

## SEND Strategy Governance Board Notes (Thursday 3 July 2025) 9:30am - 12:30pm Committee Room, County Hall, Lewes

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

**Board members present:** Carolyn Fair (ESCC), Elizabeth Funge (ESCC) Holly Riley-Saxby (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), Jane Flock (ESCC), Fenella Potterton (ESCC FE/Post 16 Representative), Ann-Marie Waite (Secondary School Representative)

**In attendance,** Jane Spice (ESCC), Jake Perry (ESCC), David Keavney-Sheath (NHS England), Loretta D'Silva (DfE), Michael Tarrant (ESCC), Lyra (Young Person Representative/work experience with Amaze), Gwen McCue (ESCC)

**Apologies:** Honor Green (ESCC), Kathy Marriott (ESCC), Kirsty Eydmann (Special School representative), Emma Buggy (Early Years Representative), Helen Diplock (ESPCF)

### 1. Facilitator's welcome and introduction

David (DS) welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced David Keavney-Sheath (DKS) who is the Clinical and Quality Improvement Lead at NHS England. In future meetings Adeleine Gibbs will be attending on behalf of NHS England. DS also introduced Loretta D'Silva (LDS) who is attending on behalf DfE.

New people and guests introduced themselves. Neil Miller Deputy CEO for LSEAT (NM), Jake Perry, Deputy Service Manager **ESCC SEND (JP)**, Michael Tarrant, the Director for Inclusion and Engagement at East Sussex College (MT), Gwen McCue, SEND CYP Participation Officer (GM), Lyra who is a young person doing work experience with Amaze.

The established members introduced themselves.

### 2. Actions from last meeting

- **Early Years transition into primary phase issues:** This is a substantive item on the agenda for this meeting.
- **Completion and distribution of ASEND Action plan:** Completed. This has now been circulated to Board members and is on the Local Offer page, along with the SEND Strategy.
- **Holly and Sally to meet with Service Leads on transition service:** Completed
- **Positive narratives on co-production and transition:** A co-production video was launched on 3<sup>rd</sup> July and is available on social media channels: [https://youtu.be/no\\_7F6FTHJs](https://youtu.be/no_7F6FTHJs) and on the Local Offer page: [Additional Strategies, Statements and Projects | East Sussex Local Offer](#)

### 3. Update on Alternative Provision in East Sussex

Elizabeth Funge (EF) and Jessica Stubbings (JS) presented on Alternative Provision.

EF explained that overhaul of East Sussex AP arrangements has been a significant piece of work over the last two years. Good progress is being made, aspirations for the young people are high and we are working collaboratively to deliver on them moving forward.



ESCC AP

Presentation July 25

\*if any embedded documents aren't opening, you can request them by sending an email to [education.projects@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:education.projects@eastsussex.gov.uk)

Neil Miller (NM) presented on East Sussex Academy AP Provision. NM started his presentation explaining that LSEAT have done a huge amount of work with DfE and ESCC over the last 18 months to ensure there are suitable buildings set up for East Sussex Academy. He then talked through the presentation explaining what provision is in place at the moment and what is being developed for September.



East Sussex

Academy AP provisio

\*if any embedded documents aren't opening, you can request them by sending an email to [education.projects@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:education.projects@eastsussex.gov.uk)

Questions/comments:

- Holly Saxby-Riley (HSR) asked for clarification around communication with families of children at existing AP provision as some parents/carers seem to have been given different information. EF said that there has been a letter sent to school leaders which provides an update and which she will share with HSR. **ACTION: EF**
- NM explained that LSEAT have worked with College Central and have communicated with families notifying them of what is happening. The key issue may be with the Flexible Learning Provision (FLP) young people who potentially may have received mixed messages. All effort is being put into getting this right so the young people only have to transition once. If there are any specific issues, HSR to contact EF or NM. **ACTION: Check at 9 October Board meeting**
- Sally Polanski (SP) focused on the connection with the voluntary sector, particularly integrating the AP taskforce with the specialist youth clubs that Amaze run. SP and NM to link up to investigate this. **ACTION: SP/NM**
- Alice (AT) also expressed how positive these developments are and asked about the measures put in place to ensure schools and LSEAT are accountable. JS explained there are robust controls in place as set out in the AP strategic plan and the AP sub-group has a clear focus on monitoring. LF clarified that it is a system-wise response. LSEAT have the expertise, but engagement is needed by all schools and partners and over next year we will maintain this focus.

- NM emphasised that LSEAT want to be held to account and there are KPIs within the SLAs. He stated that the LA and schools should be held to account too. We need to challenge each other and get this right moving forward.
- Carolyn Fair (CF) highlighted that this is change to our AP is overdue but exciting and emphasised the importance of a culture shift. She stated robust conversations are being had with school leaders and they are committed to this too.
- Caroline Tozzi (CT) expressed that this is exciting work and questioned how the ICB which is Sussex-wide can support this culture change in a way that is realistic and achievable. EF emphasised the importance of early intervention to which health is key, and the importance of the AP taskforce.
- HSR highlighted the importance of robust processes in Tier 1 and clear lines of responsibility. Loretta D'Silva (LDS) stated, from an DfE perspective, this is a priority in terms of mainstream inclusion, and she is expecting to see a lot more messaging around Tier 1 and looking at how this can work.
- DKS stated, from a Health perspective, he will commit to taking some of these queries back and will be working closely with the DfE and ICB to ensure we have a strategic approach to look at the next stage. The NHS 10 year plan published today gives a strong commitment within health and bringing in health to communities. LF stressed that there needs to be a focus on young people in this not just older people.
- Chrys Poullikas (CP) queried the capacity of the system in terms of numbers. NM stated that there are 220 commissioned places. 32 primary places and 188 secondary. Outreach is commissioned for 150 pupils but LSEAT would like to deliver more if possible. The work done with schools such as training and CPD will impact significantly more than 150 pupils.
- NM stated the specialist task force funding runs until August 2026. There is the potential for this to be sustainable if the agencies working within the model recognise its impact on young people and continue to use the model post 2026 without the funding.
- DS thanked NM for his contribution.

#### 4. Early Years/Primary Transition (including EHCP referrals and support)

Alison Martin (AM), Jake Perry (JP), Jane Spice (JSp) met with Louise Moor (LM) and Emma Buggy (EM) to look at issues raised during discussions at ESCC SEND board in April. They discussed the issues in relation to transition in school, early identification of needs and support for SEND children and the sharing of information between EY and school.



Early Identification  
and Transition - EY

\*if any embedded documents aren't opening, you can request them by sending an email to [education.projects@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:education.projects@eastsussex.gov.uk)

- Discussion held around the importance of early intervention, the challenges that nurseries have that schools don't, identifying children with needs who are not in the system and the importance of health engagement, particularly health visitors. JP also explained that work needs to be done to support vulnerable families with regards to EHCP and appeals.
- JSp highlighted that the expansion of funded Early Years places is focussed on working families which means disadvantaged families are not always identified. LDS acknowledged that this is already being discussed at the DfE. She will take this issue back to the Early Years teams.
- SP suggested using a befriending service to match volunteers with vulnerable families who need intensive support to help navigate the SEND system in the early part of their journey. **ACTION: JP and SP to meet to look at this.**
- NC highlighted the challenge of unpicking the presentation of children at a very young age and choosing the right pathway. JP said there are examples of some children going into schools with needs who haven't had the support in early years. There is a need for system-wide approach where LA and Early Years and Health all have a responsibility to identify these children so they don't get missed. A clear set of targets has been set and a progress report will be brought back to this meeting at a future to discuss.
- Fenella Potterton (FP) stated there are interesting parallels between Early Years and Post 16 transition. It highlights the importance of having good information on pupils. At ESCG the Vulnerable Learner Protocol has made a huge difference in supporting transition.

## 5. Updates from sub-groups (reports attached)

NC presented the sub-group report from the SEND Strategy Implementation Group



SSIG Subgroup  
Report July 25

\*if any embedded documents aren't opening, you can request them by sending an email to [education.projects@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:education.projects@eastsussex.gov.uk)

JF presented the subgroup report from the Commissioning and Monitoring Group



C&M Subgroup  
Report July 25

\*if any embedded documents aren't opening, you can request them by sending an email to [education.projects@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:education.projects@eastsussex.gov.uk)

- Discussion had about the continuing issues in obtaining accurate data for East Sussex on neurodevelopmental assessments and waiting times. Health data is currently often captured at Pan-Sussex level but there is a lot of work going on behind the scenes to ensure data can be broken down to East Sussex level. This will be kept on the Board agenda moving forward.
- CP stated that it would be useful to share data on unmet health needs. The perception that unmet health needs leads to medication needs to change medication is not always appropriate. Getting a diagnosis isn't going to change the need.

- HSR highlighted her concern that threshold for going onto the waiting list may potentially increase to bring down the length of the waiting list. This would not be helpful. What is more important is getting support whilst on the list so the waiting time is not so important.
- CF stated that it is anticipated that the SEND reform papers which will be published soon will help shift the current culture and system and we will start looking at new landscape.

## 6. Updates on national policy and related issues:

### Local Authority Update

- CF explained that we are still working to an ambitious timescale for the Sussex Mayoral Combined Authority to be ready for operation in 2026. The elections will be in May 2026.
- Local Government reorganisation will be a longer and more difficult process. We are still working to the proposal that is based on the East Sussex footprint and the final proposal will be submitted by 26 September. The Government response is expected in early 2026, with a shadow authority by 2027 and investing a new authority in 2028.
- NC stated that the Change Programme is in its final year and there has been a shift in focus with the new Government. This year has focussed on improving inclusion in mainstream and ensuring there is a systemic and cultural change around inclusion. The collaborated approach between Sussex authorities and Portsmouth is still in place and regular conversations and meetings are happening.
- Within this we will continue with the AP taskforce, and the early language and LSEC programme, PINS will continue and will expand and work with new schools. Positive conversations are being had on how to support Neurodiverse children in schools.
- There is a requirement to test a Local Inclusion support offer from September 25. This is the establishment of a local multi- agency team to focus on supporting the development of mainstream inclusion in schools. This will include support, training, advice and guidance for schools and appropriate intervention. The focus is on targeting support in whole schools to improve inclusive practice.
- In terms of high needs block funding for local authorities for SEND, the statutory override has been extended by HM Treasury to 2027/28, which means overspends are kept off the local authority's balance sheet. The projection for this year is the expenditure on ESCC high needs block will be overspent by £18.5 million (in-year) with a cumulative deficit at the end of the year £21.4m.
- It is hoped that the anticipated White Paper in October 2025 and the Autumn Spending Review will signal resources to support inclusion in mainstream and move towards a sustainable system. The headline figure from the recent spending review states £750m from 2026-27 to 2027-8 being allocated for SEND reforms but the details of this are not known yet.
- NC stated that the anticipated timeframe for the suite of reforms is testing in 2026-27 and embedding in 2027-28.

- SP stressed the level of anxiety around possible changes is building for families. EF/SP/HSR to meet and have conversations early on how we will work locally to allay concerns and to communicate changes. **ACTION: EF/SP/HSR**
- Discussion had on how to ensure people know that we are all working towards the same goal. CF stressed the importance of focusing on the best outcomes for children. CT suggested doing joint communications, so the same message is coming from all services. **ACTION: CT/JS/HSR/SP to meet to look at this.**

## NHS and ICB Update

- CT spoke about the NHS ten-year plan which was published today. There are three key shifts: moving from hospital to community, moving from paper to digital and moving from treatment to prevention space. There needs to be a focus on how children with SEND fit within those three areas.
- Alongside this there are three reforms going ahead. There has been a merger between the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS to remove bureaucracy. All ICBs need to reduce their running costs by 50% on average by December 2025 and all NHS Trusts to reduce their corporate service costs by 50% by December 2025.
- CT stated, from an ICB perspective, the immediate concern is to get to a financially sustainable break-even position of £18.76 per population. A ICB blueprint has been published to inform the new structure. ICBs are moving towards a strategic commissioning function. There are 18 functions that will move out of ICBs, of these there are three that are key to children, Continuing health care, SEND, and safeguarding.
- In order to move to a sustainable financial break-even position, ICBs need to submit proposals. The proposal is to merge Sussex and Surrey ICBs. This will be co-terminus with the two proposed Mayoral Combined Authorities. NHS England have confirmed 42 ICBs will go down to 26. Structures are being developed for new the organisation, then there will be a consultation. This needs to be implemented by Jan 2026.
- DS highlighted that the only representative that ESCC have on the Pan-Sussex Children's Board is CF. CF confirmed that all Local Authorities have the same concerns relating to keeping a place-based agenda central and keeping children at the top of this. There is significant concern from Sussex LAs about the merger and three leaders of Sussex's authorities have written stating their concerns. It vital to keep talking about this and not risk losing the right services for vulnerable young people.

## 7. ASEND Inspection Improvement Plan - action and impact:

- Discussion had about the progress that has been made and how momentum can be kept going. CT highlighted that we need to look at how the Government are prioritising young people with SEND. The proposed Health and Social Care structure highlights maternity and women and young people as priority areas. We need to look at how this translates on the ground and receiving services.

- DKS stated Community Services and Mental Health. Learning Disability and Autism services are also a priority in the new proposed structure. On a regional level, all ICBs have submitted plans. These responses have been reviewed and fed into the Regional Executive Group. Recently a national SEND blueprint group has been established which met last night and the Sussex Chief Medical Officer has been invited to this group. This looks at what the line within the blueprint looks like in practice.
- DKS acknowledged it's going to be a challenging time for ICBs and NHS England but there is commitment to communicate as openly as possible with colleagues and partners as much as possible. The regional blueprint is likely to be available by the end of July. Specific responsibilities can be decided once this is published.
- CF highlighted the need also to look at the broader impact in terms of resource, particularly as Sussex and Surrey are both overfunded according to the formula.
- NC stated that, in terms of the national SEND blueprint group there is the challenge around different perspectives from Health and Education in terms of SEND. There needs to be the correct people at these discussions or there is potential for disjoin. DKS stressed that this was strongly acknowledge at the first blueprint SEND group and discussion was had over how PCFs and LAs feed into this. HSK expects the scope to be broadened moving forward.
- DS thanks everyone and closed the meeting.

**Our next meeting is 9 October 2025. Followed by a formal review on actions on the Post ASEND Inspection Improvement Plan.**