent from social media. Parents are asking for assurances from the school that this man won't go near their children. Children with SEND are being put in isolation because not confirming to eye contact, shake his hand. No exception to his rules.</p> <p>EM – CB is this something you could take back to your team?</p> <p>RS – confirmed team have reached out to the CEO and already had conversations.</p> <p>CB – confirmed action will be taken.</p> <p>JF – Educational Scrutiny Committee meets on 7 March, SEND action plan is on the agenda. Happy to work with other Scrutiny Chairs on how can be achieved.</p>

	NB – SEND will come to Scrutiny meeting but need to get timing right as plan deadline is 7 March.
	<p>Dates of Future meetings</p> <p><b>01 March 2024 10am - 12 noon</b></p> <p>Ros apologies</p>