



DERBYSHIRE SEND IMPROVEMENT AND ASSURANCE BOARD MINUTES

Tuesday 24th February 2026

Council Room 1, County Hall, Matlock, 13:00-16:00

MINUTES:

Item No:	Minutes:
DSIAB2425/93	<p>Children and Young People Voices</p> <p>The Board received a detailed update on recent engagement activity with children and young people. Members were informed that young people have been actively participating in a wide range of local, regional and national forums, with their contributions being consistently confident, articulate and impactful. Representatives recently took part in a regional Inclusion Forum peer review, where they designed and posed their own questions to senior leaders. Their involvement was described as excellent, with the young people challenging leadership constructively and providing high-quality insight. Key themes emerging from this activity included concerns about community safety, the value of local Safe Spaces schemes, and ongoing issues related to travel and relationships with transport staff.</p> <p>The Board also heard that young people attended a national “Children and Youth Voice Master” conference, where early feedback indicated strong messages about the need for improved training for teachers and foster carers, particularly around ADHD and broader neurodiversity. Young people expressed that they often feel insufficiently understood or supported, and Board members noted that this aligns with existing priorities around improving neuro-affirming practice across the system.</p> <p>An update was provided on the participation group’s growth, which now comprises nine members aged 17–25 from a wide range of educational settings and with diverse needs, including autism, ADHD, social-emotional mental health needs and learning difficulties. The group continues to expand and strengthen its representative reach. Their recent work has included detailed consultation on travel and independence, where young people emphasised the need for structured travel training (potentially with a qualification), clarity on contingency plans when travel arrangements break down, improved disability awareness among drivers, and opportunities to develop wider independence skills. Young people proposed the idea of an ‘independence workbook’ to support budgeting, daily living tasks and practical life skills.</p> <p>Young people also expressed a desire for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) to better reflect their strengths and achievements, rather than focusing predominantly on needs. They advocated for EHCPs to be more celebratory, youth friendly and empowering. In addition, the participation group has developed terms of reference and a co production charter to support improved governance and clearer embedding of CYP voice across partnership activity.</p>

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DSIAB2425/93 Continued	<p>During discussion, Board members emphasised the importance of demonstrating impact back to young people through clearer “you said, we did” communication, and highlighted the need to involve children and young people in reviewing relevant data where appropriate. The Board expressed support for young people attending future meetings directly, noting this would require careful consideration of accessibility, timing and support. Members also agreed that the neurodiversity related feedback should be followed up through relevant workstreams, and welcomed proposals for strengthening communication and visibility of participation outcomes across the SEND system.</p>
DSIAB2425/94	<p>Priority Impact Area Progress Reports</p> <p>a) Priority Impact Area 1</p> <p>Under Priority Impact Area 1, the Board received an update focused on strengthening the strategic foundations of the SEND improvement programme. This work centres on improving the local area’s understanding of need through the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), refining data quality across education, health and care, and ensuring that decisions are grounded in a shared evidence base. The Board was informed that significant progress has been made in aligning datasets, improving data flows and shaping the intelligence required to underpin planning and performance monitoring.</p> <p>A major element of this priority area is the development of the SEND Inclusion Strategy, which is progressing well following review by specialist advisers. The strategy aims to set out a clear vision, reflect Derbyshire’s key challenges, and align with emerging national reforms. It was acknowledged that the strategy will need to evolve as expectations such as the maturity matrix and Local Area Reform Plan are introduced, but Board members agreed that completing the strategy at pace is essential given the timescales following the inspection.</p> <p>The update also outlined early work to strengthen joint commissioning, ensuring partners can plan, commission and review services coherently. The Board heard that a more structured approach is being developed across the commissioning cycle, linking needs assessment, planning and delivery. This includes mapping existing joint and aligned commissioning arrangements and identifying where further clarity or coordination is required to support consistent provision.</p> <p>Partners also discussed capacity pressures and wider organisational changes, including local government reorganisation and NHS restructuring. While these pose challenges, they also provide an opportunity to embed strengthened governance and clearer accountability across the SEND system.</p> <p>It was noted that collaboration between education, health and care continues to mature, with governance structures becoming more robust and effective.</p> <p>Finally, the Board emphasised the need for progress within this priority area to be supported by strong data and measurable evidence of impact. Forecasting work currently underway—including analysis of future SEND population trends and school estate capacity—will help inform sufficiency planning and strengthen the area’s ability to anticipate future demand. Members highlighted the importance of demonstrating clear improvements and ensuring Priority Impact Area 1 contributes directly to readiness for the upcoming monitoring inspection.</p>

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<p>DSIAB2425/94 Continued</p>	<p>b) Priority Impact Area 2</p> <p>The discussion under Priority Impact Area 2 focused primarily on the development, refinement and governance of the SEND Inclusion Strategy, which forms a core part of the local area's improvement framework. The leads reported that substantial work had been undertaken to assemble the strategy's foundations, including collating intelligence from the governance review, engagement activity, and the workstreams contributing to the SEND improvement plan. A near complete draft had been developed and was being reviewed externally to ensure clarity, coherence, and alignment with local and national expectations.</p> <p>Partners heard that the strategy incorporates the findings of the recent governance work, sets out a refreshed strategic vision for SEND, and identifies priority areas based on evidence from the JSNA, engagement with parent carers, feedback from children and young people, and system performance data. It also begins to articulate how the SEND partnership intends to plan, deliver and monitor improvements across inclusion, sufficiency, joint working, and service pathways. The reporting lead confirmed that further refinement was underway to strengthen the strategy's alignment with Derbyshire's wider ambitions and the changing national policy landscape.</p> <p>Board members discussed the influence of emerging national SEND reforms, including the maturity matrix and the expected Local Area Reform Plan requirements. It was recognised that while the strategy in its current form provides a strong foundation, it will need to evolve iteratively once the government confirms the future framework. The Chair emphasised that, despite the need for future adaptation, Derbyshire must complete and communicate its strategy now, given it is overdue and inspection readiness demands clarity of direction.</p> <p>The Board also reflected on the challenge of developing the strategy during a period of organisational change across both the local authority and the integrated care system. While these changes pose risks to stability and capacity, they also offer opportunities to embed more coherent structures and clearer accountability. Members emphasised that the strategy should explicitly take account of these wider changes, ensuring it remains resilient, deliverable and aligned with partner organisations' future operating models.</p> <p>A further focus of the discussion was the need for the strategy to be supported by robust data and measurable outcomes. The Board highlighted that future reporting must link the strategy's priorities to clear indicators, showing how progress will be tracked and evidenced. Members acknowledged that this work will need to connect directly with the new data pack and performance reporting structures, enabling a consistent approach across all priority impact areas.</p> <p>Finally, partners stressed that the strategy must be usable and accessible, outlining a clear journey for improving inclusion and the experience of children, young people and families. They agreed that the document should return to the Board for sign off at a future meeting once final revisions are complete, and that communication and implementation planning must follow quickly to support system readiness for inspection and longer term improvement.</p>

Item No:	Minutes:
<p>DSIAB2425/94 Continued</p>	<p>c) Data Set</p> <p>The Board received the first full version of the new SEND Data Pack, which brings together performance information across all priority impact areas into a single, comprehensive dataset. The reporting leads explained that this is an important step forward, providing for the first time a consolidated view of children and young people’s journeys through the system, covering assessments, timeliness, decision making, health services, inclusion metrics and workforce related pressures. Board members were reminded that this is an iterative document, with ongoing refinements expected as further data sources are connected and quality improves.</p> <p>The pack was presented as structured around the priority impact areas, with each section including headline measures, trend data and short narrative explanations. The intention is for these narratives to expand over time, linking each data point to clear actions, risks, and intended outcomes. The Board noted that while the data pack represents significant progress, further development is needed to incorporate trajectories, targets and clearer interpretation of what the data means for improvement. Members agreed that future versions should explicitly answer the “so what?” question describing not only performance but what is being done in response.</p> <p>Several members highlighted important gaps or areas requiring refinement. For example, additional detail is needed in relation to health data, including breakdowns of community paediatrics and nursing waits. It was acknowledged that some of this information is available through recent demonstrations by health colleagues but has yet to be built into the main pack. The Board also raised points about ensuring that data is presented consistently, that comparisons with statistical neighbours are robust, and that data definitions are made clearer particularly where national comparator information is only partially available.</p> <p>Board members discussed the need for the data pack to integrate more effectively with the quality assurance (QA) framework, noting that performance indicators can identify where deeper audit work is required to understand practice issues. Members stressed that quantitative information should be accompanied by qualitative insight including lived experience, engagement findings and evidence from audits to create a richer, more accurate picture of progress.</p> <p>It was also agreed that future reporting should include trajectories and benchmarking, enabling the Board to monitor whether improvement is progressing at the necessary pace. The Chair emphasised that the pack must become a routine element of scrutiny, with consistent updates presented at each meeting. The reporting leads committed to further refining the content, adding missing datasets, introducing clearer signposting, and ensuring the data pack is circulated sufficiently early ahead of meetings to allow for detailed review.</p> <p>The discussion concluded with acknowledgement of the significant effort already invested in producing the initial pack. The Board welcomed this progress and agreed that the next phase must focus on deepening interpretation, ensuring alignment with the improvement plan, and strengthening the link between data, actions and impact.</p> <p>ACTION DSIABA170 – Data Pack - Further detail / analysis to be provided on reasons for the increase in Children not in receipt of education - Due 17 March 2026</p>

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DSIAB2425/94 Continued	ACTION DSIABA171 - DSODG to look at qualitative data needs for PIAs - with particular attention to PIA 2 - Due 17 March 2026
DSIAB2425/95	<p data-bbox="336 259 986 293">Intervention Support Funding ISF - Update</p> <p data-bbox="336 331 1485 510">The Board received an update on the current position of the Intervention Support Funding (ISF) work programme. The update focused on the use of improvement funding, the implications of Department for Education (DfE) rules around in year spending, and progress with commissioned activity supporting system development.</p> <p data-bbox="336 555 1517 801">It was confirmed that ISF related improvement funding from the DfE is allocated on the basis of actual spend, meaning that money does not transfer to the local area unless it is fully evidenced against expenditure. If funding is not spent within the financial year, it effectively does not leave central government, and no local carry forward is possible. Finance colleagues explained that accruals are used to ensure the most accurate recording possible, but this relies on timely receipt of information from teams delivering improvement activity.</p> <p data-bbox="336 846 1522 1137">The Board noted that there has been no announcement regarding the availability of ISF related improvement funding for the forthcoming financial year. It was acknowledged that national attention within the DfE had recently been focused on wider funding announcements and system transformation work, and therefore clarity on future ISF allocations may not be available until later in the year. Members recalled that Derbyshire previously experienced significant delays in receiving confirmation of improvement funding, and there was a shared hope that this will not be repeated.</p> <p data-bbox="336 1182 1497 1361">An important component of the ISF update related to commissioned improvement activity, including analytical work commissioned to support sufficiency planning. This work involves forecasting SEND demand, identifying capacity within the Derbyshire school estate, and informing long term commissioning decisions particularly in relation to mainstream inclusion and future specialist provision.</p> <p data-bbox="336 1406 1433 1462">The Board heard that this forecasting tool is expected to support both Priority Impact Areas 1 and 2 once complete.</p> <p data-bbox="336 1507 1522 1686">The ISF update also referenced improvement activity underway within the Education, Health and Care (EHC) pathway, including quality assurance of EHC plans and work to model future structures for statutory SEND services. These developments are being supported through improvement funding and will contribute to system readiness for the national SEND reforms scheduled for 2028/29.</p> <p data-bbox="336 1731 1522 1910">Board members raised concerns about the challenge created when improvement funding is insecure or unpredictable, particularly where temporary staff or improvement projects depend on year to year allocations. The Chair highlighted the risks caused by “cliff edge” funding arrangements and stressed the importance of developing sustainable planning wherever possible.</p> <p data-bbox="336 1955 1522 2089">Overall, the Board noted the progress made but agreed that clarity about future ISF arrangements remains essential to support ongoing improvement work, particularly within high priority areas such as statutory processes, sufficiency planning and data development.</p>

Item No:	Minutes:
DSIAB2425/96	<p data-bbox="331 147 679 181">Supported Internships</p> <p data-bbox="331 221 1497 510">The Board received an update on the Supported Internships programme, accompanied by a video showcasing the experiences of young people who completed internships in the previous year. The video highlighted strong personal development outcomes, including increased confidence, independence and workplace skills across various placement settings such as hospital wards, kitchens, radiology and care environments. Staff interviewed in the video spoke positively about the interns' contributions and the mutual benefits experienced by teams and young people alike.</p> <p data-bbox="331 551 1497 840">The Board was informed that the programme has expanded significantly, with the number of interns doubling from around 16–17 last year to approximately 35 this year. Placement partners now include Chesterfield Royal Hospital, Bolsover's Caste, Lee Green, Amazon, and Chatsworth House, offering a wider range of opportunities for young people. The supported internship coordinator, funded through national programme grant funding, plays a key role in identifying suitable young people, liaising with schools and partners, coordinating placements and developing local employer engagement.</p> <p data-bbox="331 880 1455 1133">Clarification was provided on funding arrangements, with individual support for interns funded through the high needs block as part of Preparing for Adulthood pathways. It was noted that the designated Preparing for Adulthood officer had been instrumental in increasing awareness of the programme and supporting participation. Board members discussed the positive impact of supported internships on young people's confidence, skill development and transition into employment, as well as the benefits to host organisations.</p> <p data-bbox="331 1173 1497 1462">The Board also explored future opportunities to broaden the programme further, including placements in sectors such as construction and wider council services. Members highlighted the importance of linking supported internships with wider data on young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), and ensuring that these opportunities form part of a clear progression pathway for young people with SEND. There was strong support from the Board for continued expansion and sustained investment in the model, recognising its contribution to improving outcomes in Preparing for Adulthood.</p>
DSIAB2425/97	<p data-bbox="331 1509 948 1543">Derbyshire Parent Carer Voice reports –</p> <p data-bbox="331 1583 842 1617">Annual Area SEND Survey report</p> <p data-bbox="331 1657 1519 1980">DPCV reported that 214 parents and carers responded to this year's annual survey fewer than last year's 1,000+ responses, which was attributed to limitations in communication reach. The survey highlighted continuing inconsistency of experience across Derbyshire, with families frequently needing to self-navigate a complex system. Responses reflected ongoing difficulties in accessing support, long waits for assessments, variability in SEN Support, and challenges with coordination between services. Parents reported a discrepancy between feeling "welcomed" by schools yet not feeling their child was fully included within those settings.</p>

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<p>DSIAB2425/97 Continued</p>	<p>The survey also showed that improvements in timeliness of EHC processes (as highlighted in the Data Pack) were not yet fully reflected in lived experience. Many families continued to report long waits, limited communication, and insufficient clarity about processes. DPCV emphasised how these experiences affect not only educational outcomes but also wider family wellbeing. The Board discussed the need for the system to improve communication, simplify pathways and ensure that strategic improvements translate into consistent frontline experiences.</p> <p>Values Workshop DPCV also shared a set of coproduced partnership values, created with input from 60 parent carers and young people via the Inclusion Forum. These values are intended to underpin service culture and coproduction across the SEND system. The Board was asked to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • where these values should be embedded, • how they will be measured, and • how the partnership will demonstrate accountability to them. <p>The Board welcomed the framework and recognised its potential to support more consistent behaviours and expectations across agencies</p> <p>ND and Mental Health Survey A joint survey undertaken by DPCV, Derby City PCF and ICB colleagues explored parent carer experience of the neurodevelopmental pathway. Key themes included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fragmented pathways, • Medicalisation of distress, • Barriers to accessing early support without a diagnosis, • Lack of neuro affirming practice, • A strong desire for more practical, personal and relational support. <p>Parents reported that they did not understand the intended graduated support model, nor feel that information was communicated clearly through the Local Offer or service pathways. While audit data shows high use of early help ND services by neurodiverse families, the survey revealed that families themselves do not perceive the model as coordinated or accessible. Work is now planned to map a “customer journey” to identify pain points and improve clarity.</p> <p>ACTION DSIABA172 - DPCV Annual Area Send Survey Report to be reviewed by DSIAB Members ahead of further discussion at DSIAB in March 2026 - Due 17 March 2026</p>
<p>DSIAB2425/98</p>	<p>Local Partnership Updates -</p> <p>a) Parent Carer Forum update</p> <p>Update provided in the agenda item – " Derbyshire Parent Carer Voice reports"</p> <p>b) Derbyshire County Council</p> <p>Stocktake letter - A summary of the recent DfE/NHSE stocktake letter was provided, confirming that Derbyshire is on a positive trajectory with strengthened governance, improved partnership working and early progress across priority impact areas. The letter highlighted continued challenges, including the need for clearer evidence of impact, further strengthening of EHCP processes, improved data quality and closer alignment of commissioning with assessed need.</p>

Item No:	Minutes:
<p>DSIAB2425/98 Continued</p>	<p>Expectations for the next six months include demonstrating measurable improvements and preparing for the upcoming monitoring inspection. The Board agreed that the stocktake findings must be integrated into the improvement plan, with the Operational Delivery Group tasked with mapping the recommendations to current actions.</p> <p>Derbyshire County council update –</p> <p>The Council reported that recruitment had opened for the new Director of Children’s Services (DCS), with applications closing on 2 March. The recruitment and appointment process is expected to run through to the middle of the year. This post will replace the interim arrangements currently in place. It was noted that broader structural and financial pressures continue to shape the Council’s operating environment, and partners were reminded that these pressures may affect available capacity.</p> <p>c) Derby and Derbyshire Integrated Care Board</p> <p>The ICB provided a substantial update on the ongoing large scale organisational restructure across Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire. As of the meeting date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22 director level posts had been confirmed following a competitive process involving 58 individuals. • This completes the executive and senior leadership appointments for the cluster. • Wave 3 of the restructure covering all remaining staff across the three ICBs is now in consultation, running until 27 March. • Structures may change depending on consultation outcomes, and the final operating model may not fully settle until late Quarter 2. <p>The Board heard that the new structure includes explicit recognition of the Designated Clinical Officer (DCO) role and the need for a dedicated children’s team and learning disability & autism team, which will sit within the Quality Directorate. While these functions will operate across the wider regional cluster, DCO roles will remain locally based, which the Board welcomed.</p> <p>The ICB also advised that all voluntary redundancy applications had now been approved, with staff working through statutory notice periods. This ensures some managed transition time but also reflects the scale of workforce reductions required, including a 50% reduction in running costs. The Board acknowledged this presents significant uncertainty for staff and thanked colleagues for continuing to deliver core functions throughout a difficult period.</p> <p>ACTION – DSIABA173 – PIA Leads to ensure that ‘next steps’ activity listed under their respective areas in the January 2026 stocktake letter are cross-referenced with their Impact Plans / actioned where appropriate. – Due 17 March 2026</p>
<p>DSIAB2425/99</p>	<p>Minutes of the meeting of 20th of January</p> <p>The minutes from the previous meeting on the 20th of January were accepted as an accurate record with an amendment made to a members name. The minutes will be anonymised and placed on the Local Offer website. It was agreed March’s meeting will be a MS Teams meeting.</p>

Item No:	Minutes:
DSIAB2425/100	<p data-bbox="331 147 504 181">Action Log</p> <p data-bbox="331 221 884 255">Reviewed in the meeting and updated.</p> <p data-bbox="331 293 1525 360">ACTION DSIABA168 - Risk Register report to be presented quarterly to DSIAB - Due 16 June 2026</p> <p data-bbox="331 405 1394 472">ACTION DSIABA169 - Risk Register to be clear on which workforce is impacted when referenced in any risks - Due 17 March 2026</p>
DSIAB2425/101	<p data-bbox="331 517 643 551">Any Other Business</p> <p data-bbox="331 591 1509 882">Members were asked to review and respond to the newly published national White Paper and consultation due to its implications for schools and SEND partnership working. The Board was also reminded that despite the positive stocktake letter, this does not guarantee a favourable judgement in the forthcoming Ofsted/CQC monitoring inspection. Partners were advised to maintain pace, identify any areas at risk of slippage, and prepare thoroughly for the visit. The sustainability of Board governance post inspection was briefly discussed, with agreement that forward planning for future leadership and continuity will be required.</p>