

Minutes

SEN & Inclusion Board Meeting

Monday 3rd March 2025, 1pm

Microsoft Teams Meeting

Present:

Naomi Carter (NC) – Service Director, Education, Inclusion and Access
Jade Kennett (JK) – Service Manager, Strategic Development
Rachael Williams (RW) – Inclusion Manager
Nichola Smith (NS) – SEND Manager
Sarah Linington (SL) – Business Services Manager
Debbie Williams (DW) – Team Manager, Data and Performance
Kate Evans (KE) – Information Analyst
Irina Rowan (IR) – Senior Finance Business Partner
Jodi Smith (JS) – Senior Accounting Technician
Theresa Wall (TW) – Service Manager, Education
Hannah Pye (HP) – Team Lead, Speech and Language Therapy
Hannah Byers (HB) – Team Lead, Specialist Advisory Teacher Team
Charlotte Heard (CH) – Business Services Officer

Apologies:

Julie Lambert (JL) – Post 16 Manager
Rosie Lister (RL) – Virtual School Headteacher

Summary of Actions
Action: IR to update the data to show ILC's new name of Lionheart School.
Action: NC to share the SEF with the group.
Action: NS to send RW the 10 names of EHE pupils whom EHCN assessments are being requested for.
Action: HP to find out how many of the 60 Autism consultations go through to assessment.
Action: JK to share the draft SEND Sufficiency strategy colleagues to send any comments to her.
Action: CH to look at future meeting dates and add Beth Dyer to future invites.

1. Welcome

Welcome and apologies

NC welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were noted. She explained the agenda for today and that finance will be discussed first as it has implications on the whole system.

Minutes from the previous meeting

The minutes from the previous meeting were reviewed and agreed correct. NC confirmed that the title of these meetings is now 'SEND and Inclusion Board Meeting' and she advised that the minutes are published on our website.

Action tracker

An action tracker will be added to the top of the minutes moving forward.

2. Strategic Leadership and Governance of System

Financial update on High Needs spend

IR shared a table with the position as of January, which is the latest forecast. We are looking at an overspend of £5.2 million / 25.62%, and this financial year we received £970k of safety valve funding. NC asked that the ILC's name is updated to Lionheart School.

Action: IR to update the data to show ILC's new name of Lionheart School.

IR reported that there has been significant growth and NC asked whether the growth was due to medical or sixth day provision. IR advised that it is both. RW noted that permanent exclusions increased significantly last year, but have reduced this year.

NC explained that the special school places should bring EOTAS costs down and acknowledged that there is a place for EOTAS and INMSS, but we must have a mixed economy. She said that we will continue to grow as we develop our offer, and added that we are continuing to work with the NHS to recharge for therapy costs.

IR confirmed that 2026/27 is the last year of the safety valve and we have an agreement to align expenditure, and we are currently showing a gap of £3.6 million. We are working on a growth rate of 9% for EHCP's, which we hope will reduce to 4.5% from next financial year (Sept 2026), if we develop our OAP material and embed it across the school system. A graph IR shared showed that the expenditure forecast is coming down from 2025/26.

IR advised that the latest forecast shows a cumulative deficit in 2024/25 of £11.8 million. NC asked for the biggest growth areas and IR confirmed that they are EOTAS, PRU and independent places.

NC thanked IR for the update and showing the pressures we are under. She noted that having a better 'front door' system is likely to reduce statutory requests.

Local Offer

NC advised that she has asked TW to take on the Local Offer. TW explained that she has met with Kelly Quinn and is cross-referencing the original site and the webpage on the family hub. The old site will be switched off, and instead there will be a blurb which signposts people to the family hub. TW said that she hopes to have this done in the next two weeks and NC thanked her for her work.

Outcome of Area SEN Partnership Board & Sub Group

NC advised that the bi-monthly meetings are chaired by Ashley Whittaker and Anthony Harper and the minutes are published on our website. She explained that they are

currently in the process of developing a SEF, and she will send it out before it is due back to Ofsted on Wednesday.

Action: NC to share the SEF with the group.

NC shared that JK is finishing developing the SEND Sufficiency strategy and DW and her team are working on a data dashboard.

3 & 4. Oversight of statutory process and Specialist Places

SEN performance (EHCNA and timeliness) and trends/patterns

NS reported that there are currently 1783 EHCP's, and back in September there were 1700, so there has been a significant increase in six months. She advised that in terms of timeliness and the 20 week timeframe, the figure is 0% due to the EP advice. The team had a backlog of 95, which is now down to 38. NS shared that this has significantly impacted on panel, and they have over 36 cases a week.

NS confirmed that the list from Hampshire has now been done and they have allocated approximately 25 cases. In terms of prioritising, NS explained that she has been doing this based on phase transfer years and RAG ratings. NC said that if she needs to put them all through, to go ahead and we will pay for them all, as AW wants the backlog cleared. NC noted that we need to extend the EP agreement past April and asked how many requests we get a month, which NS confirmed is about 30. NC advised that we have a new member of staff starting in September and possibly another one later on. IR said that she needs to speak to AW about the budget strategy for 2025/26.

Annual review

NS reported that she has seen a positive shift in mindset, and the team have created a roadmap which has been shared with schools. In January and February, 79 annual reviews were completed, and 17 late decisions were issued. NS noted that this is not where we want to be, but is progress.

NS advised that 88 pupils are EOTAS or EOTIC, and the rationale behind the large figure is because the legal test was never applied at panel. With support from the Legal team, this is now being applied and if provision can be delivered in an education setting, then they will go with the setting. KE noted that once pupils are out of the statutory age (19-24), their plans are not always being ceased. She asked if the figure of 88 includes over 19's. NS advised that it includes everybody and KE felt that there is the opportunity to reduce the number, and NS suggested that they discuss this separately.

NS confirmed that they completed the phase transfer for all Nursery and Year 6 pupils by 15th February, bar one student who they are awaiting a consultation response for. Now, their focus is on Year 11. NS noted that there is a cohort of 10 EOTAS pupils with significant and complex needs, and there is a transition meeting this week. She added that there has been a surge in complaints as parents don't recognise where the placement lies. NC asked whether they are working with Adult Services and NS confirmed that she is meeting with them this week to look at pathways. She is looking to get health and social care colleagues to collaborate with us too.

NS reported that on average, 45% of EHCN assessment requests are parental, and the national average is around 28%. She noted that there is also a cohort of EHE parents making requests. RW suggested that they could do a deep dive into whether they have ever been on a school roll. NC asked how many are EHE, and NS confirmed that they have had 10 requests over the last three weeks. RW asked that NS sends her the names, and she can do some analysis.

Action: NS to send RW the 10 names of EHE pupils whom EHCN assessments are being requested for.

NC said that she would be interested in the reasoning for EHE and RW explained that the school provides the reason to the LA, not the parent. NS confirmed that when they issue a plan and agree EHE, they include a blurb around legislation so they cannot apply for EOTAS.

Quality Assurance

TW advised that she needs to spend time on this, and NC confirmed that we have visited all places that have been commissioned. She explained that for INMSS, Steff Gleeson will lead on the visits with NC or HM (and HB if the young person is deaf), and the team for AP visits has been narrowed down. NC advised that if there are concerns around a providers building, then she will carry out a visit with JK.

5. Services for Schools

Early Years

TW advised that the team have reduced the portage waiting list from 6 months to 4 months, and have looked at an exit strategy. As a result, they have introduced portage networks in family hubs, which those on the waiting list can go to. TW explained that this has resulted in early recognition that some don't meet the criteria, and they have been able to signpost to services, which has worked well.

TW shared that she is working with NS, as historically those that quality for SENF funding have been encouraged by EY providers to apply for an EHCP to hold onto the funding. NS advised that she has been also working with Rowena, and they have discovered that the NHS are failing in their Section 23 statutory duty to inform the LA of children with complex health needs. NC asked if this has been raised with health colleagues and NS confirmed that it has. She reported that 34 nursery EHCN assessments are ongoing and 2 weren't known to Early Years. NC commented that there is work to do around the inclusion agenda.

TW advised that in terms of SENF funding, they have worked hard to decrease spend but noted that children are now entitled from 9 months old, so we need to be mindful of the impact this may have.

TW confirmed that an Early Years SEN teacher was appointed in September, and is working with EY and Year R classes to get to know the pupils and ensure a smooth transition. TW added that, due to this capacity, EY SENCO networks have been introduced and training is being delivered which has had a huge impact on EY providers.

School Improvement offer/training/networks

NC confirmed that Beth Dyer and Sam Sillito will be with the LA full-time from April, and will be working with schools in the Ofsted window.

PBS

RW reported that this academic year, all primary schools bar one have accessed an element of PBS outreach. She suggested that the need isn't there in the school that has not accessed it.

RW confirmed that there have been 122 consultations this academic year, and 68 moved onto a full referral, with 46 currently open.

RW advised that they have seen a 21.64% reduction in primary suspensions.

Speech and Language Therapy

HP reported that staffing issues have had a knock-on effect on statutory deadlines, which hasn't been a problem so far, but if EP advice meets timescales, then they will be behind. She noted that some assessments take up to a day to complete, and she added that hasn't been able to attend panel meetings.

HP confirmed that they support 468 pupils and provide one day per week of support to St. George's and support is provided to the IOW College and HTP. HP shared details around training courses and virtual drop-ins.

In terms of Autism Inclusion, HP advised that they have had 60 consultations since September, and there has been a good uptake in training. NC asked how many pupils go through to assessment and HP said that she can find out.

Action: HP to find out how many of the 60 Autism consultations go through to assessment.

Specialist Teacher Advisors

HB gave a brief overview of the service and explained that they are low incidence, but high need. She noted that the Communication Support Assistant is looking to reduce their hours, so forward planning is needed to protect the role.

HB ran through the pathways and KPI's and reported that there are 199 pupils on the deaf caseload, 65 on the VI caseload (of which almost all have complex needs) and 7 on the deafblind caseload. HB noted that there are some off-island placements where there could be a potential saving. NC queried if St Catherine's are able to provide services for deaf pupils and HB advised that they use SSE.

6. Ordinarily Available Provision

NC explained that we have paused on this area at the moment, and will wait until the School Improvement team are established and we have in-house EP's. TW advised that she has asked for team input from service areas and will pass on what she has done so far. She thanked everyone for their input.

7. Children and Young People

Schools

JK confirmed that a paper will go to the April Cabinet outlining the next phase of the expansion of provision across the island. She explained that we started the process in September but took the decision to pause due to the sensitivities with SPP, however discussions with schools continued in the background.

JK advised that there are plans to expand St George's satellite provision by 5 places in September, another 5 in January, another 5 in April and then another 10 from September 2026.

Greenmount have expanded their RP to 12 places and Medina House have expanded by 34 places.

We will be asking Cabinet to approve a 12 place RP at The Bay Primary for September, and will take a slow approach (there will not be 12 pupils straight away).

We have asked Hunnyhill to increase their RP from 8 places to 12 places (the governing body have approved this), and we have asked St Francis to do the same.

JK is meeting with the academy sponsor for Medina and Carisbrooke, to discuss increasing their RP from 15 places to 20 places. She noted that they have to undertake their own consultations.

Governors at The Bay Secondary have already approved an increase from 15 places to 20 places, and the aim is to have this in place for September to provide immediate relief, although some building adaptations are needed.

Brighstone are keen to set up a 12 place RP which they aim to start from September. NC explained that because they are a small school, if they set this up any later there would be an impact on their budget and staffing.

Overall, there will be 74 additional places for September. SL asked what the split is across primary and secondary and JK confirmed that it is around 50/50.

NC thanked JK and her team for their phenomenal work and she shared that she is taking Southampton City Council around the studio site tomorrow.

JK noted that we will be dependent on the Cabinet decision as to which buildings will be available and within our gift.

JK advised that she will share the draft SEND Sufficiency strategy which sets out what the future looks like regarding growth and how we intend to meet need. She asked that colleagues send any comments to her.

Action: JK to share the draft SEND Sufficiency strategy colleagues to send any comments to her.

Early Years

TW advised that the transition document will go to Cabinet on Thursday, and it includes a timeline of activities and events that will be taking place with closing and receiving schools, if the decision is made to close the five schools. She thanked services for their input on the

EIA day and said that she will be coming back to them for their support. The document runs from mid-March to September/October (if necessary) to ensure smooth transitions. TW explained that DAIT have a spreadsheet which details EHCP/CIC/vulnerable children etc, and they are trying not to place too much influx pressure on receiving schools. TW added that we will also be asking schools which pupils they feel are vulnerable, as this is a sensitive piece of work. DW advised that the data is based on the Autumn census and she will rerun it once the Spring census data is available. NC thanked colleagues for their work.

Inclusion

RW reported that indicative data shows that permanent exclusions are down 41% since September last year, and there has been a 13.61% reduction in suspensions (21.64% primary and 12.57% secondary). RW confirmed that numbers are down overall:

134 primary suspensions – 61% have some identified SEN and 30% have an EHCP
1155 secondary suspensions – 43% have some identified SEN and 8% have an EHCP

NC asked about the needs and RW reported that they are primarily SEMH needs. NC queried why this would be and RW suggested that it is the impact of trauma, dysfunctional families and the role of social care. HP added that they may also have a diagnosis of Autism. NC asked if there is a trend in the schools that are suspending and RW shared the schools with the highest figures. DW noted that the criteria for suspending at secondary is different to primary, and the behaviour policies and expectations are different.

EHE

RW reported that there are currently 695 EHE pupils. There have been 217 new EHE pupils this year, and 113 have left. RW advised that there were 2 that specifically identified SPP as a reason for opting for EHE, but she noted that they have been EHE before.

KE noted that there is a growing trend of parents taking their children out and then putting them back in, and asked if we measure this. RW explained that we are seeing less of this, particularly in secondary, as there are less school places. KE suggested that the statutory data online can be misleading and RW said that she can run reports on repeat periods. DW suggested that some parents apply for their children to go back into school when they sit their GCSE's and RW advised that the data doesn't support this theory.

KE asked whether a pupil remains out of education if they withdraw from a school to go EHE and then get assessed for an EHCP. RW explained that EHE is classed as education until they start at wherever is named in Section I of their plan.

RW advised that emotional and mental health needs is the main reason cited for opting for EHE.

8. Any other business

NC asked that CH looks at future meeting dates and ensures that everyone can make them. She also asked for Beth Dyer to be added to future invites.

Action: CH to look at future meeting dates and add Beth Dyer to future invites.

DW noted that all the data she is collecting is from censuses, but documents are using live data. She asked if deadlines could be moved to later next year and NC agreed that we need to look at systems. SL added that there have been discrepancies in the EHE dates we have recorded and what schools have recorded, and there can sometimes be a difference of 2 weeks.

NS commented that we need to be holding health and social care to account and get them on board and involved with complex cases. NC said that the SEN Partnership Board is crucial in this.

NC thanked colleagues for their time and hard work.

Meeting closed 2.40pm