

SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy & Partnership Board
29 June 2026, 10.00 – 12.00, Cathedral Room, Chichester College, Westgate Fields, Chichester

Chair: Brian Pope, Independent Chair

WSCC

Aaron Swain, Service Manager, SENAT

Andrea Morgan, Principal Educational Psychologist

Anna Parsons, Early Years SEND Lead (maternity cover)

Adrian Dyka, Interim Assistant Director Corporate Parenting

Daniel Ruaux, Director of Children's Services

Claire Hayes, AD Education & Skills

Jack Jones, Head SEND & Inclusion B

Kathryn Kellagher, SEND Development Officer

Katie Bates, Adult Services and Health

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

Jade Fellows, Practice Development and Improvement Lead

Education and schools

Simon Brown, Chichester College

Phillip Potter, Head Oak Grove College

NHS Sussex ICB

Louise Needham, Senior Designated Clinical Officer, NHS Surrey and Sussex

Department for Education

Liz Flaherty

NHS England SE SEND Advisor

Adeline Gibbs

Parent Carers

Rowan Westwood, West Sussex Parent Carer Forum

Apologies

WSCC

Andrew Parker, Head SEND & Inclusion A

Charlene Hornsey, Early Help

Karen Furse, Head of Standards & Effectiveness

Heidi Farr, Head of Assessment & Family Safeguarding Central

Kelly Steel, Head of Service Assessment and Family Safeguarding Western

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

Loretta Rogers, AD Adult Operations

Mark Dodson, Adult Social Care

Nadia McGarry, SEND Improvement Lead

Sarah Clark, Head of Virtual School

Education and schools

Doug Thomas, Head APC

Matt Whatford, Head Imberhorne Secondary School

Zoe Gordon, Head North Mundhan Primary School

Ruth Campbell, Head Chichester Nursery

Department for Education

Luke Parker

Elizabeth Roff

1. Welcome

2. Action Log

3. Report by Exception

SEND Reform Plan – this was submitted on 19 June 2026 and colleagues across the partnership were thanked for their supportive approach in meeting this deadline. The Department for Education will feedback in September and we can continue to make adjustments to the plan in the meantime.

A mobilisation plan was started on Monday 22 June 2026 which involves a significant amount of recruitment. The Board will be updated on progress.

- The DfE Experts at Hand guidance can be found here: [Developing and delivering the Experts at Hand offer in year 1: supporting guidance - GOV.UK](#)
- The DfE Inclusion bases guidance can be found here: [Inclusion bases in schools - GOV.UK](#)

River Beach SSC – The WSPCF was contacted by the National Society for Deaf Children around the closure of the River Beach SSC for the deaf. It was clarified that this decision was made at school level rather than by the Local Authority and follows years of significant recruitment challenges that exist nationally for Teachers of the Deaf. Increasing numbers of deaf children are now educated in mainstream schools and there are currently just four children in the River Beach SSC. The WSCC Sensory Support Team is providing interim support. It was agreed to add this to the action log for the Board to be updated.

4. WSPCF feedback on education

This presentation drew from surveys, comparison with previous findings in 2023 which provide a baseline, and other ongoing feedback gathered through WSPCF activity such as the Have Your Say events.

Communication remains a key concern and service improvements are not yet reflected in the lived experience feedback reported to the WSPCF. Although most of the negative comments were around operational feedback, the poor communication experienced by parent carers contributes to wider mistrust of the system and amplifies worries around timeliness.

For context, the caseload for a SEND Officer is very high and stands at around 420, which means that SENAT are unable to deliver the service they would like.

- SENAT is exploring digital solutions such as parent portals, AI plan writers and streamlined email inboxes.
- Asking Business Support to manage phones isn't always helpful as they lack the expertise required to answer questions; SENAT is working to free up SEND Officers' time so they can pick up the phone and reduce emails.
- They would like to be more transparent around waiting times but are having to work within legal guidance. SENDOs try to manage expectations around waiting times and have a number of scripts to work from.

Suggestions:

- Learning from procurement which triages the management of email enquiries
- Learning from the Post-16 team, which bases officers within Colleges a number of days a week. This allows for greater transparency and easier access to officers to

facilitate annual reviews, act as a point of contact and build trust. They have worked like this for four years and it is being looked at as a model by the DfE.

Actions

4.1 Updates on digital and service communication improvements to be brought back to the board.

4.2 Response to WSPCF feedback on education to be coordinated by Andy Parker

5. EHCP timeliness update: Ofsted Area for Improvement 3

Discussion:

- There are noticeable differences between the positive feedback received through quality assurance activity and the concerns reported by the WSPCF.
 - SENAT plan to start collecting feedback on EHCPs and Annual Reviews to get a wider bank of evidence.
 - There has been a steady increase in compliments for SENAT which were shared at the recent Service Day.
- It was noticed that there was a lot of repetition in the reports circulated with today's agenda and it would be worth exploring if we should have one joint, co-produced report from WSCC, health and WSPCF. The reporting template goes some way to achieving this and could be developed to ensure all perspectives are incorporated.

Actions

5.1 Explore developing the reporting template to create one co-produced partnership report.

6. Evaluative Report – Quality Assurance of EHCP Impact

- The next SEND Performance Group meeting will focus on quality assurance and will be attended by the WSPCF.
- There is a Courageous Conversation event around Cease to Maintain this week.
- We are planning the next thematic audit and will feedback on this at a future board meeting.

Discussion around how to quality assure the implementation of EHCPs:

- Schools are contacted as part of the EHCP process but it would be interesting to evaluate the impact of an EHCP in the classroom.
 - It would be helpful for schools to have prior knowledge of the audit cycle, so they know the window of when they could be contacted if a child attending their school is selected for audit.
- The EPs has focused on provision writing to ensure the provision can be actioned in a school, including the development of resources to support that.
- There are particular issues with schools not implementing advice around toileting and food. Health colleagues are aware that the medical guidance puts a lot of responsibility on schools and are looking at this.
- It would be helpful to have more notice of health provider survey consultations and Louise will help with this coordination.

Actions

6.1 Jade to share audit cycle schedule with schools for the next academic year.

6.2 Medical guidance for schools: health colleagues are looking at this to see if they can better support schools.

6.3 Louise to coordinate health provider survey consultations to give more notice to partners.

7. Preparation for Adulthood update: Ofsted Area for Improvement 5

Preparation for Adulthood

- Supported internship programme continues to grow and is on track to meet targets, with additional places created for September.
- Annual review timeliness information has been added to the report.
- Work is underway to improve the collection and reporting of destinations data, including apprenticeships and employment, to give a clearer picture.
- Training in independent living skills is an important element of preparation for adulthood and we should explore opportunities to expand this support.
 - The training programme currently available to foster carers could potentially be adapted and offered more widely to families of young people with SEND.

Action

8.1 Improve the collection and reporting of destinations data as part of the preparation for adulthood workstream.

Student's Experience and Journey to Employment

A Chichester College student attended the Board to share his personal experience of the supported internship programme.

- He studied at college for a number of years and completed a range of different courses. During this time, he faced difficult personal challenges, which involved moving into his own accommodation and learning to manage his finances. He praised the support from college staff during this time as going "the extra mile."
- He said that the supported internship programme gave him an opportunity to understand what working life is really like and helped him explore what kind of career he wanted. It helped him grow in confidence, develop social skills and learn how to work in a team. He also received support with employment skills such as writing a CV and how to prepare for an interview.
- In his second year of the internship, after his personal circumstances had settled down, he was able to focus more fully on work experience and secured a placement at Rolls-Royce. He has now signed up to the employment agency used by Rolls Royce and the agency is helping to place him into an appropriate role.

Brian thanked the student for sharing his positive experience of supported internships and for speaking confidently to a room full of professionals.

Discussion points:

- There are ongoing challenges in persuading employers to participate in supported internships, including the Local Authority. The Corporate Leadership Team is meeting to discuss how to create placements in the Local Authority next week.
- Numbers of supported internships are growing but there have been some reports of placements being turned down because they would affect benefit payments.

- The Local Offer pages on Preparation for Adulthood have recently been improved and can be found here: [Preparation for Adulthood section](#). This section has information on:

- [Preparing for and finding employment](#)
- [Transport information](#)
- [Independent travel training](#)
- [Supported internships](#)
- [Connect to Support](#)
- [Being part of your community](#)
- [Social care](#)
- [Health and development](#)
- [Living more independently](#)
- [Finding somewhere to live](#)