

DERBYSHIRE SEND IMPROVEMENT AND ASSURANCE BOARD MINUTES

Tuesday 21st July 2026

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

MINUTES:

Item No:	Minutes:
DSIAB2425/146	Children and Young People's Update The Board received an update from representatives of the Youth Inclusion Forum on recent engagement with children and young people across Derbyshire. The discussion focused on ensuring that the views and experiences of children and young people continue to shape SEND improvement work and service development. Young people had recently met with local area representatives to discuss how support for neurodivergent children and young people could be improved and shared a series of recommendations based on their lived experience. A key theme was the need for greater awareness and understanding of autism, ADHD and neurodiversity among professionals, school staff, transport providers, carers and peers. Young people highlighted the importance of recognising individual needs, understanding sensory and communication differences, and ensuring that reasonable adjustments are understood and accepted. Members heard that work is underway to develop training for school transport providers and strengthen awareness across schools and post-16 settings. The Board also heard about the continued development of one-page profiles to help adults better understand a child or young person's strengths, needs and preferences. Young people stressed the importance of personalised support, particularly during transitions and periods of change, and emphasised that support should encourage independence whilst ensuring appropriate levels of challenge and opportunity. An update was provided on the development of a co-produced glossary of SEND-related language. This work has been led by young people and aims to encourage the use of respectful, accessible language that reflects how children and young people wish to be spoken about and understood. Members welcomed the initiative and discussed opportunities to share it more widely across partner organisations. The Board also heard about work to strengthen young people's involvement in service reviews and reflective practice processes, ensuring that lived experience continues to influence service improvement. In addition, updates were provided on the East Midlands Youth Inclusion Forum and ongoing participation work across schools, colleges and community settings. Members welcomed the update and discussed opportunities to increase participation further by working with schools, colleges and other organisations to engage a wider range of children and young people. The Board recognised the positive impact of the Youth Inclusion Forum and thanked the young people involved for their continued contribution to Derbyshire's SEND improvement journey.

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DSIAB2425/146 Continued	ACTION (DSIABA250) – Due 09/09/2026 Share co-produced Glossary ‘Change the word, change the assumption’ with DSIAB.
DSIAB2425/147	JSNA Update The Board received an update on progress with the SEND Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and the ongoing work to strengthen its role in informing strategic planning, commissioning and service development across Derbyshire. Feedback from a recent stakeholder survey showed that the JSNA is being used by health, education and local authority partners to support decision-making, although there is still work to do to improve awareness and accessibility for a wider audience. Members heard that further work is being undertaken to ensure the voices of children, young people and parent carers are better reflected within the JSNA. Analysis of emotional health and wellbeing data has highlighted that children and young people with SEND experience lower emotional wellbeing, higher levels of bullying and greater challenges in school. Work is now underway to better understand these experiences and strengthen the inclusion of lived experience within future updates. The Board welcomed progress in developing a more comprehensive early years SEND dataset, which will help address previously identified gaps in understanding need before school age. Additional work is also taking place to analyse SEND and EHCP data in more detail, including by gender, ethnicity, deprivation and EHCP banding, to provide a clearer picture of differing needs across the county. An annual refresh of SEND data is currently being completed to ensure information remains current and relevant. Members emphasised the importance of ensuring the JSNA is widely promoted, aligned with other SEND and performance datasets, and actively used to inform commissioning, service planning and improvement activity across the partnership. Overall, the Board was assured that good progress is being made, particularly around strengthening early years intelligence, improving the quality of SEND data and incorporating the experiences of children, young people and families. However, members agreed that continued focus is needed to ensure the JSNA remains a practical tool that drives service improvements and strategic decision-making. ACTION (DSIABA251) – Due 09/09/2026 Share JSNA slide deck with DSIAB and link into next ODG and comms team to better embed and promote JSNA work.
DSIAB2425/148	SEND Reform Update The Board received a brief update on the Derbyshire SEND Reform Plan. Following feedback from schools and partner organisations, amendments were made to the submission before the final plan was submitted to the Department for Education on 19 June 2026. The Board heard that the local area is now awaiting the outcome of the national assessment process, with feedback expected during the autumn term. Schools have also been updated through recent communication issued to education settings.

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DSIAB2425/148 Continued	An update was provided on the Department for Education's moderation process, which is currently progressing through a number of review stages before final decisions are made. While the outcome is not yet known, partners were reminded that implementation work should not be delayed while awaiting feedback. The local area is expected to continue developing key elements of the programme, particularly the delivery of the "Experts at Hand" model and the Year 1 reform roadmap. The Board discussed the need to ensure that SEND reform activity is fully aligned with existing improvement work and governance arrangements. Members noted that planning over the summer would be important to ensure reform priorities, funding requirements and programme governance are integrated effectively into the wider SEND improvement programme. There was also discussion about communication with schools. While recent updates had been circulated, members highlighted the need for clear and consistent communication routes to ensure all schools receive key SEND reform information and remain informed about developments. The Board agreed that communication arrangements and stakeholder engagement would continue to be an area of focus moving forward. Overall, the Board was assured that the reform plan had been submitted successfully and that preparatory work was continuing. However, members emphasised the importance of maintaining momentum, strengthening communication and ensuring governance arrangements are in place to support delivery once national feedback is received. ACTION (DSIABA252) – Due 09/09/2026 Map communication routes to schools to ensure messages are being circulated effectively. Relevant leads to work together on this activity.
DSIAB2425/149	Future Governance The Board received a proposal outlining future governance arrangements for SEND following the eventual completion of the current improvement programme. Members heard that the existing SEND Improvement and Assurance Board was established in response to the Ofsted and CQC inspection outcomes and has provided clear oversight, accountability and pace of delivery. However, consideration is now being given to how governance arrangements could evolve into a longer-term partnership model that supports sustained improvement beyond the current inspection framework. The proposed approach would see the transition of the current Board into a wider SEND and Inclusion Partnership, bringing together education, health, local authority services, parent carers and children and young people within a more permanent governance structure. The intention would be to maintain strong accountability and oversight while strengthening ownership across the whole partnership. Existing delivery arrangements, including the Operational Delivery Group and workstreams, would continue to oversee implementation and monitor progress.

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DSIAB2425/149 Continued	Members discussed the potential for a future charring arrangement that would strengthen education involvement and increase partnership ownership. It was suggested that education leaders could play a greater role in future governance arrangements, although it was recognised that a range of options should be considered to ensure appropriate independence, challenge and representation across the system. The importance of maintaining strong links between education, health and local authority partners was emphasised throughout the discussion. The Board also discussed the significance of the forthcoming SEND monitoring inspection and the relationship between inspection outcomes and future governance arrangements. Members were advised that the current arrangements, including the requirement for independent oversight, remain in place until the outcome of the improvement process is known. It was acknowledged that the timing and nature of any transition would depend on the outcome of future inspections and any decisions made by national bodies regarding the improvement notice. There was broad support for beginning to plan for future governance and ensuring that any new arrangements build on the progress already made. Members agreed that future structures should continue to promote partnership working, co-production, accountability, performance oversight and a strong focus on outcomes for children, young people and families. Further work will now take place to develop proposals, review governance structures and refresh terms of reference, with updates to return to the Board at a later date. ACTION (DSIABA253) – Due 09/09/2026 Comments on the future governance slide deck to be submitted through the agreed governance route.
DSIAB2425/150	Priority Impact Area Progress Reports A) Priority Impact Area 5 The Board received an update on progress against Priority Impact Area 5, which focuses on improving communication and engagement across the SEND system. Members heard that a revised Communication Strategy and Action Plan had been developed and reviewed by the Operational Delivery Group. Feedback from partners is currently being incorporated, with a final version expected to be completed and brought back through governance processes before wider engagement with parent carers and young people takes place. It was reported that much of the groundwork has now been completed, with the focus shifting towards embedding improvements and demonstrating measurable impact. Board members discussed how success would be evidenced and challenged whether some of the proposed measures were sufficiently ambitious. In particular, there was discussion about how communication-related complaints should be monitored and whether this would provide a meaningful indicator of improvement. Members acknowledged that communication remains a common theme within complaints and agreed that a more sophisticated understanding of communication issues across education, health and local authority services would be beneficial.

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DSIAB2425/150 Continued	The Board also discussed the importance of ensuring communication reaches all stakeholders, including schools, families and partner organisations. Questions were raised regarding newsletter reach, communication pathways and how information is distributed across the partnership. Members agreed that further work is needed to map communication routes and ensure consistent, effective engagement with schools, children, young people and families. Overall, the Board recognised progress being made but emphasised the need to evidence impact and ensure communication improvements are felt across the whole system. ACTION (DSIABA254) – Due 09/09/2026 Review comments regarding draft communications strategy and specified targets to discuss at ODG in August. Final sign off due for Board in September. B) Priority Impact Area 6 The Board received an update on Priority Impact Area 6 and heard that work continues to strengthen support for children and young people with neurodiverse needs across Derbyshire. Members acknowledged that, while there have been delays in some areas of delivery, significant activity is taking place across both health and education services to improve support pathways, increase access to advice and reduce reliance on diagnosis before support is provided. The discussion highlighted the growing emphasis on a needs-led approach, ensuring children and young people can access appropriate support based on identified needs rather than waiting for a formal diagnosis. Members heard about the increasing collaboration between health services, education settings and inclusion support services, with a particular focus on workforce development, early intervention and supporting schools to respond effectively to neurodiverse needs. The Board was advised that a range of initiatives are already having a positive impact, including training programmes, inclusion support work and projects designed to improve schools' confidence in meeting neurodiverse needs. Members welcomed the direction of travel but stressed the importance of maintaining momentum, delivering agreed actions within realistic timescales and providing clear evidence of impact against the Priority Impact Plan. C) ND Business Case Update & Support whilst waiting update The Board received a detailed update on the Neurodiversity (ND) Business Case and the range of support available for children, young people and families whilst waiting for assessment. Members were reminded that demand for neurodiversity assessments continues to exceed available capacity, with referral rates remaining significantly higher than the number of assessments that can be undertaken. Although referral numbers have started to stabilise, thousands of children and young people remain on waiting lists, highlighting the ongoing challenge facing the system. The update outlined investment made across neurodiversity services over recent years, including increased assessment capacity and the development of community-based support. Particular emphasis was placed on the role of the Neurodiversity Hubs, which provide advice, guidance, resources and practical support to children, young people and families whilst they wait for assessment.

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DSIAB2425/150 Continued	The hubs were described as a key part of the local offer, helping families understand neurodiversity, access support more quickly and avoid feeling isolated during lengthy waiting periods. Examples were shared demonstrating how families had benefited from early advice and information, even before a diagnosis had been reached. Members also heard about the extensive support available through education services. This includes training programmes, ND champions, inclusion support services, webinars, school-based interventions and work to develop a neurodiversity profiling tool. The aim of this work is to help schools identify strengths and needs earlier, provide appropriate support and reduce dependence on diagnostic pathways before interventions can begin. Early evidence from participation projects showed reductions in exclusions, suspensions and referrals to specialist support services in schools involved in the programme. The Board was updated on proposals within the emerging ND Business Case, including the development of redesigned neurodiversity pathways. These proposals focus on early identification, multidisciplinary working and a more integrated needs-led model for both early years children and school-aged children. Learning from successful pilot work in Derby City is being used to shape future developments in Derbyshire, with plans to utilise Family Hubs and Best Start for Life programmes to provide earlier support and intervention. The intention is to reduce unnecessary referrals, improve outcomes and ensure children receive support at the earliest opportunity. During discussion, members welcomed the progress being made but expressed concern about the significant number of children and young people still waiting for assessment. The Board requested further information on how those at greatest risk are prioritised and sought assurance that clear timescales for the completion and approval of the ND Business Case remain in place. Overall, members acknowledged the substantial amount of work underway to transform the neurodiversity pathway while recognising that reducing waiting times and improving access to support remain critical priorities for the local area. ACTION (DSIABA255) – Due 09/09/2026 Check that support whilst waiting videos referenced in ND pathways slide deck are available via the Local Offer. ACTION (DSIABA256) – Due 09/09/2026 Include understanding and data around how vulnerable young people (particularly those at risk of self-harm) people will be prioritised in relation to support whilst waiting
DSIAB2425/151	ODG Assurance Report A) Transition Guidance – Final version The Board reviewed the final version of the Transition Guidance and heard that the document had been through extensive development and consultation. The guidance has been designed to support children and young people through key stages of transition, ensuring that planning is coordinated, timely and centred around the individual needs of the child or young person. Members welcomed the quality of the document and recognised it as an important resource for schools, settings, practitioners and families.

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DSIAB2425/151 Continued	The guidance was viewed as a positive step towards improving consistency of practice across the local area and strengthening support during periods of change, which are often particularly challenging for children and young people with SEND. While the Board was broadly supportive of the final version, members encouraged any final comments or refinements to be shared with the authors before publication. Overall, the guidance was regarded as a strong piece of work that would help improve transition planning and support better outcomes for children and young people. B) Preparation for Adulthood guidance – Final version The Board also reviewed the final version of the Preparation for Adulthood Guidance. Members heard that the document has been developed to support practitioners, families and young people in planning for adulthood from an earlier stage, helping to ensure that aspirations and future outcomes are embedded throughout the SEND journey. The guidance focuses on the key Preparation for Adulthood themes, including education and employment, independent living, good health and community inclusion. Members welcomed the practical approach taken and recognised the document as an important tool for supporting more consistent preparation for adulthood conversations and planning across Derbyshire. The Board agreed that both the Transition Guidance and the Preparation for Adulthood Guidance represented significant progress and demonstrated effective partnership working. Members praised the quality of the work completed and noted the potential benefits these resources could bring in supporting positive outcomes and improving the experiences of children and young people with SEND as they move through education and into adult life. Overall, the Board provided positive assurance on both documents and supported their progression towards implementation and wider dissemination across the local area. ACTION (DSIABA257) – Due 09/09/2026 Compile list of all outstanding documents to be signed off by Board including expected dates.
DSIAB2425/152	Local Partnership Updates - A) Parent Carer Forum update The Board received an update from the Parent Carer Forum on recent engagement and co-production activity. Members heard that the Forum has continued to work closely with partners across the local area, including contributing feedback on the EHC Hub, supporting reviews of communication materials and participating in a range of SEND improvement workstreams. The Forum has also been involved in parent carer drop-in sessions delivered in partnership with educational psychology services, SEND Information, Advice and Support Services (DIAS) and neurodiversity hub colleagues. Feedback from these sessions has been positive, providing families with opportunities to raise concerns, ask questions and contribute to service development.

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DSIAB2425/152 Continued	The Board was also advised that a recent transport question-and-answer session had been well attended, allowing families to engage directly with officers and receive responses to common concerns. The Forum reported that over the last academic year it had engaged with more than 1,100 parent carers across Derbyshire through surveys, consultations, drop-ins and participation activities. Members recognised the significant contribution made by Forum volunteers and heard that much of this work is achieved despite limited resources and increasing demand on parent carer representatives. The Forum highlighted opportunities to strengthen parent carer involvement further across schools and services and discussed the importance of ensuring co-production remains embedded throughout SEND improvement activity. The Board thanked the Forum, its volunteers and staff for their continued commitment and agreed that opportunities to strengthen engagement and sustainability should continue to be explored through existing governance arrangements. B) Derbyshire County Council The Board received an update on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and the implications for Derbyshire. Members were advised that the Government had confirmed its preferred option for future local authority arrangements, which will result in the creation of two new unitary authorities covering Derbyshire. The proposed model will see local authority boundaries reorganised into a northern and southern authority, with implementation work now progressing across the ten Derbyshire councils. It was reported that significant preparatory work has already taken place, including the establishment of programme structures, project groups and shared data arrangements across partner councils. Further guidance from Government is expected to support implementation planning, governance and transition arrangements. Members heard that shadow authority elections are anticipated in 2027, with the new authorities expected to become operational from April 2028. The Board recognised that local government reorganisation will have future implications for SEND governance, commissioning and service delivery arrangements. It was agreed that further updates would be brought back to the Board once more detail becomes available, enabling members to consider the implications for the local SEND system and partnership arrangements. In addition, the Board was informed that work is underway with external partners to review organisational capacity, digital infrastructure and opportunities to modernise services. This includes exploring how technology and digital solutions could support areas such as complaints management, EHCP processes and wider service improvements as part of preparations for future system change. C) Derby and Derbyshire Integrated Care Board The Board received a brief update regarding ongoing organisational changes within the Integrated Care Board. Members heard that recruitment to senior leadership posts had commenced as part of the wider ICB restructuring programme. The first phase of recruitment is focused on very senior leadership positions, with further appointments anticipated in the coming months.

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DSIAB2425/152 Continued	The Board was advised that the current changes are not expected to have an immediate impact on SEND services, although further updates will be provided as new appointments are confirmed and governance arrangements continue to develop. Members welcomed the update and thanked health colleagues for maintaining regular communication with the partnership throughout the period of organisational change. Overall, the Board noted the update and acknowledged the importance of maintaining strong partnership working and continuity of leadership whilst the transformation programme within the ICB progresses.
DSIAB2425/153	Minutes of the meeting of 16th of June The minutes from the previous meeting on the 16th of June were accepted as an accurate record of the previous meeting. The minutes will be anonymised and placed on the Local Offer website.
DSIAB2425/154	Action Log Reviewed in the meeting and updated.
DSIAB2425/155	Any Other Business A) Derbyshire Self Evaluation Report Under Any Other Business, the Board received an update on the development of the SEND Self-Evaluation Framework (SEF). Members heard that work is ongoing to strengthen the document so that it provides a clear evaluation of the local area's strengths, areas for development and evidence of impact. It was acknowledged that this work will be important in preparing for future Ofsted and CQC activity, with further development planned over the summer and a more detailed update expected at a future meeting. The Board also discussed the SEND Strategy, with members seeking assurance regarding its finalisation, publication and implementation. It was agreed that a future update should provide clear information on the status of key strategies and guidance documents, including publication timescales and how their impact will be monitored across the local area. Members considered arrangements for future Board meetings and agreed on the importance of holding the September meeting in person, given the significant SEND improvement activity expected over the coming months. This will include updates relating to the SEND Reform Plan, Local Government Reorganisation, governance arrangements, the SEF and preparation for future inspection activity.