

**SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy & Partnership Board**  
**26 February 2026, 10.00 – 12.00, Committee Room 3, County Hall, Chichester**

**Chair:** Brian Pope, Independent Chair

**WSCC**

- Andrew Parker, Head SEND & Inclusion
- Anna Parsons, Early Years SEND Lead (maternity cover)
- Cate Mullen, SENAT consultant
- Claire Hayes, AD Education & Skills
- Daniel Ruaux, Director of Children’s Services
- Graeme Potter, Public Health
- Graham Olway, Head of Service – Schools Organisation and Planning
- Kathryn Kellagher, SEND Development Officer
- Kelly Steel, Head of Service Assessment and Family Safeguarding Western
- Laura Tomlin, Schools Planning Officer SEND
- Nadia McGarry, SEND Improvement Lead
- Natalie McNeill, Designated Social Care Officer
- Rebecca Turner, Head of Commissioning
- Sarah Bloor, Interim Head of Service, Children with Disabilities
- Vicky Richardson, Head of Practice, Improvement & Inspection

**Education and schools**

- Nicky Hiscock, Governor Parklands Primary
- Ruth Campbell, Head Chichester Nursery
- Sam Channon, Business Manager APC

**NHS Sussex ICB**

Caroline Tozzi, Joint Director Children & Young People, Strategic Lead for SEND

**Parent Carers**

Rowan Westwood, West Sussex Parent Carer Forum

**Department for Education**

Liz Flaherty

**Apologies**

**WSCC**

- Adrian Dyka, Interim Assistant Director Corporate Parenting
- Heidi Farr, Head of Assessment & Family Safeguarding Central
- Karen Furse, Head of Standards & Effectiveness
- Kieron Lyons, AD Children’s Social Care and Early Help
- Loretta Rogers, AD Adult Operations

**Education and schools**

- Lisa Harris, Rumboldswyke
- Phillip Potter, Head Oak Grove College
- Mia Lowney, St Andrews
- Simon Brown, Chichester College

**NHS Sussex ICB**

- Isabelle Hodgson, Community Paediatrician and Interim Designated Clinical Officer for SEND, NHS Sussex
- Toby Silverman, SEND Improvement Manager

**Department for Education**

Luke Parker

**NHS England SE SEND Advisor**

Adeline Gibbs

**Councillor Representative**

Jacque Russell, Cabinet member

## **1. Welcome**

## **2. Action Log**

See action log.

Risk Register:

- Claire has suggested a rag rating for each risk which will be further discussed at the grading event.
- It was suggested we include the Ofsted Area for Improvements in the Category column to help with cross-referencing.
- It was agreed to sign this off.

Terms of Reference:

- To be reviewed again in July (amend wording on last page)
- Link to SEND Strategy 2026-2030 once it's published.

## **Action**

2.1 include Ofsted Area for Improvements in the Category column to help with cross-referencing

## **3. Report by Exception**

### **Preparation for Adulthood update – Supported Internships**

- Supported Internships
  - There are now 23 applications for the Supported Internship Programme, which is very positive.
- Transitions to adult services
  - One of West Sussex's Connected Council programmes is around transitions to adult services. This was due to be discussed at the February board but is now rescheduled for April.

## **4. Outcome and learning from DfE 6-month monitoring letter**

The DfE's six-month monitoring letter noted overall "clear and sustained progress", strengthened partnership working, and effective SEND & AP Board governance.

However, communication with families continues to be a significant theme for improvement—this being the third monitoring cycle in which it has been raised.

- Vicky's team is now supporting this area and has established a Communications Group that will meet for the first time in March. The SEND Strategy priority 6 on Communication already has actions and outcomes previously agreed by partners (including the WSPCF), and we will use this as the basis of an Action Plan. The Communications Group will report back to the SEND-AP Board.
- A new SEND-AP Board reporting template has been created for all improvement leads; it includes a section on how information is being shared with families so communication will be threaded through all areas.
- Rebecca to provide tangible evidence of how they are communicating with providers and families over SALT. She will link with Anna outside the meeting over Early Years and messages that are given to families.
- We have a rolling contribution of feedback from CYP to inform our work from several different channels, including:

- A 12 month plan for scheduled feedback from Lauren Boal (Voice and Participation Team) at the Area SEND Partnership Improvement group. This includes feedback from mental health survey in March, feedback on annual reviews in July, CYP annual survey in September and feedback on transitions in November.
- Learning from a thematic Annual Review audit
- Plan to hear back from CYP on supported internships at Chichester College next term (meeting tbc)
- WSPCF will ask parent carers who attend the Have Your Voice Heard events to share the survey with their CYP.
- Public Health has recently published a report on the schools health and wellbeing surveys [West Sussex SEND report 2025.pdf](#).

#### Area for Improvement 1 Support Whilst Waiting:

- ICB Surrey/Sussex merger: Isabelle Hodgeson is acting as the interim DCO, working closely with Sally Keene and the tribunal team. The new ICB structure post-merger be shared at the end of March. SEND remains a priority but will be moved to be under the Chief Nurse function. We will need to consider where health input can have the best impact.
- SALT and OT: as part of the Change Programme, we are trialling a strong universal offer in primary and secondary schools, which was identified as a gap last summer. They are upskilling TAs in schools to enable them to implement SALT and OT screenings using progression tools. The project will start in mid-March and we will be able to report on data and impact measures.

#### Area for Improvement 3 EHCP Timeliness:

- Future board item: bring an evaluative report of the audit process around EHCPs (including timeliness and quality) to ensure that learning from current work and previous 6-month reviews is being implemented. Include how data and family feedback is informing next actions.
- April board item: Cate Mullen to report on her findings

#### Area for Improvement 4 SEND Sufficiency:

- Nathan Jones' report around commissioning of alternative provision in its broadest sense is being fed into the Transformation Board and will be brought to this board once complete – possibly April.

#### Area for Improvement 5 Preparation for Adulthood:

- We need to ensure we have an accurate measure in the dashboard around Supported internships.
- We need to better capture other work within this area, including the transition from children to adult social care.
- Future board, possible May: report on Back to the Floor Preparation for Adulthood Findings

## Actions

4.1 KK to contact education representatives and ask them to attend the DfE Grading Event.

4.2 Add to Forward Plan: Back to the Floor Preparation for Adulthood

4.3 Add to Forward Plan: Cate Mullen's report on SENAT

4.4 Add to Forward Plan: evaluative report of the audit process around EHCPs

4.5 Add to Forward Plan: Nathan Jones' report on commissioning of alternative provision

## 5. SEND Sufficiency quarterly update

**Ofsted Area for Improvement 4:** Leaders should continue to implement their oversight and commissioning arrangements of suitable specialist school places and AP so that there is sufficient high-quality provision that meets children and young people's SEND.

See updated presentation that includes an update on projects as requested at the meeting.

Discussion points:

- We have a target of 373 places which is on the Continuing Practice and Improvement Plan (CPIP); funding is committed for 209 places but projects take time to complete and we are not on track to achieve 373 places by 2026/2027.
- Slide 2: add a line in the graph to show how many places are commissioned at INMSS
- We need to broaden out to consider developing provision in Early Years, which in the main is through market provision. One of the challenges is identifying opportunities for provisions. Settings are keen to have onsite nursery provision which gives them certainty of school places. It's reported that parents of many young children with more complex needs (ie who need a nurse on site) choose to stay at home rather than have their child attend a mainstream nursery which can't meet their needs, or travel long distances to attend a provision which can meet needs.
  - Laura/Graham to liaise with Anna to understand numbers of pre-school children with complex needs who need a nurse on site to attend nursery, and how to develop a plan for Early Years SEND provision
- The decision by the DfE to cancel the funding for the two free schools is disappointing. The view of the board was that we should accept the £11.4m grant offered, which aligns with feedback from schools. For the next update, they will include a slide on what they plan to do with the grant, which will be about delivering specialist places rather than new schools.
- Primary schools with surplus space: there is growing interest in setting up their own provision, but not in setting up an SSC.
- The small capital award has its first board meeting next week and has received 11 applications from 36 enquiries. Schools are asked to evidence how they involve their parents and community in the application form.
  - The small capital award is available for Early Years as well as schools.
  - Schools are showing interest and it's hoped this will translate into more applications.
  - Some schools are match funding with help from their parent associations.
  - We need to build an evidence file of how the initiatives are helping CYP, how many of these have EHCPs. The data should include evidence of how schools involved parents in the application.
  - Laura to contact Rowan around including parent feedback in the impact data

## Actions

5.1 Include project update in the slide pack (circulated with notes)

5.2 Laura/Graham to link with Anna to discuss Early Years SEND provision.

5.3 Include a slide in next update on how they will use the £11.4m grant to increase specialist places.

5.4 Build an evidence file around impact of the small capital award scheme, including parent feedback (Laura to liaise with Rowan).

## **6. Initial thoughts on the Education White Paper**

### **Every child achieving and thriving**

The general consensus was that we agree with the ambition of the White Paper but are waiting for detail on how the ambition will be realised.

Discussion points:

- There are lots of positives, such as the focus on early intervention and the drive to remove some of the fight in the system.
- The White Paper broadly aligns with our SEND Strategy. Being in the Change Partner programme has helped us prepare for change, eg the LISO, which while not mentioned specifically in the White Paper, is aligned with the Experts at Hand model.
- It's raised a lot of questions from a commissioning point of view (INMSS, independent alternative provisions) which will require a detailed response.
- It's disappointing that there is no mention of further Ofsted reform and still too much focus on Progress 8.
- There needs to be more clarity on how EPs will be used within the tiers. There are also questions around how we will train EPs and SALTs to meet the demand.
- The requirement to reassess children at the point of transition to secondary school will bring increased capacity challenges in teams that are already stretched.
- The new comms group will develop a plan around sharing changes coming from the White Paper. It was agreed that we would share the survey with schools and parents and encourage partners to have their say: [SEND reform: putting children and young people first - Department for Education - Citizen Space](#).
- It's not yet known if areas in West Sussex will be included in Mission Coastal.

## **Actions**

6.1 It was agreed to share the survey with schools and parents: [SEND and inclusion news - West Sussex County Council](#)