

DERBYSHIRE SEND IMPROVEMENT AND ASSURANCE BOARD MINUTES

Tuesday 9th December 2025

Council Chambers, County Hall, Matlock, 10:00-13:00

MINUTES:

Item No:	Minutes:
DSIAB2425/70	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>The Chair asked if there were any conflicts of interest or declarations of interest that needed to be noted. None declared.</p>
DSIAB2425/71	<p>Children and Young People Voices</p> <p>Member for Children and Young People's engagement provided an update on the work undertaken with children and young people over the past twelve months. The Board member highlighted the success of recent workshops, which have offered valuable opportunities for parents and young people to collaborate and contribute to shaping improvement activity. These sessions have been well received and are helping to embed young people's perspectives into the wider SEND improvement programme.</p> <p>It was reported that colleagues from the ICB, have agreed to take responsibility for the newsletter, ensuring that contributions come directly from young people. In addition, young people will be attending a national conference in Birmingham in February 2026, which will provide a platform for them to share their experiences and perspectives at a national level. Work is also underway with schools and colleges to develop "you said, we did" style communication, enabling young people to see how their feedback is acted upon and to provide further input.</p> <p>The Board noted examples of impact from Youth Voice, including changes to transition planning following a Young persons attendance at a previous meeting. Young people are also now involved in the peer review process, having attended planning meetings to ensure their perspectives are represented in external scrutiny. Rosie shared testimonies from participants, including one young person who gained confidence and enjoyment from contributing despite initial nerves, demonstrating the personal benefits of involvement.</p> <p>Looking ahead, it was confirmed that young people are keen to explore wider media engagement, including opportunities with Radio Derby. The Chair emphasised the importance of diversifying communication channels beyond newsletters, recognising that while newsletters remain useful, they are not always the most effective means of reaching young people. Alternative platforms such as Instagram and radio were discussed as more accessible and engaging options. The Board welcomed these developments and noted the growing confidence, skills, and influence of young people within the SEND improvement programme.</p> <p>ACTION DSIABA159 – supported internships to be on the agenda for discussion at the January Board meeting.</p>

Item No:	Minutes:
DSIAB2425/72	<p>Priority Impact Area Progress Reports</p> <p>A. Priority Impact Area 3</p> <p>The Board received an update on Priority Impact Area 3, which focuses on the joint and accurate assessment and provision for children and young people with SEND. This includes multi-agency assessment of needs, quality assurance processes, timely issuing of high-quality Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), and holistic oversight through annual reviews.</p> <p>Positive impacts highlighted include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A considerable decline in complaints year-on-year, reflecting improved performance and communication. • A reduction in tribunal requests, attributed to more effective mediation processes and monitoring. • Improvements in the timeliness and quality of assessments, with robust staffing and improved triaging leading to over 95% timeliness in decisions to assess. • The number of EHCPs in the system has plateaued, bringing Derbyshire in line with national data. • Increased engagement and attendance at SENCO network meetings, supporting a more coordinated response to statutory responsibilities. <p>Risks and challenges remain, particularly around staff turnover, reliance on agency personnel, and pressures on the Educational Psychology Service. Mitigations include ongoing recruitment, process mapping, targeted training, and support for staff wellbeing. Technical issues with the EHCP Hub (Idox) are being addressed through regular partnership meetings and product optimisation.</p> <p>Immediate and medium-term actions include increasing locum educational psychologist capacity, maintaining additional staffing to process backlogs, improving communication with families, and embedding quality assurance processes. Longer-term actions focus on sustainable workforce planning, legislative compliance monitoring, and continuous improvement.</p> <p>The Board noted positive feedback from schools, parents, and colleagues regarding the improved responsiveness and support provided by the SEND team. The Board was assured that ongoing improvements are delivering positive impacts for children, young people, and families, and endorsed the continued focus on Priority Impact Area 3</p> <p>B. Priority Impact Area 4</p> <p>Priority Impact Area 4 focuses on ensuring that children and young people with SEND have access to appropriate provision, with a particular emphasis on reducing the number missing education due to exclusions, suspensions, part-time timetables, poor attendance, or insufficient specialist places. The area also addresses the need for joint strategies to tackle underlying issues such as long waits for needs assessments and gaps in mental health support, and for a partnership approach with mainstream schools to reduce suspensions and exclusions.</p> <p>The Board was informed that good progress continues in several areas, especially regarding the use of data. A data dashboard is now available for Priority 4, supporting the use of key vulnerability data to inform prioritisation and decision-making across services.</p>

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<p>DSIAB2425/72 Continued</p>	<p>The Attendance Strategy and a graduated response framework are now in place, and inclusion funding has been implemented from Early Years through to Post-16.</p> <p>Co-production meetings have taken place as part of the review of the Inclusion Framework, with a revised framework scheduled for implementation in September 2026. The Alternative Provision framework and strategy are also on target for implementation in September 2026, with pilot work this academic year informing improved processes around permanent exclusion.</p> <p>A proposal has been developed for a Vulnerable Children’s team within SEND, to work with children and young people not in full-time education, those with a social worker, and those educated other than in school or college (EOTISC), working closely with teams across Children’s Services.</p> <p>In Early Years, the review of the Early Years Inclusion Fund (EYIF) has made it easier for providers to supply the information needed for appropriate support decisions. Successful applications increased from 58% to 71% following support visits by the Outreach Team. The Early Years SEN Team has delivered weekly workshops, which have been highly rated by practitioners, and termly SENCo briefings have seen high engagement.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">C. Area for improvement 2</p> <p>The Board received an update on Area for Improvement 2, which focuses on improving transitions and supporting more effective preparation for adulthood for children and young people with SEND. The aim is to ensure that all settings understand the statutory guidance for preparation for adulthood as outlined in the SEND Code of Practice, and to improve communication so that transitions between settings and services are managed in a way that reduces stress and anxiety for families.</p> <p>Significant progress was reported since the last update. Permanent exclusions have decreased from 306 in 2023–2024 to 214 in 2024–2025, with a further reduction in the current academic year to date. Suspensions have also halved, and the overall number of exclusions and suspensions has dropped by nearly 50%. Cease data indicates a marked increase in young people moving into higher education and employment outcomes, and Derbyshire’s NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) figures remain below the national average.</p> <p>Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) planning at Year 9 annual reviews has improved, with the percentage of young people with transition plans in place rising from 11.95% to 18.87% this year. The proportion of young people accessing independent careers advice by Year 9 annual review has also increased. The workstream has enhanced its ability to report on PfA planning and positive outcomes using Power BI and is now able to track and benchmark progress in detail.</p> <p>Work is nearing completion on two guidance documents for schools—Transitions Guidance and Preparation for Adulthood Guidance—with pilot projects underway to inform a toolkit for schools, scheduled for publication in autumn 2026. Updates to the Local Offer are ongoing, with new content and resources being added, and a full review of PfA pages is in progress.</p>

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DSIAB2425/72 Continued	<p>Quality assurance processes have been strengthened, with Invision 360 being used to audit EHCPs against national standards and highlight PfA elements. A termly PfA Community of Practice Network for secondary schools will be launched in Spring 2026 to support sharing of good practice and professional development.</p> <p>A draft PfA strategy is under development and is expected to be completed by February 2026.</p> <p>Risks remain around the availability of destination data and the need to upskill the wider workforce to ensure all professionals are clear about their PfA responsibilities. Training will be delivered virtually and made widely accessible, with further competency training anticipated as part of the National Framework for Transition.</p> <p>The Board noted the positive impact of these developments, including reductions in exclusions and suspensions, increased positive post-education outcomes, and improved embedding of preparation for adulthood into annual reviews and EHCPs. Ongoing work will focus on finalising guidance, improving data tracking, and workforce development to ensure sustained improvement in transitions and preparation for adulthood for young people with SEND in Derbyshire.</p>
DSIAB2425/73	<p>Operational Delivery Group update</p> <p>The Board received an update on the work of the Operational Delivery Group, which has been focusing on priority impact areas and incremental improvements across the SEND system. The group has spent considerable time reviewing delivery plans and reviewing on a system-wide basis. Workforce has been identified as a major ongoing risk, with some specific services operating with significant staffing issues. The group discussed the request to Cabinet for additional staffing and the associated mitigations to ensure sufficient capacity for completing key actions within the improvement plan.</p> <p>Recent meetings have concentrated on reviewing complaints data, permanent exclusions, and suspensions, which are central to the improvement reports. The group also discussed the use of key performance indicators (KPIs) and the importance of including performance trajectory models in Board papers, particularly in relation to the recovery plan. This will help demonstrate expected progress over time.</p> <p>Decisions were made regarding escalation processes, particularly around staffing concerns, which are currently not an issue. The group agreed to enhance newsletter updates to include master data, allowing for regular progress reporting.</p> <p>The Intervention Support Fund was discussed, with the group noting the development of a data reporting tool to track the use and impact of the fund. The Board requested a future update on the amount of money agreed, its allocation, and the difference it is making, to ensure appropriate oversight. It was noted that there is no standardised report format from the Department for Education, but the Board should be aware of what the funding is for, what it is paying for, and the impact it is having</p> <p>The group is working to move at pace with various elements of support, acknowledging the challenges of spending allocated funds and recruiting staff at this time of year. Progress has been made in purchasing necessary tools, and further updates will be provided in January.</p>

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DSIAB2425/73 Continued	<p>The Board noted that the quality and timeliness of data and information in reports has improved significantly. It was suggested that future reports should include benchmark data from the point of inspection to demonstrate progress. The Board also highlighted the need for more qualitative data, including feedback from children, young people, and families, to further strengthen assurance.</p>
DSIAB2425/74	<p>Quality Assurance Update</p> <p>The Chair of the QA Group, provided an update on the Derbyshire SEND Quality Assurance, Performance and Participation Framework. The framework, developed collaboratively with partners across education, health, social care, and parent carer representatives, is designed to embed a systematic approach to quality assurance, performance management, and participation across the local area. Its aim is to drive continuous improvement through regular self-evaluation, collaborative planning, and robust governance, ensuring that services for children and young people with SEND are consistently high quality, inclusive, and responsive to their needs.</p> <p>The annual quality assurance programme is structured around termly audits of EHCP casework, multi-disciplinary reviews, bespoke sampling from partner agencies, and thematic learning loops. All newly issued EHC plans are now uploaded to the Invision 360 system, which enables automated family feedback and regular analysis. A proportion of new and amended EHC plans are audited monthly, and multi-agency moderation panels review a sample of plans each month. Tribunal cases are also reviewed termly to identify learning points. Recent QA activities have included a focus on the quality and consistency of social care contributions to EHCPs, particularly for cases not open to social care at the time of assessment. In response to identified variability and missed contextual factors, a dedicated post is being recruited within the Starting Point team to improve the quality and timeliness of social care input. The Youth Justice Service and Health partners are now fully embedded in QA arrangements, with improved information sharing and regular moderation activity.</p> <p>Operational challenges remain, particularly around the integration of QA processes across agencies, data quality and access, and the need to strengthen feedback loops to ensure that audit findings translate into practice improvements. The QA group is committed to ongoing training and support for practitioners to ensure consistency in QA returns.</p> <p>Board members discussed the importance of ensuring that QA is not solely focused on process, but also on the impact and outcomes for children and families. There was a call for more qualitative data and lived experience to be included in QA reporting, and for clear mechanisms to track and evidence the impact of QA activities. The need for a culture of constructive challenge within the QA group and across the partnership was also highlighted.</p> <p>Key risks identified include limited sufficiency for children requiring specialist provision, capacity and workload pressures within the SEND and QA teams and ensuring timely implementation of QA findings. Mitigations include ongoing recruitment, process mapping, and regular monitoring and escalation of risks to the Board.</p>

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DSIAB2425/74 Continued	<p>The Board was assured that the QA group's annual programme and associated strategic actions are delivering improvements in information quality, responsiveness, and multi-agency coordination. The Board endorsed the QA report and supported ongoing evaluation and resource allocation to sustain quality improvements across the Area SEND Partnership</p>
DSIAB2425/75	<p>Stocktake Preparation</p> <p>The Board was reminded that the upcoming Stocktake is the second such exercise undertaken.</p> <p>The Board was reminded that the upcoming Stocktake is the second such exercise undertaken. It was clarified that the Stocktake is not an inspection, Ofsted and CQC are responsible for inspection and making judgments. The role of the stocktake team is supportive, aiming to help the partnership prepare for inspection by reflecting on strengths and areas for potential development.</p> <p>The preparation for the Stocktake involves reviewing governance arrangements, particularly the effectiveness of the Board, and addressing criticisms from the initial inspection, such as having many plans but limited strategy. The Board was encouraged to demonstrate how operational activity is now tied together strategically and to show progress against the priority action plan.</p> <p>The focus of the Stocktake will be on the six Priority Impact Areas, as these are also the focus of monitoring inspections. The Board was advised that evidence should be readily available and already seen by Board members, as the process is intended to empower the partnership to take ownership of its improvement journey.</p> <p>It was noted that Derbyshire has the highest number of priority actions and areas for improvement in the country with 6 + 5, making the improvement journey particularly challenging. The Board was encouraged to ensure transparency about what is working well, to keep timeframes tight and well understood, and to provide clear, high-quality data and quality assurance.</p> <p>The importance of demonstrating sustained partnership working and progress, despite ongoing changes in the ICB, local government reorganisation, and leadership, was emphasised. The Board was also reminded that the outcome of the monitoring inspection could result in the improvement notice being lifted, continued, or escalated to a statutory direction, depending on the progress made.</p> <p>Finally, the Board was encouraged to review the inspection framework, particularly the definitions of "reasonable steps" and "effective action," and to ensure that preparations for the stocktake reflect these expectations. The next stocktake is scheduled for 21st January, the day after the next Board meeting.</p>
DSIAB2425/76	<p>Local Partnership Updates</p> <p>A. Parent Carer Forum update</p> <p>The Parent Carer Forum update highlighted ongoing engagement through values workshops and surveys, with over 300 responses received to the annual survey and additional work underway to gather feedback on neurodiversity experiences.</p>

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DSIAB2425/76 Continued	<p>The feedback from these sessions is being thematically analysed to inform future co-production, and further online workshops are planned to increase accessibility for parent carers. The Board acknowledged the significant commitment of parent carers in participating and emphasised the importance of valuing their input. The analysis of this feedback will help shape a shared set of values and guide future partnership work, ensuring parent carer voices remain central to SEND improvement in Derbyshire.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">B. Derbyshire County Council</p> <p>It was announced that Neil Chittenden has been appointed as the substantive Chief Executive and will be joining the Council in the new year, with the exact start date to be confirmed. The Council is also moving forward with establishing substantive leadership for the partnership, with further details to be made public soon.</p> <p>Additionally, the Council acknowledged the support received from elected members, which has enabled greater strength in teams and progress in the partnership's improvement journey. There was also recognition of the need to support staff through ongoing changes, restore confidence, and help teams recover from what has been a challenging period.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">C. Derby and Derbyshire Integrated Care Board</p> <p>No update given/was available.</p>
DSIAB2425/77	<p>Minutes of the meeting of 11th of November</p> <p>The minutes from the previous meeting on the 11th of November were accepted as an accurate record.</p> <p>The minutes will be anonymised and placed on the Local Offer website.</p>
DSIAB2425/78	<p>Action Log</p> <p>Reviewed in the meeting and updated.</p>
DSIAB2425/79	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>None raised in today's Board.</p>