

DERBYSHIRE SEND IMPROVEMENT AND ASSURANCE BOARD MINUTES

Tuesday 16th September 2025

MS Teams online meeting, 14:00-17:00

MINUTES:

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DSIAB2425/39	Welcome, introductions and apologies The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees and thanked them for their time and commitment to the Board.
DSIAB2425/40	Declarations of Interest The Chair asked if there were any conflicts of interest or declarations of interest that needed to be noted. No conflicts of interest or declarations were reported by the attendees at that time.
DSIAB2425/41	Children & Young People Focus: Children and Young People Voices The Board received an update on the engagement with children and young people. Feedback was presented from recent participation activities, led by attendees who had attended meetings with young people to gather their views and experiences. Young people shared a range of perspectives on transition planning and preparing for adulthood. It was noted that while some began planning as early as Year 9, others, particularly those not in education, had not been offered such conversations. This highlighted a gap in support for those outside formal education settings. The young people emphasised the importance of personalising information and support to individual needs and preferences. Access to information was a key theme. Young people expressed a desire for information to be provided in a variety of formats, such as voice notes, podcasts, short films, or direct conversations, rather than relying solely on written leaflets. They also highlighted the value of hearing directly from people working in roles of interest, and the importance of seeing diversity and representation in these roles to help break down perceived barriers. Communication methods were discussed. Young people felt that services often relied on outdated communication channels and suggested that more modern, accessible platforms, such as WhatsApp or other social media, should be used. The idea of developing peer mentoring or buddying schemes was strongly supported, particularly to help with transitions at key ages.

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DSIAB2425/03 Continued	The issue of stigma was also raised, with young people noting that accessing mental health or social care support can carry negative perceptions. They recommended that positive stories and images of people who use these services should be promoted to help normalise and destigmatise support-seeking. A significant point raised by the young people was the need for a clear feedback loop. They wanted assurance that their contributions would lead to real change and asked, “What’s in it for us?” In response, the Board committed to developing an action tracker to monitor how young people’s feedback is acted upon, ensuring transparency and accountability. The Board welcomed these insights and agreed to certain actions. These included developing the feedback tracker, providing clear and jargon-free summaries of reports for young people, and ensuring that feedback is shared back with them. The Board also agreed to integrate children and young people’s feedback into strategic workstreams, including the Preparing for Adulthood group and communications planning, and to continue exploring modern communication platforms suitable for both young people and parents. Finally, the Board encouraged ongoing engagement with young people, while recognising the need to balance adult presence at meetings. Members were invited to suggest young people who could join the Board to broaden representation. The Board reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring that the voices of children and young people are central to the SEND improvement process and that their feedback informs ongoing service development. ACTION - DSIABA124 - Young People - to support their understanding of SIAB Reports, provide a brief accessible summary at start of reports.
DSIAB2425/42	Priority Impact Area Progress Reports A) Priority Impact Area 1 - Strategic Direction and Needs Assessment The Board received an update on progress within Priority Impact Area 1, focusing on strategic direction and the ongoing needs assessment for SEND in Derbyshire. The discussion covered the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), development of the SEND and Inclusion Strategy, the planned “deep dive” review, and improvements to the Local Offer. Board member for priority impact area 1 reported that the first version of the JSNA has been published and is available on both the Local Offer and Derbyshire websites. He emphasised that this represents phase one of the work, with phase two now underway. An update on phase two will be provided to the SEND Operational Delivery Group and subsequently to the Board later in the autumn. Board members were reminded that the JSNA is intended as a practical tool to inform their work, and all were encouraged to use it actively and provide feedback on its utility and areas for improvement. A Board member highlighted a significant related piece of work: a health needs assessment for children and young people’s mental health. She noted the strong link between SEND and mental health needs, and confirmed that a summary of this work will be brought to a future Board meeting.

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DSIAB2425/42 Continued	The Board was updated on the development of the SEND and Inclusion Strategy, which is being supported by the Council for Disabled Children (CDC) as part of the “RISE” support offer. There was discussion regarding the integration of values workshops within the RISE programme, and it was agreed that these would be included, with further confirmation to follow. The aim is to develop clear strategic outcomes to inform both the SEND and Inclusion Strategy and the Joint Commissioning Strategy, with a target for completion by January 2026. The Board also emphasised the importance of avoiding duplication and ensuring that all strategic workstreams are joined up. Plans for a “deep dive” review were also outlined. This review, to be conducted in partnership with the DfE and NHS England, will focus on four key areas: waiting times for Education, Health and Care (EHC) assessments; delays in key health assessments; effective communication with families; and the handling of complaints and feedback, particularly in relation to communication. These areas have been identified as central to the improvement plan and as recurring themes in partnership discussions. The Board received an update on ongoing work to improve the Local Offer, with a focus on accessibility, accuracy, and fitness for purpose. A review programme is in place for each area of the Local Offer, with six-monthly reviews planned. The Board noted that engagement with the “You Said, We Did” feedback mechanism has been low, and discussed ways to strengthen this approach and ensure that service developments are communicated back to families. A co-produced introductory video for the Local Offer has been created with a local special school, and a YouTube channel has been launched to host video content. Publishing guidance and a brand guide are also being developed to support consistent and effective communication. Board members were encouraged to review the Local Offer themselves and provide feedback at the next meeting. There was a discussion about the need to modernise communication channels, particularly to reach young people and families more effectively. Suggestions included using platforms such as Facebook for parents and TikTok or Snapchat for young people, with the Board recognising the need to be “brave” and adapt to current trends while ensuring safeguarding and moderation. The challenge of balancing organisational constraints with the ambition to be more current and accessible in communications was acknowledged. The Board also discussed the importance of using accurate, up-to-date data to inform strategic decisions and improvement trajectories. Significant progress has been made in data quality and the development of dashboards to support performance monitoring. It was agreed that risks identified in reports should be actively managed through the Operational Delivery Group, with only strategic risks escalated to the Board for oversight. B) Priority Impact Area 3 - Assessment and Provision The Board received an update on progress, performance data, and ongoing improvement actions within assessment and provision for SEND. The EHCP performance group continues to meet fortnightly, with strong engagement and established routines. Team manager reports and Power BI data reviews are helping to drive efficiencies and identify training gaps. The number of finalised assessments has increased, reflecting progress in addressing the previous backlog of outstanding educational psychologist (EP) advice.

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DSIAB2425/42 Continued	A recovery plan is in place, aiming to align timeliness with national levels within six months, supported by additional staffing and strategic collaboration between the assessment team and the Educational Psychology Service. Additional staff have also been brought in to address complaints, and a clear complaints recovery plan is being developed. The Assessment Panel format is now established, and all panel formats are under review to ensure efficiency and timeliness. Inclusion Support Service training is scheduled to embed “moving on together” meetings, supporting a graduated response and monitoring the impact on appeals. Policies and procedures related to the EHC process have been mapped by process improvement colleagues, forming the foundation for clear operating processes. These are being reviewed by the new interim Head of SEND and team managers. Core data is now imported onto the hub, reducing the need for dual reporting. A recent product optimisation session included input from schools and health colleagues, with feedback provided to hub providers for Derbyshire-specific improvements. All decisions to assess continue to be made within the statutory six-week timeframe, with a robust “front door” process now embedded. The “agreed to assess” rate is stable at around 30%, which is low compared to other areas. The contact form and MP inbox are being used to improve communication and responsiveness. The “Mind of My Own” app is being rolled out to capture children’s views, and Inclusion Support Service will commence person-centred review training in the new academic year. A recent SENCO survey focused on communication and implementation, providing a baseline for future improvements. The survey will be repeated at least termly. A stress risk assessment has been completed for the SEND team, informing training and support needs. The Assessment team and Educational Psychology Service have a clear plan, monitored through performance meetings, to reduce the backlog and improve timeliness. Quality Assurance systems are now in place to scrutinise the quality of plans and ensure needs are met robustly and in a timely manner. The new dashboard, developed in Power BI, brings together local and published data, enabling summary and drill-down views for operational and strategic monitoring. The dashboard is being refined to include targets, definitions, and more up-to-date attendance and CME (Children Missing Education) data. Data quality has improved significantly, with dual recording during the transition to the new EHC hub and a focus on accuracy and completeness. Team managers are increasingly owning and using the data. There was a detailed discussion about the use of locum EPs to clear the backlog and concerns about long-term sustainability. The Board requested further assurance on permanent solutions, such as “grow your own” schemes, and learning from other Local Authorities. The low “agreed to assess” rate (30%) was noted as unusual, with most areas being much higher. The Board requested tracking of children not initially assessed to ensure their needs are met and to monitor if they re-enter the system later. The importance of using data to inform strategy and being ambitious beyond national benchmarks was emphasised. The Board requested more detail in future reports on staffing numbers, milestones for recovery plans, and updates on key documents such as the Graduated Response. The need for robust panel processes and ongoing review was highlighted, with recent meetings focused on this area. The Board discussed the importance of family feedback and ensuring that improvements are experienced by families, not just reflected in data.

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DSIAB2425/42 Continued	Health colleagues offered to review process mapping to ensure alignment and avoid retrofitting health into SEND processes. The Board agreed that risks identified in reports should be managed through the Operational Delivery Group, with only strategic risks escalated to the Board. The Board welcomed the development of the dashboard and agreed that future reports should include screenshots and headline data for transparency and trust-building. Ongoing work is being done to cleanse data, particularly around learners leaving post-16 and ceasing EHCPs, with colleges and the local authority working together to resolve discrepancies. C) Priority Impact Area 4 - Education Provision An update was provided on Priority Impact Area 4, with a focus on sufficiency work and the development of a KPI dashboard to inform service responses across inclusion and education services. The dashboard is designed to provide visibility of children not in full-time education and to help identify vulnerabilities, aligning with the broader attendance strategy set for 2025. The Inclusion Framework across Education Inclusion Services has undergone a compliance review and is ready to be rolled out in its new format after half-term, following final checks and co-production with stakeholders. The Early Years Service continues to offer targeted support for schools and providers, particularly around accessing early years inclusion funding, and is also providing direct support for providers not currently accessing or declining applications. Significant progress has been made in expanding both mainstream and specialist provision. In the first round, 52 applications were received from schools, with 25 shortlisted for final panel decisions. Ultimately, 20 schools were identified in July as successful and are moving forward to feasibility studies. Provisional dates for a second round have been set, indicating ongoing momentum. Much of the initial expansion has focused on alternative provision (AP) units, with only three of the 20 schools proposing SEND units. This has raised concerns about the balance between AP and SEND-specific provision, especially given Derbyshire's high rate of permanent exclusions. However, it was noted that expansion of numbers within specialist schools is also underway, and further rounds are expected to address SEND unit provision more directly. There has been a reduction in exclusions and suspensions over the year, despite a slight spike in July. The monitoring of data is being used to understand how increased capacity is influencing the number of pupils awaiting alternative provision. Work is ongoing to develop an Alternative Provision Framework in collaboration with procurement and commissioning colleagues, with a target implementation date of September 2026. During the discussion, Board members raised concerns about the heavy focus on Alternative Provision in the first round and the need for more SEND units, given the size of Derbyshire and the number of children with SEND. The response highlighted that this is only the first round, and further expansion of specialist provision is planned. The sufficiency strategy is being mapped to ensure the right provision is created in the right areas. The new dashboard and improved data quality are seen as significant steps forward, enabling better operational and strategic monitoring. There is a focus on using this data to inform decisions and ensure that interventions are targeted where most needed.

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DSIAB2425/42 Continued	The Board discussed the importance of supporting children and families while they wait for appropriate placements, particularly those with social, emotional, and mental health needs. There is ongoing work to review Section 19 provision and to develop a clear graduated response for attendance and support. The Board emphasised the importance of co-production with schools and families, ensuring that provision meets local needs and that feedback mechanisms are robust. There was also discussion about the need for clear communication with families about the progress being made and the support available. Plans are in place for additional rounds of funding and expansion, with feedback from the first round being used to refine the process and ensure alignment with local needs as identified in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). The Board requested regular updates on progress, including more detail on staffing, milestones for recovery plans, and updates on key documents such as the graduated response. There is a continued emphasis on partnership working, with all partners encouraged to promote the local offer and to engage in the development and review of provision. Risks identified in the report are being managed through the Operational Delivery Group, with only strategic risks escalated to the Board. The Board requested assurance that risks are being actively managed and mitigated. In summary, the Board acknowledged significant progress in expanding education provision, improving data quality, and developing robust monitoring tools. Key challenges remain around balancing AP and SEND provision, supporting children awaiting placement, and ensuring that improvements are experienced by families. The Board requested continued focus on these areas and regular updates on progress, risks, and impact. D) Data and Performance in relation to Impact areas 3 & 4 An update was presented to Board on data and performance, focusing on the development and use of a new KPI dashboard to support both assessment/provision and education provision. The dashboard, developed in Power BI, brings together local and published data, enabling summary and drill-down views for operational and strategic monitoring. It is designed to provide visibility of children not in full-time education, track progress on assessments, and identify areas requiring targeted intervention. The dashboard is still being refined, with ongoing work to include targets, definitions, and more up-to-date attendance and Children Missing Education (CME) data. The integration of core data onto the hub has reduced the need for dual reporting, and a recent product optimisation session included input from schools and health colleagues to ensure the system meets Derbyshire's specific needs. The dashboard is also being used to monitor the impact of increased capacity on the number of pupils awaiting Alternative Provision and to support the broader attendance strategy. Board member demonstrated the dashboard's capabilities, highlighting its ability to compare local data with national and statistical neighbour benchmarks. The dashboard allows for filtering by school phase, SEND status, and social care involvement, providing a comprehensive view of performance across the county. It also supports the identification of trends in exclusions, suspensions, and attendance, and enables the tracking of children not in receipt of full-time education.

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DSIAB2425/42 Continued	The Board discussed the importance of data quality and accuracy, noting that significant progress has been made in cleansing and validating data during the transition to the new EHC hub. Team managers are increasingly taking ownership of data, and regular performance meetings are supporting a culture of data-driven decision-making. The Board emphasised the need for transparency and suggested that screenshots or headline data from the dashboard be included in future reports to build trust and support robust monitoring. The Board welcomed the development of the KPI dashboard and acknowledged the improvements in data quality and performance monitoring. The dashboard is seen as a vital tool for supporting operational and strategic decision-making in both assessment/provision and education provision. The Board requested continued updates as the dashboard is further developed and embedded into practice. ACTION - DSIABA125 - Overview of the schedule / timetable for values workshops to be sent to the PA5 Lead in order to update the PA5 project plan ACTION - DSIABA126 - All to view Introduction video on the Local Offer website via Local Offer YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/@DerbyshireSENDLocalOffer ACTION - DSIABA127 - Partner Leads to provide workforce overview (to include key data) for themed item at October Board meeting.
DSIAB2425/09	Local Partnership Updates - A) Parent Carer Forum update The Chair of Parent Carer Forum provided an update on behalf of the Parent Carer Forum. Following a summer break, the forum is now reforming and preparing for the new school year. Key activities include the imminent launch of a new website, internal work to strengthen trustee onboarding and update policies, and the rollout of a new calendar of events for parent carers after October half term. The forum is also preparing to launch its annual survey, which will be shared with the Operational Delivery Group and priority area leads to ensure relevant questions are included. Additionally, the forum is working with around 24–25 schools for the second rollout of the Partnership for Inclusion of New Diversity in Schools project, while continuing to support the 30+ schools involved in the first year. The forum is focused on embedding its support offer and strengthening relationships with schools. B) Derbyshire County Council Two members of Derbyshire County Council provided an update on behalf of Derbyshire County Council. Updates highlighted ongoing work across SEND and inclusion. They reported on progress with the Sufficiency Strategy, the development of the KPI dashboard, and the expansion of both mainstream and specialist provision. The Council is also focusing on reducing exclusions and suspensions, developing an Alternative Provision framework, and ensuring robust monitoring of children not in full-time education. There was discussion about the importance of partnership engagement, the need for clear communication with families, and the ongoing review of policies and procedures. The council is also working to ensure that risks identified in reports are actively managed through the Operational Delivery Group, with only strategic risks escalated to the Board

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DSIAB2425/09 Continued	C) Derby and Derbyshire Integrated Care Board Board member for Derby and Derbyshire Integrated Care Board provided an update from the ICB, noting significant developments in the regional structure. The formal announcement of the cluster chair was shared, and it was noted that the Executive structure is currently out for consultation, with appointments expected to progress through the autumn and into the new year. The ICB is also engaging with the new model region and good practice guide for SEND, although it was noted that the guidance largely reinforces current practice. highlighted the pressures associated with upcoming inspections and ongoing organisational changes, asking for understanding during this period. The ICB remains focused on supporting the SEND improvement plan and is monitoring resource implications as changes progress.
DSIAB2425/10	Minutes of the meeting of 13th of August The minutes from the previous meeting on the 13th of August were accepted as an accurate record. The minutes will be anonymised and placed on the Local Offer website.
DSIAB2425/11	Action Log Reviewed in the meeting and updated.
DSIAB2425/12	Any Other Business The Chair raised that future dates for the Board would change to be rescheduled for a Tuesday morning, and further dates for 2026 would be sent out shortly. ACTION - DSIABA128 - Meeting times to be amended to a Tuesday afternoon, 1pm-4pm from January 2026 onwards.