

## SEND Strategy Governance Board Notes

Thurs 3 April 2025

9:30am -12:30pm Committee Room, County Hall, Lewes

**Chair/Facilitator:** David Smith    **Notes:** Lisa Cloves (ESCC)

**Attendees:** Carolyn Fair (ESCC), Elizabeth Funge (ESCC) Holly Riley-Saxby (ESPCF), Helen Diplock (ESPCF), Nathan Caine (ESCC), Louise Moor (Primary School Representative), Sally Polanski (Voluntary Sector Representative), Councillor Bob Standley (ESCC), Chrys Poullikas (NHS), Caroline Tozzi (NHS), Andrea Ferns (NHS), Jessica Stubbings (ESCC), Alice Tigwell (ESCC), Max (Young Person Representative), Peter Houlders (ESCC), Emma Buggy (Early Years Representative), Jane Flock (ESCC), Fenella Potterton (ESCC FE/Post 16 Representative), Kirsty Eydmann (Special School representative)

**Apologies:** Ann-Marie Waite (Secondary School Representative), Honor Green (ESCC), Kathy Marriott (ESCC)

### 1. Facilitator's welcome and introduction

David (DS) welcomed everyone to the meeting and emphasised the main purpose of this meeting is to ensure alignment between the ASEND post-inspection implementation plan, the extended (to August 2026) East Sussex SEND Strategy and the Sussex Integrated Care Board (ICB) Health SEND priorities. To ensure that the Board are fully aware of context, there will be updates on Board sub-group activity and national SEND and Inclusion policies prior to discussion of the ASEND actions.

There are no new members to the board but membership to be kept under review.

Everyone introduced themselves.

### 2. Actions from last meeting

- CF and EF to attend ESPCF Board steering group meeting: **Completed**
- To put timetable together to ensure the 3 April meeting is able to approve and agree an alignment of priorities to meet East Sussex SEND Strategy commitments: **Completed.**
- CT will ensure that 'transition' features in agreed Sussex ICB SEND priorities: **Completed and will be covered in this meeting.**
- DS will ensure 1:1 visits/dialogue with board members is now customary before 3 April meeting. **Completed.**
- With regards to EHCPs, Chrys (CP) would like to work with Andrea (AF), to look into more detail about what is meant by the Health Contribution to EHCPs. **To be covered in the presentations at this meeting**

David (DS) reminded the group that a condition of the post-inspection planning arrangements is that representatives from DfE and NHS are invited to this meeting. The representatives have received the papers and will be in attendance from the next meeting.

Informal action update: Alice brought Sam to the last meeting, who is young person doing work experience and was having difficulties securing an apprenticeship into full-time work from post-16 education. This has been followed through, though his course was defunded at a

national level, he has started at Little Gate Farm this week.

### Early Years/Primary transition issues

- DS stated that Emma Buggy (EM) did a presentation in 2024 on Early Years SEND focus which highlighted transition challenges from early years to primary. Elizabeth (EF) and Louise (LM) explained that there have been in-depth discussions at the last East Sussex Primary Board meeting on this. It's recognised as a complex issue and it's important to get this right. There are frustrations and inconsistencies in both primary schools and early years settings around early identification and support around SEN and sharing of information. EB explained that early years settings are identifying early but often need to wait months for an appeal if and when requests for support are turned down. This means children can start school without the support they need and they have had no support whilst in early years. LM pointed out there is a discrepancy between the experience of knowledgeable and articulate parents and vulnerable families who do not know the system.
- Jane Spice and Jake Perry are happy to meet with Early Years and primary school colleagues to unpick issues. There will be a dialogue involving Early Years, Primary sector stakeholders and ESCC to come up with an approach to address identified issues.
- Sally (SP) asked for a particular focus on the arrangements for vulnerable early years families in the light of national developments. **Action: EF/LM/EB**

**Action:** To bring this back to the 3 July meeting to discuss.

## 3. Updates from the Board sub-groups

### SEND Strategy Implementation Group

NC talked through the SSIG sub-group report and asked for questions



SSIG Sub Group  
report April 25\*

- Holly (HR-S) asked if there was data on how many Annual reviews have been attended by the transition service. Nathan confirmed that there were 770.
- SP said she would be very keen to meet with the service leads in the Transitions Service and hear the positive stories from people involved. NC to arrange a meeting with the service leads, PCF and Amaze specifically relating to outcome and stories from people. **Action: NC**
- Alice (AT) referred to Max who had his annual review recently. Max explained that at his annual review, there were a lot of people who he didn't know, and he found it a little intimidating. NC to take this back to the team. **Action: NC**

### SEND Commissioning and Monitoring



Sub group report  
C&M April 25\*

- Jane (JF) talked through an update on the Wheelchair Service, PINS and Autism in School and the outcome of the mediation procurement. (This issue to be addressed in item on post inspection actions)

## Alternative Provision



AP Subgroup report -  
April\*

- Jessica (JS) presented the report on Alternative Provision (AP).
- AT suggested the narrative around AP needs to be around building confidence rather than their current behaviour in school.
- SP reflected that co-production around AP is important in order to dispel myths and improve communication.
- EF emphasised that AP is an area of policy focus that has previously been neglected. As the Government looks at SEN and at the curriculum review, there will be reconsideration of AP. The majority of children's needs should be met within schools, so there needs to be a focus on what it is that AP is providing and how it supports reintegration and further progression (including post 16 progression). This issue relates to the fourth of the identified areas for improvement in the ASEND Report
- EF explained we are working hard on the transfer of AP to LSEAT and are also looking at internal AP. We will need to have a coherent offer to meet people's needs at different stages.
- Chrys (CP) asked where to go to find out information on evidence on the impact information especially around going into employment. EF stated the current position is not that positive. However, there are recent local developments and joint working between our new provider and the FE Colleges to map out and develop progression routes. Action: Significant item on AP to be put on the agenda for the July meeting.
- DS to agree an attendance and invite arrangement for this meeting. **Action DS**

## East Sussex Designated Clinical Officer (DCO) SEND Report



DCO Report EAST  
SUSSEX FINAL 27  
03\*

- Andrea Ferns (AF) talked through her report. She also confirmed that her contract has been extended until at least February 2026.
- DS thanked AF for her paper and reiterated to the group that she is now the contact for people wanting to navigate through the issues/items presented.
- SP asked about accessing the training mentioned in the report. AF confirmed that it will go on the ICB website and it will also go on the Local Offer page.

#### 4. National Policy Updates: NHS England; SEND

- NC has met with DfE about the Change Programme. DfE are waiting for funding confirmation from HM Treasury around this and a year's extension has been requested by the DfE, specifically to test arrangements for mainstream inclusion.
- This links closely with AP in expanding the offer so more young people can access mainstream education if it is right place for them.
- The increasing cost of SEND placements is a big challenge on every LA budget and a White Paper around SEND is likely to come in late spring.
- Linked to this are government consultations which are out at the moment about Ofsted judgements which will now include inclusion.
- NC referenced an interesting piece of research from Education Endowment Foundation. This is an evidenced based piece of work which examines how additional adults in the classroom should be used to add value. [Deployment of Teaching Assistants | EEF](#)
- CT gave an update on the recent NHS changes.
- The Government has announced a merger of the Department of Health and Social Care with NHS England. The effect of this will be the abolition of NHS England. Adeleine Gibbs is the new NHS adviser for our region. The view is 50% of staff in NHS England will go and 50% will move the new department. The government have announced they want to minimise duplication and want one governance structure.
- Sussex Integrated Care Board (ICB) is one of 42 ICBs who all need to reduce budgetary spend by 50% by September 2025. There may be a merger of existing ICBs with some ideas on new structures but no agreed way forward as yet. The work with local authorities is still regarded as crucial - but local authority reform and devolution will impact on that.
- Carolyn (CF) emphasised the health changes are huge, there is a lot of risk and the September timescale is challenging.
- With regards to Devolution, *Sussex is regarded as an ideal* size for a Combined Mayoral Authority with the added strength of the Sussex ICB. This enables a fast track to mayoral election, in May 2026.
- East Sussex are on the priority accelerated programme for local government reorganisation and have submitted a proposal with the Districts/Boroughs. It is acknowledged that devolution, local authority reform, Children's Service reform and NHS reform all combine to mean that there will be a lot of churn in the system for some time to come. In that context, extending the East Sussex SEND Strategy to summer 2026 feels like the right thing to do.
- Bob Standley (BS) highlighted the difference between devolution and local authority reform. Consultation out at the moment is about devolution.
- DS stated we are trying to improve the system as specified in the inspection report in a world where all the pieces are shifting. Committing to extending the life of this board to through to 2026 will ensure a *forum in which to seek consensus* through the changes being described.

#### 4. East Sussex ASEND Inspection Report and implementation of actions - update and discussion on timelines; extension of East Sussex SEND Strategy to 2026; alignment of Sussex ICB Health SEND Priorities

- EF updated that there is still ongoing work and changes on the plan reflecting feedback from CQC and DfE. We are following the timeline and the final plan will be published once approved by internal processes in ESCC and the NHS. *ESCC is having urgent and productive dialogue with health colleagues on wheelchairs and CAHMS area, wording needs to be sharpened so the actions reflect what we want to see and shows clear impact and milestones.*
- DS sought assurance for the Board that, in particular, on wheelchair waiting times, there is still dialogue taking place on impact measurements, timelines and resources on what might be needed to make improvement in this area before the expiry of the current contract with RossCare. CF gave assurance that these discussions are in play.
- SP asked for a level of reassurance on waiting times and how we continue to communicate as a partnership around this?
- CF has had helpful conversations with CT and Health Colleagues on what needs to happen. The re-procurement process will address the issue long term. In the interim CT confirmed that work is still being done on this part of the plan and in the latest version, there is more specific activity and timelines.
- ESCC will share the final version of the plan when it is available via email.
- Helen (HD) queried the specificity around waiting times. As a parent waiting for a wheelchair, having a sense of a timeline around waiting times is very important as currently this is not clear.
- SP proposed a piece of work around communication with the community would be helpful along with transparency to increase their belief that change is going to come.
- CF agreed and stated that the action plan is a tool that helps us to collectively hold each other to account. She stated she wants to see specific data around what will happen from the investment going into wheelchairs. Looking at milestones detailing what will the results be at the end of specific periods such as 3 and 6 months in terms of how much the waiting list has reduced as that's how impact is measured.
- DS summarised that there needs to be clarity, both on what will happen and alongside this, how this will be communicated and what is going to happen in the interim.
- **ACTION: circulation of updated action plan to Board members, which will include a specific focus on impact and timelines and reference to communication improvements.**  
JS/LC

Caroline shared the Pan Sussex Children's Board Thematic Review and talked through the contents.



Pan Sussex Children  
Board Thematic  
SEND\*



- DS pointed out a key issue of this is what networks need to be engaged to ensure the recommendations happen. CF is the only member from this board on the Sussex Children's Board so she will be representing this board at the meeting. CT stated that the new format of the board allows directors of Children's Service and Director of Public Health are able to have direct and focused strategic dialogue at the meetings.
- DS highlighted that PCF and Amaze need to have strong communication with CF to ensure their Parent/Carers have a voice on impact which is being fed into the meeting.
- CT explained Health are planning a health PCF focussed workshop. The future of the pan-Sussex ICB is unknown but the Terms of Reference for the board has a review option and the question of whether the board is effective or needs to change is under review.
- DS reminded everyone of the wording of the four areas of the improvement plan from the ASEND inspection and stated through his one-to-one dialogues, it's clear that each area is not exclusive and there is a lot of interconnections between them all.



Inspection - four  
areas of  
improvement\*

## 1. Quality of EHCPs

- EF has had discussions at the Primary Board about what works and where change in needed. Engagement with school providers and PCF is important in this.
- With regards to young people's voice, AT stated there is research being done into this and the results will be fed back to the group. EF confirmed we are currently working alongside other LAs and have a good cycle of quality assurance in place. The case study approach used in Ofsted was useful and we will be continuing to do deep dive case studies.

## 3. Developing and embedding inclusion

- EF confirmed that this is a focus of many meetings and is talked about all the time, most especially at the East Sussex Primary and Secondary Heads Boards and in Early Years networks. There is also significant attention being paid, via an FE Sussex network, to improving planning and funding dialogues for post 16 SEND provision
- DS asked Kirsty (KE) on the potential wider contribution that special schools can make to improving inclusion in mainstream schools. KE explained that there are some children in her school who would benefit from attending mainstream and vice versa. There isn't a quick fix but we are very open to sharing expertise. EF confirmed that the dialogue is good and we are trying to work well in existing systems already. We are not waiting for national reform before doing this. CF agreed with this and in her experience, schools are engaged in this discussion.
- HD highlighted that in order to be inclusive in mainstream, schools will need support from therapeutic services such as SALT and OT.
- DS asked whether there are large scale strategic discussions in play, eg on specialised capital investment. EF and JS confirmed that this is already happening, we have a clear strategy and are making significant adaptations in improving the system including through the expansion of new specialist facilities.
- HR-S stressed the importance of communication and, for some children, specialist

facilities can make them feel excluded as they need to feel part of the school. EF confirmed that for most of the specialist facilities, children move between the school and the facility base.

#### 4. Sufficient and Suitable AP and Post-16 options

- There will be an agenda item in the July meeting on sufficiency and suitability of AP. DS to speak with board members before this meeting and will identify if there needs to be additional invitees and/or new board members to reflect this. DS will also speak with AT about ensuring the young person's voice is represented. HR-S suggested that it would be beneficial if there was a definition of the areas in the priorities in the plan which would benefit from parents and young people's engagement.

#### 5. East Sussex SEND Strategy Governance Board forward plan: extending meetings cycle to 2026; DfE and NHS attendance post area inspection; ongoing review of membership

- It was agreed that the lifetime of the Board will be formally extended to summer 2026. The current membership is prepared to stand until then. The Board will take on the extra function of monitoring specific progress against the action plan.
- There is also a commitment to review membership as required to meet any emerging priorities.

**AOB:** None

**Date of next meeting:** Thurs 3 July 9.30 am, County Hall, Lewes.

\* if you would like to read any documents embedded in this document and they don't open, please email:

- [education.projects@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:education.projects@eastsussex.gov.uk)