

SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy & Partnership Board
30 April 2026, 1.00 – 3.00, Main Conference Hall, County Hall Horsham

Chair: Brian Pope, Independent Chair

WSSC

Andrew Parker, Head SEND & Inclusion A

Claire Hayes, AD Education & Skills

Emma Parker, Early Help

Graeme Potter, Public Health

Jack Jones, Head SEND & Inclusion B

Karen Furse, Head of Standards & Effectiveness

Kathryn Kellagher, SEND Development Officer

Katie Bates, Adult Services and Health

Kelly Steel, Head of Service Assessment and Family Safeguarding Western

Loretta Rogers, AD Adult Operations

Mark Dodson, Adult Social Care

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

Sarah Clark, Head of Virtual School

Vicky Richardson, Head of Practice, Improvement & Inspection

Education and schools

Doug Thomas, Head APC

Phillip Potter, Head Oak Grove College

Simon Brown, Chichester College

NHS Sussex ICB

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

Emma Davies, Designated Clinical Officer, West Sussex

Katherine Baker, Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust

NHS Sussex ICB continued

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

Naomi Ellis, Deputy Chief Nursing Officer and Director of Safeguarding, NHS Surrey and Sussex

Toby Silverman, SEND Improvement Manager

Parent Carers

Rowan Westwood, West Sussex Parent Carer Forum

Department for Education

Liz Flaherty

Apologies

WSSC

Anna Parsons, Early Years SEND Lead (maternity cover)

Adrian Dyka, Interim Assistant Director Corporate Parenting

Daniel Ruaux, Director of Children’s Services

Heidi Farr, Head of Assessment & Family Safeguarding Central

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

Education and schools

Mia Lowney, St Andrews

Lisa Harris, Head Rumboldswyke Primary School

Matt Whatford, Head Imberhorne Secondary School

Liz Mellor, Head Horsham Nursery

Department for Education

Luke Parker

NHS England SE SEND Advisor

Adeline Gibbs

Councillor Representative

Jacquie Russell, Cabinet member

1. Welcome

Brian welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted it was Caroline's last meeting. She was thanked for her support and valuable contributions to the board over many years and wished well for the future.

2. Action Log

Action 121 CAMHS average waits for initial assessment – action to be closed but new action 150 is to communicate this and the SALT improvements to families.

Action 148 Risk Register – Andy to add a risk around the delivery of the SEND Reform Plan.

3. Report by Exception

SEND Reform Plan

This is on track to meet the first submission deadline of 15 May and Andy thanked colleagues for prioritising it over recent weeks. The maturity index is nearing completion, with feedback received from key partners, and the task and finish groups are concluding their work this week, with a draft report to be circulated to strategic leads on 5 May.

The plan will be shared with partners including schools, health and the WSPCF, as well as SLT, DLT and the SEND-AP Board, before 15 May.

- It is challenging to write the SEND Reform plan with incomplete guidance from the DfE on key aspects of the White Paper.
- Under normal circumstances, there would have been more direct engagement with families and CYP but this hasn't been possible because of the tight timeline. It was recognised that all local authorities are facing similar constraints, and that West Sussex is fortunate in that we have recently published a coproduced strategy and can use engagement work from that to inform the plan.
- The SEND Reform Plan will be refined over time, as more guidance is published by the DfE.

4. Draft WSCC response to White Paper consultation

Jack presented the initial draft response, noting that further partner input will be incorporated, including feedback from headteachers, social care colleagues, and WSPCF survey responses.

Key points from the discussion included:

- The response was considered balanced and transparent, effectively setting out both strengths and challenges.
- The response should highlight the low level of funding per child in the high needs block compared to other authorities, and the need to support this with clear data.

5. Focus: Support Whilst Waiting

Ofsted Area for Improvement 1:

"Local area health leaders should act swiftly to identify and address 'waiting well' arrangements, and gaps in service provision to meet the full range of needs of children and young people with SEND."

Caroline introduced the new strategic health representatives for the SEND-AP Board:

- Naomi Ellis, Deputy Chief Nursing Officer and Director of Safeguarding, NHS Surrey and Sussex
- Louise Needham, Senior Designated Clinical Officer, NHS Surrey and Sussex
- Emma Davies, Designated Clinical Officer for West Sussex (starting on 5th May). She will work 3 days a week as DCO, and one of these days will be in the SENAT office.

The update was presented using the new reporting format, which focuses on impact.

Discussion points

- While health colleagues recognise there is still a lot of work to be done, it was positive to see the higher rate of parental satisfaction in the survey presented by WSPCF last month. This is because of all the work put in place to improve support whilst waiting and to address waiting lists, particularly in CAMHS and SALT.
- They are aware they need to work on communication and engagement and will ensure there is a regular update included in the SEND & Inclusion newsletter going forward. They will also work with the local authority on more creative ways to engage with young people.

SALT

- It is good to see the data around improved waiting times for SALT. These have been achieved by the delivery of a sustainable service improvement plan that has chipped away at a whole range of measures, including weekly performance meetings, offering additional staff hours to allow them to catch up, skill mixing within the services, efficiency improvements in report writing, triage processes, training and input to schools.
- The range of the SALT offer is welcome, though it would be interesting to know how long head teachers have to wait once they have submitted a request for whole school training.
- It would be useful to know what percentage of CYP are seen and get given a plan with no further action required, versus those CYP who need ongoing support. This will inform the Experts at Hand plan.

CAMHS

- Update around CAMHS waiting lists from Karen Ward, to provide context to the fall from 42 weeks (Oct 2023) to 10 weeks (Sept 2025) in average waits for initial assessment.:
 - As a trust, a significant piece of work was undertaken to improve data quality, which included wait times reporting. This included the following actions:
 - All long waits were reviewed to ensure accuracy of wait times. A number of data-quality issues, specifically related to waiting times were identified and rectified. This work is ongoing.
 - Contact recording - ensuring all contacts are recorded correctly and appropriately. Ensuring the correct codes were entered to accurately report waiting times.
 - In addition to the data quality work, the below actions were undertaken by the teams within West Sussex to significantly reduce the waiting times for young people.
 - Weekend clinics were offered regularly for initial assessments to reduce waiting lists and waiting times.
 - KIT (Keeping In touch) calls were made to young people and families waiting for an assessment. This included a review of the current mental

health needs, risk and providing advice and guidance. For some young people, their mental health had improved, and they no longer required a service.

- Vacant posts were successfully recruited to, which increased capacity to offer additional assessments.
- The expansion of Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) in schools was welcomed, including a new team planned for September.
- While these improvements were acknowledged, significant gaps remain, particularly for children under 11. Data sharing from SPFT continues to be an issue, and families report ongoing and significant concerns around waiting times from this provider, particularly around mental health and ND pathways. These concerns have been raised with SPFT and Naomi will monitor progress.

Autism and Neurodevelopmental (ND) Pathways

- Waiting list numbers reflect a spike in referrals during 2024
- There has been a focus improving data, including the merging of datasets to address duplication
- Assessment timeliness is improving, with a strong focus on “waiting well” offers and compliance with NICE guidance.
- Demand remains high, though efficiencies are beginning to have an impact.
- The lack of robust data from the SPFT makes it hard to judge if improvements are having an impact.

Escalation of concerns

Clarity is required on the escalation process for health concerns, in particular the wider agenda beyond the Ofsted Areas for Improvement. Today’s health update responded to parental feedback on the Ofsted Areas for Improvement but the WSPCF survey reported on health inequalities through a much wider lens and there needs to be a process to address these other areas of concern.

It was agreed there should be a process and Louise will work with Rowan on this wider agenda.

Public health – Joint Needs Assessment and Outcomes Framework

There is a wealth of information held by public health that relate to SEND. One example is a recent project on CYP leisure time, which includes some important findings about SEND access; there’s also the work around schools health checks.

It was agreed that this would be best brought to the Area SEND Partnership meeting, where we are looking at broader areas of practice and improvement.

ACTION

5.1 Health (Kath) to feed back on how long it takes for a SALT request for whole school training from a headteacher to be delivered.

5.2 Kath to provide SALT data on percentage of CYP who are seen and given a plan, with no further action required, versus CYP who need ongoing support.

5.3 Health (Toby) to pull together a comms around the improvement in waiting times for SALT and CAMHS.

5.4 Naomi to ascertain what data exists in relation to neurodiversity waiting times and monitor concerns around data sharing and waiting times for SPFT

5.5 Louise to work with Rowan on escalation process for health concerns beyond the Ofsted Areas for Improvement.

5.6 Graeme to meet with Vicky Richardson, to understand the role of the SEND Area Partnership and whether wider health and wellbeing needs relating to CYP with SEND would be helpful to feed in to this partnership

6. Strategic Improvement Plan

The grading event on 16 April covered all areas apart from health, which were reviewed at this meeting.

- 1.1 Develop 'support whilst waiting' offer for Neurodevelopmental Pathways. Stay amber. There have been improvements but there isn't yet sufficient evidence to move this to green.
- 1.2 Respond to the gap in service provision for Neuro-Development Services. Stay red. Despite the practice improvements evidenced in the health quarterly update, we are still lacking data and it is therefore impossible to grade impact.
- 1.3 SALT offer for support whilst waiting. It was agreed to move this to amber following today's quarterly update.
- 1.4 Respond to the gap in service provision for SALT. Stay amber. This has improved but not sufficiently to move to green. If we hear positive data around waiting times for head teachers, it can move to green.
- 1.5 CAMHS support whilst waiting. Remain amber. Again there have been improvements, we can see more data but there is a real gap for CYP under 11.
- 1.6 CAMHS Service provision gap. Remain red. There is work being done in this area and SPFT recognise its importance, but all the strands of activity and data need to be brought together in a short report.
- 1.7 General action across all areas to include monitoring by the ICB and Place-Based Partnership Boards. Stay amber. This is edging towards green but we need clarification around escalation processes.

The plan was signed off.

7. Focus: Moving from children to adult social care

Ofsted Area for Improvement 5:

"Leaders should review and further strengthen their strategic approach to preparation for adulthood so that young people consistently receive the right help and support they need to lead successful lives."

See attached paper "Transitions to Adults" which explains processes and pathways.

Discussion:

- Two multi-disciplinary transitions panels are in place: the Mental Health Transitions panel (established around 4 years ago) and the Children with Disabilities panel (established 2 years ago).
- The process for adult social care is very different to that for children and is bound by the Care Act. It is a strength-based, preventative approach that doesn't automatically replicate the care that young people get in children's services. This can come as a shock to families as they may be assessed as needing less formal support than they are used to.

- Within the Children with Disabilities panel, there are established pathways and transitions are generally more efficient. However, it is more complicated for young people who do not meet the high eligibility criteria (for Children with Disabilities).
- A positive development has been the transitions teams coming to meet students and families in year 12 at special schools. This has alleviated some of the anxiety felt by families, who can see the huge difference between children's and adult services and don't always understand why.
- While there are clear transitions for families who are already known to Children's social care, there are CYP who have been fully supported by their parents until 18 when adult support is needed. There needs to be clearer and easily accessible information for these families, who don't know where to go for help when a crisis happens.
- Rowan reported that there is an assumption that families understand the system but they often don't. A key area for improvement is easily accessible information – the adults' website is too big and families can't find the information they need. This is being addressed in the Connected Councils Transitions workstream.
- Families also need more information about the financial side: support that was free for children may be chargeable once they are an adult.
- In the recent WSPCF Have Your Voice Heard event, the feedback was clear that we need to signpost earlier. The SENAT Review and Monitoring team has committed to looking at the annual review paperwork, to make effective signposting part of the annual review process.
- Improvement area 5 is not only related to transitioning to social care; it's also about CAMHs to adult mental health services.
- It was acknowledged that transitions is a complex and challenging area for all local authorities, but some do it better than others and we are collating information from them to support our improvement programme.