



## DERBYSHIRE SEND IMPROVEMENT AND ASSURANCE BOARD MINUTES

Tuesday 20th January 2026

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

### MINUTES:

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| DSIAB2425/82 | <p><b>Children and Young People Voices</b></p> <p>Members were advised that the most recent meeting of the Youth Inclusion Forum (YIF), held at Alfreton Fire Station, took place the evening prior to the Board meeting. It was noted that young people had engaged positively and meaningfully in discussions, particularly in sessions delivered jointly with Derbyshire Parent Carer Voice. These contributions are being used to inform the ongoing co produced values work and are already being considered in broader strategic planning.</p> <p>The Boards communication lead reported that children and young people identified a number of key issues that were important to them. These included a lack of confidence in attending meetings and making phone calls, high levels of anxiety, and a need for greater emotional support and opportunities to build self confidence. Young people also expressed a strong desire for increased independence and better access to SEND friendly youth groups and community activities, highlighting the importance of spaces that feel inclusive and accessible without the need to repeatedly request adjustments.</p> <p>Concerns were also raised by young people about feeling unsafe in the community. There is work underway to explore the Safe Spaces scheme with young people, including giving them opportunities to trial the approach and provide feedback on whether it improves their sense of safety and confidence in public settings.</p> <p>Members were informed that engagement with children and young people is not limited to the Youth Inclusion Forum. Recent school visits, including at Jasmine House School, had been used to gather wider views while undertaking other consultation activity. The Board noted this approach as good practice in maximising opportunities to hear directly from children and young people.</p> <p>The Board was also updated on regional and national engagement activity. Young people from Derbyshire are actively contributing through the East Midlands Youth Inclusion Forum, participating in a peer review process, and attending a national conference in Birmingham during the February half term. This was noted as providing opportunities for Derbyshire children and young people to influence discussions beyond the local area.</p> <p>An update was provided on the continued growth of the participation network, including the addition of three new schools. It was acknowledged that recruitment to youth groups is being carefully managed to ensure safe and effective participation, with further expansion planned. The work is ongoing to review representation within engagement activity, including reaching children educated other than at school, those with medical needs, and groups that may be under-represented. Evidence of this work will be brought to a future Board meeting.</p> |

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| <b>DSIAB2425/82</b><br><b>Continued</b> | <p>Board members discussed how children and young people’s views could be more systematically linked into other governance arrangements. It was proposed and supported that relevant themes, particularly around safe spaces and community participation, be shared with the Council’s Youth Transformation Board. Members also raised the need for improved inclusion support and training within the voluntary and community sector, noting that limited SEND awareness can restrict young people’s ability to access local activities.</p> <p>The Board thanked the Participation Team and all children and young people involved for their continued contributions. Members agreed that significant progress had been made in strengthening participation and welcomed the depth and quality of recent engagement. The Board emphasised the importance of continuing to widen representation and ensuring that children and young people’s voices remain central to decision-making and service improvement.</p> <p><b>ACTION DSIABA162 – Due 24/02/2026 Monitoring information of the young people’s group to be provided at the February Board meeting.</b></p>   |
| <b>DSIAB2425/83</b>                     | <p>Priority Impact Area Progress Reports</p> <p>a) Priority Impact Area 5</p> <p>The Board received an update on Priority Impact Area 5, focusing on improving communication, engagement and co-production with children, young people, parents, carers and partners. Progress was noted, alongside ongoing challenges relating to capacity, consistency and impact. Members welcomed the recent co-produced values work delivered with Derbyshire Parent Carer Voice, noting that it had been well attended and had provided valuable insight into families’ experiences. The outcomes of this work are informing the refresh of the SEND strategy and shaping how the local area articulates its values and expectations.</p> <p>It was reported that there is a need to revisit the Communications and Engagement strategy to ensure it is more accessible, genuinely co-produced and focused on delivery and measurable impact. This includes strengthening the associated delivery plan and ensuring communications support improvement activity rather than sitting separately from it.</p> <p>Capacity constraints within communications functions across both the Local Authority and the ICB were acknowledged. Members were advised that additional communications capacity is being introduced within Children’s Services through a new post linked to the Families First programme, which should help strengthen coordination and consistency.</p> <p>The Board agreed that communications should be embedded more firmly within core governance arrangements. It was proposed that communications be aligned through the Operational Delivery Group, enabling clearer links between communications, priority actions, risk management and evidence of improvement. Members highlighted that, while negative messaging about SEND continues locally, there are examples of progress and improvement that are not being communicated consistently. The importance of sharing clear, factual evidence of improvement to build confidence and trust was emphasised.</p> <p>The role of schools in communications was discussed, with recognition that schools have established channels for engaging with families. Concerns were raised about inconsistent communication with schools and the need for improving clarity and reliability as new education partnership arrangements become embedded.</p> |

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| <p><b>DSIAB2425/83</b><br/><b>Continued</b></p> | <p>The Board supported the suggestion that key communications be structured around the six priority impact areas to provide clearer, more consistent messaging and improve understanding of progress.</p> <p>The Board reaffirmed that effective communication and meaningful co production are essential to sustained improvement. Members agreed that the next phase of work should focus on strengthening delivery, embedding communications within governance, and ensuring that progress is communicated clearly to families, schools and partners.</p> <p>a) Priority Impact Area 6</p> <p>The Board received an update on Priority Impact Area 6, focusing on reducing Health waiting lists and strengthening support for children and young people while they wait for assessment or treatment, particularly in relation to CAMHS, neurodiversity (ND) assessments and wheelchair services.</p> <p>Members were advised that progress has been made in relation to CAMHS waiting lists, with previously approved investment now being mobilised by providers. Recovery trajectories are nearing completion and will be brought together to enable formal monitoring and assurance through NHS governance processes.</p> <p>In relation to neurodiversity assessment waiting lists, it was acknowledged that demand continues to be very high, with over 5,000 children currently waiting for assessment in Derbyshire. The Board noted that while solutions do not sit solely within the NHS, there has been positive engagement with NHS England and agreement on a revised pathway model. Work is ongoing to finalise delivery plans, recovery trajectories and governance approvals.</p> <p>An update was also provided on wheelchair services. A recovery plan is in place, and the provider is working through a cohort of children awaiting assessment, with further clarification sought on timescales for individual cases to enable assurance that the backlog will be resolved.</p> <p>The Board noted the development of a monitoring dashboard to support improved oversight of health waiting lists and performance. While some data gaps remain, this was welcomed as a significant step forward in supporting transparency and system assurance.</p> <p>A substantial part of the discussion focused on ‘support while waiting’. Members acknowledged that schools, inclusion services, ND community hubs and online resources are providing support during waiting periods, but emphasised the need for clearer, more consistent articulation of the offer. Concerns were raised about whether families fully understand what support is available, how long they are likely to wait, and how changes in need are identified and escalated.</p> <p>The Board highlighted the importance of transparency and communication with families, including clarity around expected waiting times, regular updates, and clear routes for raising concerns if circumstances change. Members agreed that support while waiting must be proactive, joined up and prioritised according to need and risk, particularly for vulnerable children.</p> |

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| <b>DSIAB2425/83<br/>Continued</b> | <p>The Board requested further clarity through additional reporting on support while waiting, including articulation of the offer, prioritisation arrangements, and how families are kept informed. It was agreed that this information should be brought back in a clear and accessible format to support Board assurance.</p> <p>The Board recognised the complexity of the challenge and welcomed progress made to date, while emphasising that reducing waiting times and strengthening support while waiting remain critical to improving outcomes for children and young people.</p> <p><b>ACTION - DSIABA163 – Due 24/02/2026 NHS Reps to attend and to share the work that they have been doing for feedback from people using individual services.</b></p> <p><b>ACTION - DSIABA165 – Due 24/02/2026 Support whilst waiting - summary paper to be circulated alongside February Board papers</b></p>  |
| <b>DSIAB2425/84</b>               | <p><b>Operational Delivery Group update</b></p> <p>The Board received an update on the work of the Operational Delivery Group, which provides oversight of delivery against the Priority Impact Plan and supports coordination across workstreams.</p> <p>It was reported that the Operational Delivery Group is now established and functioning on a more consistent basis. The Group is overseeing progress across the priority impact areas and tracking delivery against agreed actions.</p> <p>Members noted that this represents an important step in strengthening system grip and focus on implementation.</p> <p>A key issue highlighted was a significant increase in requests for Education, Health and Care (EHC) assessments. The Board was advised that there has been approximately a 50% increase in requests since November, largely driven by families seeking assessments in advance of potential changes outlined in the forthcoming Education and SEND White Paper. This trend was noted as consistent with national experience and was identified as a material risk to system capacity and timeliness.</p> <p>Members were informed that, despite the increased demand, performance in relation to timeliness has shown some improvement, with completion of EHC assessments within the 20 week statutory timeframe increasing from a very low baseline. However, concerns were raised that continued increases in demand may offset recent improvements, and the situation is being closely monitored through the ODG.</p> <p>The financial implications of increased demand were discussed, including the Council's recent investment to mitigate pressure on the system. The Board noted that ongoing volatility in demand creates challenges for financial planning and reinforcing the importance of robust forecasting and risk management through the ODG.</p> <p>The Board also considered the role and effectiveness of the Operational Delivery Group itself. Members discussed the balance between operational detail and strategic assurance, noting that while detailed discussion is valuable for leaders, the Board requires clear, structured assurance rather than operational minutiae.</p> |

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| <p><b>DSIAB2425/84</b><br/><b>Continued</b></p> | <p>It was agreed that the ODG should provide a written assurance report to the Board to support effective oversight. This report should align with the Group's terms of reference and set out: key progress, risks, challenges, and areas requiring escalation. Members agreed that this would improve transparency, enable clearer decision making, and strengthen accountability.</p> <p>The Board noted recent improvements in administrative and project management support to the ODG, including the introduction of tracking mechanisms and improved management of risks and actions. This was welcomed as an important enabler of more effective delivery and reporting.</p> <p>Members agreed that the terms of reference for the Operational Delivery Group should be reviewed at a future meeting to ensure they remain fit for purpose and aligned with The Board's role as an improvement and assurance body.</p> <p><b>ACTION - DSIABA164 – Due 24/02/2026 DSODG to oversee Priority Impact Area Comms and consider involvement of Schools in the group</b></p> <p><b>ACTION - DSIABA166 – Due 17/03/2026 DSODG Chair to provide monthly assurance report to DSIAB from March 2026 Board meeting onwards</b></p>   |
| <p><b>DSIAB2425/85</b></p>                      | <p><b>SEND Activity report 2024-25</b></p> <p>The Board received the SEND Activity Report 2024–25 for information. Members were advised that the report is produced annually and shared through relevant local authority and ICB governance arrangements. It covers both Derby City and Derbyshire and provides a health focused overview of SEND activity across the system.</p> <p>The report was presented as a means of informing and assuring partners about statutory duties, performance and delivery from a health perspective. Members welcomed the clarity it provided regarding ICB responsibilities under the Children and Families Act and the SEND Code of Practice, particularly in relation to contributions to EHC assessments, provision within EHC plans, tribunal activity and commissioning arrangements.</p> <p>The Board noted strong performance in the provision of health advice within statutory timescales for EHC assessments, despite rising demand. Members recognised the significant efforts of health providers in maintaining performance and minimising delays within the 20 week assessment process.</p> <p>Governance and quality assurance arrangements were outlined, including routine audit activity and monitoring of key indicators. Overall performance was reported as positive, with identified issues subject to ongoing improvement activity. Members noted the increase in extended tribunal appeals and how learning from these has informed service development, including improvements to sensory processing pathways. The report also highlighted joint working to support children with complex medical needs, training for education staff, and work to strengthen transitions into adult health services as part of the Preparing for Adulthood agenda.</p> <p>The Board acknowledged the growing demand for neurodevelopmental assessments and the impact on waiting times. A range of multi-agency initiatives aimed at improving early support and reducing reliance on diagnosis were outlined, including community hubs, pilot programmes and work linked to family hubs.</p> |

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| <b>DSIAB2425/85<br/>Continued</b> | Members welcomed the comprehensive nature of the report and its contribution to system transparency and assurance. The Board formally noted the report and thanked Health colleagues for their ongoing commitment to SEND improvement.  |
| <b>DSIAB2425/86</b>               | <p><b>Inclusion Support Funding ISF</b></p> <p>The Board received an update on the Inclusion Support Funding (ISF), which has been provided by the Department for Education to support local areas with Priority Impact Plans and to accelerate SEND improvement activity.</p> <p>Members were advised that Derbyshire had been successful in securing £200,000 of ISF, which must be allocated by the end of March 2026. The tight timescales associated with the funding were acknowledged, along with challenges in securing fixed term staff to support delivery, resulting in the use of agency arrangements and alternative capacity solutions.</p> <p>The funding has been allocated across several key areas. One focus is strengthening shared vision and evidence, including procurement of a SEND forecasting and data planning tool. This tool is intended to forecast demand over the next five years, identify future gaps in provision, and inform sufficiency and strategic planning.</p> <p>The Board was advised that additional ISF is being used to strengthen system support through project management capacity, with further details to be shared once arrangements are finalised. Members were also informed of exploratory work using artificial intelligence to support EHC planning processes. A six week trial of an AI supported EHC planning module is underway to assess effectiveness, usability and stakeholder confidence before any longer term commitment is made. It was emphasised that AI would be used to support professional practice rather than replace it, with a clear intention to test safeguards, quality assurance and user experience, including feedback from families and schools. Alternative options would be considered should the trial not demonstrate sufficient benefit.</p> <p>Members noted that a formal report to the DfE is required by late January and will be shared with the Operational Delivery Group and the Board. The Board acknowledged that, due to the early stage of delivery, it is not yet possible to fully assess impact.</p> <p>The Board agreed that regular updates on the use and impact of ISF should be provided at future meetings, given that the funding is collectively owned and intended to support sustained improvement.</p> <p><b>ACTION - DSIABA167 – Due 24/02/2026 ISF Update Report for DfE to be presented to DSIAB and DSODG in February, with regular updates at each DSIAB on progress of ISF delivery</b></p> |
| <b>DSIAB2425/87</b>               | <p><b>Local Partnership Updates -</b></p> <p><b>a) Parent Carer Forum update</b></p> <p>Members were advised that a new website has been launched, improving accessibility, event booking and real time engagement with parent carers.</p>  |

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| <p><b>DSIAB2425/87</b><br/><b>Continued</b></p> | <p>Since November, online and face to face workshops have been delivered with strong attendance, and membership has continued to grow. A series of further online workshops is planned, with high levels of pre registration reflecting ongoing demand. Feedback from parents indicates recurring themes around emotional wellbeing, school anxiety, self care and ADHD support.</p> <p>Survey activity is ongoing, with analysis to be shared through joint working arrangements.</p> <p>Priorities for the coming period include continued delivery of workshops and strengthening feedback loops with parents.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>b) Derbyshire County Council</b></p> <p>Members were advised of recent senior leadership changes within the Council, including the appointment of a new Chief Executive, Neil Crittenden, who has expressed commitment to understanding the SEND improvement journey and supporting continued progress. An update was provided on plans to move forward with substantive leadership arrangements within Children’s Services, with an emphasis on taking a considered approach to securing the right leadership to sustain improvement. The Board was also informed of new partnership arrangements with the education community, due to commence shortly, aimed at strengthening communication and collaboration with schools. The forthcoming stocktake was noted as a key milestone for assessing progress and identifying next steps.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Adult Social Care / Public Health</b></li> </ul> <p>Members were informed of forthcoming multi agency audit activity focused on safeguarding practice for young people transitioning into adult services. It was agreed that findings from this work would be shared with The Board at a future meeting. In addition, Public Health colleagues reiterated the importance of partner engagement with the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and requested feedback on how it is being used to inform planning and commissioning.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>c) Derby and Derbyshire Integrated Care Board</b></p> <p>An update was provided on recent and forthcoming organisational changes within the Integrated Care Board (ICB), including the move to a clustered ICB arrangement. Members were advised that SEND, alongside continuing healthcare and safeguarding, will remain a statutory responsibility within the ICB’s future structure. Consultation on senior leadership arrangements is ongoing, with further phases expected to follow. Reassurance was provided that SEND will continue to be represented at senior level, with local delivery remaining a priority despite broader system changes. The Board was advised that further clarity on structures and appointments will be shared as plans are confirmed.</p> |
| <p><b>DSIAB2425/88</b></p>                      | <p>Minutes of the meeting of 9th of December</p> <p>The minutes from the previous meeting on the 9th of December were accepted as an accurate record with an amendment made to a members name.</p> <p>The minutes will be anonymised and placed on the Local Offer website.</p>  |

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| DSIAB2425/89 | <p data-bbox="320 147 491 181"><b>Action Log</b></p> <p data-bbox="320 185 871 219">Reviewed in the meeting and updated.</p> <p data-bbox="320 259 1506 331"><b>ACTION - DSIABA160 – Due 24/02/2026 Full Risk Register to be considered at February Board meeting</b></p>   |
| DSIAB2425/90 | <p data-bbox="320 371 632 405"><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p data-bbox="320 483 1517 696">Members were reminded of the forthcoming SEND Stocktake meeting, scheduled to take place the following day. The Board recognised the significant amount of work undertaken to prepare for the stocktake and thanked officers and partners for the quality and robustness of the supporting papers and submissions. It was noted that the Stocktake would provide an important opportunity to reflect on progress, assurance and next steps in the improvement journey.</p> <p data-bbox="320 741 1525 880">The Board discussed future meeting arrangements, including dates for upcoming meetings. It was agreed that dates would be confirmed up to July, with a decision on whether an additional meeting would be required in August to be considered at a later point.</p> <p data-bbox="320 925 1517 1025">Members were advised that a venue had not yet been confirmed for the March Board meeting. Partners were asked to consider whether they would be able to host this meeting and to inform the programme team if so.</p> <p data-bbox="320 1070 1118 1104">No further items were raised under Any Other Business.</p> |