

SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy & Partnership Board

14 July 2025, 10.00 – 12.00

Committee Room 1, County Hall, Chichester

Chair

Brian Pope, Independent Chair

WSSCC

Andrew Parker, Interim Head SEND & Inclusion

Anna Parsons, Early Years SEND Lead (maternity cover)

Claire Hayes, AD Education & Skills

Daniel Ruaux, AD Corporate Parenting

Grace Hall, Early Years SEND Lead

Graham Olway, Head of Organisation and Planning

Karen Furse, Head of Standards & Effectiveness

Kathryn Kellagher, SEND Development Officer

Laura Tomlin, Schools Planning Officer, SEND

Russell Allen, Head of Libraries and Heritage

Samantha Taplin, Public Health Consultant

Sara Hughes, Service Manager, Pupil Entitlement Investigations

Sarah Clark, Head of Virtual School

Vince Clarke, Director of Children's Services

Education and schools

Lisa Harris, Head Rumboldswyke Primary

Nicky Smith, Governor Parklands Primary

Simon Brown, Head of SEND, Chichester College

NHS Sussex ICB

Rachael Prim, Designated Clinical Officer, for SEND

Parent Carers

Rowan Westwood, West Sussex Parent Carer Forum

Apologies

WSSCC

Charlene Hornsey, Head of Early Help

Derry Richardson, Head of Commercial & Contracting

Heidi Farr, Head of Assessment & Family Safeguarding Central

Kieron Lyons, AD Children's Social Care and Early Help

Loretta Rogers, AD Adult Operations

Nadia McGarry, SEND Improvement Lead

Vicky Richardson, Head of Practice, Improvement & Inspection

Education and schools

Doug Thomas, Head APC

Liz Mellor, Head, Horsham Nursery

Ruth Campbell, Executive Head Chichester, Bognor and Boundstone nursery schools

Gillian Santi Governors Association

Phillip Potter, Head Oak Grove College

Parent Carers

John Clifton, West Sussex Parent Carer Forum

NHS Sussex ICB

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

Toby Silverman, SEND Improvement Manager

NHS England SE SEND Advisor

Adeline Gibbs

Department for Education

Liz Flaherty

Councillor Representative

Jacquie Russell, Cabinet member

1. Welcome

We are now halfway to the next Ofsted inspection and it is a good opportunity to have a reflective talk about what we should focus on as a board.

National picture:

- There are no concrete proposals in response to the Green paper issued by the previous government. Brian updated the Board on potential options the DfE are considering. The consistent message from parents is that the current system does not provide consistent support, with delays in medical diagnosis, delays in EHCPs, and the belief that their child needs an EHCP to get any support.
- The recent SOLACE report shows that we're now spending three times the money in schools but outcomes for children with SEND are worse than they have ever been.
- From the parent carer point of view, they would support change but there would need to be systems put in place for accountability. The Parent Carer Forums are working with the DfE and next week are in Westminster to speak directly to ministers.

Reflections on last 18 months:

- It feels like we have come a long way but while we've made some progress, there is still a lot to do. The quality of engagement and commitment at this board is good to see, the partnership is stronger than it was and we have a greater understanding of different challenges faced by members.
- From September, we will start to keep an attendance log.
- There is more clarity about where we are and more honesty about problems.
- Communication with schools has improved and we need to hold on to the good relationships.
- With regards to the 5 Ofsted areas for concern, we have made headway on the first four and need to focus on preparation for adulthood and transitions.
 - Important to link to the Wellbeing board which has a delivery group focusing on transitions.
 - Growing West Sussex is working on the supported internship programme and there is a business case going to DLT next week. At the moment we are 0% and the national average is 1% of young people in supported internships.

Future agendas

- Intersectionality around EHCPs and Children We Care For, and the support provided for this group.
- Working with head teachers about how we can support greater inclusion in schools and embedding the OAIP.
- Preparation for adulthood – how to embed a focus on this from an early age
- Curriculum review
- EHCP timeliness
- Medical needs and ensuring nursing guidance matches up with school policy.

Actions

- 1.1 Andy Parker / Samantha Taplin to link in over transitions/preparation for adulthood work.
- 1.2 Nursing guidance matching up with school policies to be brought to board at the next health quarterly update.

2. Action Log

See Action Log

3. Disability Register Annual Report

The Disability Register Annual Report was circulated with the agenda.

- Virtual Reality experiences: this is a national lottery funded programme for the library centenary. There are 5 story books covering areas as diverse as the baking a cake in the Bake Off Tent or travelling to space in a rocket. SEND friendly versions are available.
- There have only been 5 requests for data reports and members were encouraged to make use of this valuable resource.
 - WSPCF will link the data to the feedback cycle they provide at the board.
- Russell would like to be part of the conversation about work placements; currently they offer 2 but they would be interested in extending this in the larger libraries.
- Libraries hold a trusted position in communities and are a key engagement point with families.
- The disability register was taken to schools earlier this term and generated a lot of interest from head teachers. It would be interesting to know if applications have increased as a result.
- Russell and Anna to discuss children with medical needs rather than SEND.

Actions

3.1 Rowan to link with Disability Register to include its data in the regular WSPCF feedback cycle.

4. Update from WSPCF

The summer survey closes tomorrow. They will share with colleagues and bring to the board in the autumn term.

5. Attendance and exclusions data

See attached presentation.

- We authorise more absence than the national average. This could be because of the increased use of alternative provision.
- On average, every child with an EHCP misses a day a week (20%) which disrupts their learning and makes it hard for teachers who are constantly helping them to catch up.
- The ability to engage with school is linked to young people's emotional response to attending school, and seeing a rise in attendance data is a good indicator of improving inclusion in schools. Low attendance is used as an indicator for schools requiring improvement.
 - The Dedicated Schools team work with families to identify barriers to attendance.
 - We are working to foster an inclusive culture in schools, with tools such as the OAIP.

- The Standards and Effectiveness service is working with the DfE around secondary school attendance. They have identified a list of schools where attendance by children with SEND or who are disadvantaged was not as high as in other schools and are considering what would be the most effective way to share good practice.
 - Some schools may have lower overall attendance levels but their exclusions data might be good; whereas other schools with good attendance data could have a high exclusions rate.
 - Alternative provision is generally coded C (authorised absence)
- Identifying barriers to attendance needs to be discussed at every opportunity, eg it should be talked about in Annual Reviews for children with an EHCP.
- There's a risk that looking at attendance through a safeguarding lens can be a barrier to inclusion for children with SEND and can be perceived as parent blaming.
- We could track back to attendance in Early Years to see when patterns emerge.
- There is good EBSA guidance available for schools - [Emotionally Based School Avoidance - West Sussex County Council](#)
- There is a pan-Sussex health project around asking GPs not to sign children and young people off school, which will result in a letter to all GPs. This ties in with a medical needs and exclusions workstream in Fair Access which has involvement from GPs and public health. Kathy Lockyear to link with Rachael Prim.
- It would be useful to have a breakdown and analysis of those children and young people attending independent alternative provision. Currently we have the data but lack the resource to monitor it. To be brought to a future board meeting.
- PEX figures are 10% down overall, which is largely because of a 21% reduction in secondary exclusions. This is offset by a 25.5% increase in primary exclusions. Going alongside this is a slight upward trend in suspensions, which is to be expected if schools are reducing PEX.
- This would suggest that various projects such as LINC'S, APST and APC Outreach offer are having a positive effect in secondary schools and we need to replicate this in primaries. The Local Inclusion Support Offer (LISO) aligns with these projects.
- Teams such as ASCT and LBAT have offered intensive support and training to schools with children (without an EHCP) at risk of exclusion. The impact of this support is that these children are now accessing education full-time.
- There have been 18 PEX for children with EHCPs in primary schools. While this is very concerning, it's not as simple as saying primary schools are not inclusive: head teachers feel they are at a crisis point and they have a duty of care to protect all pupils. We need to look at the support we are giving schools, including safeguarding considerations, early intervention and therapeutic help.
- It would be helpful to analyse the exclusions data, to see if there is a pattern of schools, areas, or needs. Also compare to national rates.

Actions

5.1 Kathy Lockyear to link Rachael Prim with the Fair Access workstream on medical needs and exclusions.

5.2 A breakdown and analysis of those children and young people attending independent alternative provision to be brought to a future board meeting.

5.3 Analyse the exclusions data to see if there are any patterns (schools, areas, needs). Compare West Sussex exclusions data to national rates. To be brought to a future board meeting.

6. Quarterly update: SEND Sufficiency

See attached presentation.

- The SEND Sufficiency team is keen to work in co-production with commissioning, health colleagues and the parent carer forum and has established quarterly meetings to help plan therapeutic support for the additional provisions.
- We need to renew our focus on training teachers in developing their SEND practice. NB there is the [SENCo Development Programme | West Sussex Services for Schools](#) which was developed with the University of Chichester.

Actions

6.1 Graham to link with Lisa who is interested in the SEND Sufficiency funding.

6.2 For the next SEND Sufficiency focus, the team will work with colleagues from commissioning, health and WSPCF to bring a therapies protocol.