

Independent Chair's update on SEND Improvement Board meeting.

12th February 2025

Representatives from the SEND Improvement Board attended the latest meeting on February 12th 2025. All papers from the board can be found on the [Local Offer website](#).

What is the purpose of the Board?

The purpose of the board is to bring strategic oversight and to hold those with responsibility to account for the improvement of special educational needs and disabilities services across Suffolk. Senior leaders recognise that children and families have an entitlement to a better experience, and they are committed to making the improvements needed. The SEND Local Area Partnership comprises Suffolk County Council, NHS Suffolk and North-East Essex Integrated Care Board and NHS Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board, Suffolk Parent Carer Forum, schools and settings, colleges, health providers and the voluntary sector.

Key discussions at the Board included:

- How to ensure consistent quality across the SEND system in Suffolk, especially with Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs).
- Board Governance and revised terms of reference
- Listening to children and young people and learning from them

Update from the Suffolk Parent Carer Forum

To begin the meeting, the Board heard from Sue Wilgoss from the Suffolk Parent Carer Forum (SPCF). The Forum is a key strategic partner within the Local Area Partnership and shares the voice of many parents and carers. This provides valuable insight into the experiences of parents/carers, their children and young people. This is so important as the views and needs of families need to be at the heart of all the changes and improvements that are being made.

The Board heard how the forum has held focus groups on post 16, home education and the quality assurance process for EHCPs. Future focus groups will feature Local Authority complaints, Suffolk User Forum, attendance, phase transfers and the All Age

Carers Strategy. The forum reported on areas which were working well including 'active listening from leadership' and bullet points returning to EHCPs. They also reported on areas where things were not working well, including a lack of clarity on Activities Unlimited budget changes; issues with family services' communications, including untimely calls and failure to notify families when case workers leave; and 'excessive' waiting times for ADHD assessments. Actions were agreed as a result of the feedback so that ongoing improvements can be made.

Improving quality assurance processes within SEND, especially EHCPs

The Board had an update on improving quality assurance across SEND services.

The multi-agency EHCP Quality Assurance Group carries out three EHCP auditing cycles a year, covering a four-month period. The latest quality assurance cycle into EHCPs was conducted between October and December 2024, auditing 188 EHCPs.

Key findings included:

- **Timeliness and quality:** 50% of the EHCPs reviewed had been finalized within the statutory 20-week timeframe. These plans were, on average, 15.5% higher in quality than those completed outside of the 20-week timescale, highlighting the positive correlation between timeliness and quality.
- **Consistency:** The overall quality of new EHCPs has remained stable.
- **Increased inclusion of views:** There was a 19% increase in the number of EHCPs that incorporated the views and interests of children, young people, and their parents/carers.
- **Enhanced data quality:** More qualitative data was available to support audit findings, strengthening the evidence base for future improvements.

It is recognised that there is still a lot to do to improve the quality of plans and a number of recommendations were agreed including additional training, ensuring that all EHCPs undergo appropriate health sign-off and maintaining consistency with logging all interactions with families. The next steps agreed by the Board included the appointment of an Interim Strategic SEND QA Development Lead for six months to develop a

coproduced EHCP QA Framework and Development Plan in collaboration with key stakeholders and a review of existing policies and processes to create a robust, transparent EHCP Quality Assurance Framework, ensuring continuous learning and feedback.

It was agreed that these steps will further enhance the quality, consistency, and effectiveness of EHCPs, ensuring better outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

Board Governance and revised terms of reference

The Board agreed that it is useful to revisit governance arrangements and Terms of Reference to ensure that they remain relevant and appropriate. This includes strengthening strategic oversight, improving monitoring and reporting including any risks or blockages and creating alignment with other SEND workstreams.

Listening to young people and learning from them

To bring the meeting to a close, the Board welcomed a presentation from The Engagement Hub and the Young Person's Network. It included inspiring videos from children and young people about celebrating differences and their views on having additional needs. The Board all agreed that it is crucial that young people's experiences are shared at every meeting and a highlight on the agenda.

The next board meeting is 2nd April 2025.

Thanks,

Kathryn Boulton

Independent chair of the SEND Improvement Board

