DERBYSHIRE SEND IMPROVEMENT AND ASSURANCE BOARD MINUTES

Tuesday 20th October 2026
MS Teams 13:00-16:00

MINUTES:

Item No:	Minutes:
DSIAB2425/167	**Welcome, introductions and apologies** Apologies were noted.
DSIAB2425/168	**Declarations of Interest** The Chair asked if there were any conflicts of interest or declarations of interest that needed to be noted. None declared.
DSIAB2425/169	**Children and Young People's Update** The Board received an update on recent participation activity with children and young people across Derbyshire. The Youth Inclusion Forum had met with an Elected Member, giving young people the opportunity to discuss issues important to them. The session also prompted discussion about increasing participation in the Forum and encouraging more young people to become involved. Employment, work experience and future opportunities remained a key theme. Young people had contributed to regional work through the East Midlands Youth Inclusion Forum and highlighted two clear messages: "don't underestimate me" and the importance of receiving a proper induction when undertaking employment or work experience. An alternative apprentice was also being approached to share their experience at a future Board meeting. Members heard that young people had participated in the Council for Disabled Children art competition and were being supported to contribute to wider Council consultation activity. A SEND youth group had also registered for the Your Voice Matters national conference in February. Discussion highlighted young people's concerns about whether those supporting them read and understood their EHCPs, alongside the need for meaningful opportunities as they move towards adulthood. Particular concern was raised about the potential "cliff edge" during transition into adult services. The Board heard that new transitions guidance and a toolkit had recently been launched, with young people also due to contribute to the transitions handbook. The Board reiterated that partner organisations should identify practical employment, apprenticeship and work-experience opportunities for young people. Existing initiatives also needed to be brought together and communicated more effectively so that young people understood what opportunities were available and how to access them. This would return to the November Board. **ACTION - DSIABA261 - October Childrens and Young People's Update to include experience of a young person undertaking an apprenticeship DUE 24/11/26** **ACTION - DSIABA262 - Each Board member to identify SEND-inclusive work experience, apprenticeship and employment opportunities within their organisation and report back on opportunities available and how they will be promoted to young people. DUE 24/11/26**

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DSIAB2425/170	**Priority Impact Area progress reports.** - **Priority Impact Area 3** The Board received an update covering the Graduated response, EHCP processes, SEND service restructuring and workforce. The Stepping Stones document had been developed and was due to be available through the Local Offer, with further co-production planned with families, children and young people, education settings and partner services. Initial feedback would be reviewed in December 2026, followed by focused work during the spring term. A slight dip in EHCP performance during September was attributed to the service restructure and move to a locality model, including the reallocation of approximately 10,000 plans. It was emphasised that maintaining the improvement trajectory remained a priority. Annual review activity had increased significantly, with 566 amendments completed within timescales in 2025 compared with a projected figure of at least 1,096 during 2026. The Board welcomed the progress but requested greater context within future reporting, including the overall number of EHCPs and the number and proportion of annual reviews outstanding. This would enable members to understand both the improvement achieved and the scale of the remaining challenge. The SEND workforce had moved to a six-locality model aligned with Social Care localities. Schools would have linked inclusion support teachers, educational psychologists and SEND officers, with the intention of strengthening relationships with schools and families. School representatives were supportive of the model and shared examples of improved responsiveness from named officers. However, members stressed that locality links needed to be supported by sufficient capacity, with Educational Psychology provision specifically highlighted. Communication with schools was also discussed, as information shared through SENCO networks did not always reach Headteachers. It was agreed that relevant communications should reach Headteachers alongside SENCOs. The Board also requested a visual representation of the six localities and the support available within each area. Staff feedback following the restructure was increasingly positive, although workload remained a concern. Members emphasised the importance of demonstrating that workforce improvements ultimately resulted in better experiences and outcomes for children and families. - **Priority Impact Area 4 – Sufficiency Focus** The Board received an overview of the Derbyshire SEND Sufficiency Strategy 2026–2031. Increasing demand for EHCPs, growing complexity of need and financial pressures were highlighted, with particular pressure relating to Autism, social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH), and speech, language and communication needs (SALT). The ambition is for children and young people with SEND to be educated within their local communities wherever possible, with specialist provision available where required. Inclusion Resource Bases were identified as a significant part of the strategy, providing greater specialist expertise within mainstream settings while supporting earlier intervention and reducing reliance on independent provision. Locality-based planning would align projected EHCP growth with school capacity, accessibility and travel patterns. The strategy also focused on preventing escalation through stronger Early Years support, Experts at Hand, additional mainstream support and improved transitions. Across 2026–2031, the programme anticipates approximately 1,103 additional places through Special school expansion, Alternative provision, hub and spoke arrangements and Inclusion Resource Bases. Intended outcomes included fewer Independent and out of county placements, shorter travel times and more children having their needs successfully met within mainstream education.

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DSIAB2425/170 Continued	Members requested clearer baseline information and measurable trajectories to enable the Board to monitor delivery. Future reporting should include locality level information on current placements, capacity and demand, together with progress already achieved, planned developments and associated risks. The importance of aligning sufficiency work with the SEND Local Area Reform Plan was emphasised. The Board also requested greater visibility of Capital and Revenue funding, planned investment and the financial implications of reducing reliance on higher cost Independent provision. **ACTION - DSIABA277 - Provide the Board with evidence of how the new transitions toolkit and guidance are improving preparation for adulthood, including uptake, feedback from young people and families, and any measurable improvements in transition planning outcomes. DUE 26/01/2027** **ACTION - DSIABA278 - PIA3 - Include fuller reporting on annual reviews and volumes outstanding in next PIA3 Report** **DSIABA279 PIA3 - Circulate to Board Members a map showing the new SEND localities DUE 26/01/2027** **ACTION - DSIABA280 - PIA3 - Review and strengthen communications on the locality model to ensure headteachers understand locality boundaries, named contacts, available support and routes for escalation, with communications issued directly to school leaders as well as SENCO networks. DUE 24/11/2026** **ACTION - DSIABA281 - PIA3 - Provide the Board with the SEND communications and engagement plan for schools, including key messages, communication channels, target audiences and measures of effectiveness. DUE 24/11/2026** **ACTION - DSIABA282Undertake structured engagement with the Parent Carer Forum to identify what information families need about the locality model and report recommendations for improving parent-facing communications. DUE 26/01/2027** **ACTION - DSIABA283PIA3 - Circulate the all-through banding storyboard. DUE 24/11/2026** **ACTION - DSIABA284PIA 4 Sufficiency - Develop a sufficiency delivery tracker showing provision opened since 2024, projects currently in development, forecast additional places, delivery milestones and anticipated impact on demand for specialist placements. DUE 26/01/2027** **ACTION - DSIABA285PIA4 Sufficiency - Incorporate a financial summary into future sufficiency reports showing approved capital funding, expenditure to date, forecast spend, planned investment and expected value-for-money benefits from additional local provision. DUE 26/01/2027**
DSIAB2425/171	**Quality Assurance Update** The Board received an overview of the SEND Quality Assurance Framework, focusing particularly on the audit and multi-agency moderation of EHCPs. The framework incorporated information from complaints, compliments, parental feedback, the Local Offer and wider quality-assurance activity. The EHCP audit programme commenced in March 2026. Since December, 1,615 new EHCPs had been issued, with 240 audits allocated and 112 completed. The programme was moving towards auditing 15% of newly issued plans, with at least 5% including a Preparation for Adulthood focus. The auditor pool was also being expanded across Education, Health and Social Care.

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DSIAB2425/171 Continued	Envision 360 benchmarking showed that 8% of Derbyshire plans were fully compliant compared with 32% within the national comparison data available through the tool. Some individual sections were performing above the national average, while 3% of Derbyshire plans had been assessed as gold standard compared with 6% nationally. The greatest gaps related to sections concerning Health and Social Care needs and provision. Updated guidance, training and induction materials were being developed, while a technical issue affecting Section K was being managed through manual checks. Health and Social Care colleagues were contributing to the improvement work. Family feedback continued to identify delays, communication difficulties and concerns regarding plan quality. However, improvements had been recorded across the survey questions since March, particularly around plans reflecting young people's needs and the appropriateness of support. As the overall response rate remained approximately 6%, the Board requested that actual response numbers accompany percentages in future reporting. The Board also supported involving children and young people in developing accessible information about EHCPs. Multi-agency quality assurance of annual reviews was expected to commence in January 2027, initially covering 5% of reviews alongside existing service level quality assurance. Please see Appendix 1 – Survey Response Analytics **ACTION - DSIABA286 Quality Assurance - Develop and test child and young person-friendly EHCP guidance and quality assurance materials, including mechanisms for gathering direct feedback on the quality and accessibility of EHCPs. DUE 26/01/2027** **ACTION - DSIABA287 Quality Assurance - Explore face-to-face EHCP support/drop-in arrangements to compliment existing drop-in sessions with DPCV DUE 26/01/2027.**
DSIAB2425/172	**SEND Local Area Reform Plan – Update** The Board was advised that the SEND Local Area Reform Plan had been approved, enabling the partnership to move into implementation. Regular progress reporting would commence at the next Board meeting to provide assurance against agreed milestones and outcomes. The High Needs Stability Grant associated with the Reform Plan was reported as covering 90% of the Designated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit accumulated to the end of 2025/26, equating to just over £83 million for Derbyshire. This leaves a remaining 10% and does not cover any additional deficit arising during subsequent financial years. Further national guidance was awaited.

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DSIAB2425/172 Continued	The Reform Plan had been aligned with the SEND Priority Impact Plan and SEND Strategy to avoid parallel programmes. Priorities included increasing inclusion, improving statutory timeliness, strengthening local capacity, reducing high-cost provision, improving family experience and co-production, and improving value for money and partnership maturity. Governance would operate through the SEND Improvement and Assurance Board, supported by the Operational Delivery Group and workstreams covering Experts at Hand, pathway redesign, Inclusion and Sufficiency, workforce, and data and performance. Finance, capital, communications, co-production, evidence and benefits would operate as cross-cutting areas. The first quarterly return to the Department for Education is due on 30 October 2026, with quarterly reviews involving the Department for Education and NHS England planned from January 2027. Members supported integrating these arrangements with existing governance wherever possible to minimise duplication. **ACTION - DSIABA288 Future Governance - update to be provided to November SEND Board subject to publication of OfSTED's Monitoring Inspection Report DUE 24/11/2026**
DSIAB2425/173	**Local Partnership Updates -** **A) Parent Carer Forum update** The Board received an update from Derbyshire Parent Carer Voice. The annual survey was launched at the end of September and had approximately 60 responses, with the survey remaining open until the end of December. Members were encouraged to support wider circulation. Four online workshops held in September had attracted 76 parent carers, while the first parent/carer drop-in session had approximately 40 attendees. Two further sessions before the end of October had more than 180 parent carers booked to attend. The Board acknowledged the contribution of Parent Carer Forum volunteers and discussed improving communication through schools. It was agreed that information about the annual survey would be shared for distribution through the all-schools mailing list. **B) Derbyshire County Council** The Board received an update on the SEND Monitoring Inspection. A draft report had been received from Ofsted and was being checked for factual accuracy. Publication was anticipated potentially around mid-November, subject to Ofsted timescales, after which the report would be shared across the partnership. An update was also provided on Local Government Reorganisation. A decision is awaited from Central Government, and the potential implications for Derbyshire's SEND improvement journey and Reform Plan were acknowledged. School representatives requested concise summaries of key developments from Board meetings to help improve communication across schools. It was confirmed that SEND updates would feature within partnership meetings and the planned half-termly newsletter. **C) Derby and Derbyshire Integrated Care Board** The Board received an update on recruitment and organisational changes within the ICB. The Deputy Director appointment had been formally confirmed and recruitment to the associated Assistant Director post is progressing. Recruitment to the Designated Clinical Officer posts was also underway, with interviews scheduled for 3 November 2026. Recruitment within Children's Commissioning was progressing on a similar trajectory. Although the process had taken longer than initially anticipated, members were advised that recruitment is now progressing.

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DSIAB2425/174	**Minutes of the meeting of 9th September 2026** The minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2026 were agreed as an accurate record, with no amendments noted.
DSIAB2425/175	**Action Log** Reviewed in the meeting and updated.
DSIAB2425/176	**Any Other Business** None raised.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – SURVEY RESPONSE ANALYTICS

Question	Strongly Agree/Agree			Percentage change
	March & April 2026	May & June 2026	July & August 2026	
Number of survey responses received	52	68	81	
My child's individual needs are accurately reflected in the EHC plan	57%	62%	66%	+7% (June) +4% (August) Increase (11%)
The support outlined in the EHC plan is appropriate and relevant	52%	57%	61%	+5% (June) +4% (August) Increase (9%)
I am satisfied with the content in my child's EHC plan	50%	54%	58%	+4% (June) +4% (August) Increase (8%)