

MINUTES

Title of Meeting:	SEND Improvement Board
Date:	Thursday 29th January 2026
Place:	Hybrid Teams Meeting & Endeavour House
Times:	10AM – 12:45PM
Membership	<p>Kathryn Boulton (KB), Independent Chair</p> <p>Nicola Beach (NB), Chief Executive, Suffolk County Council</p> <p>Dr Ed Garratt OBE (EG), Chief Executive, Suffolk and North-East Essex Integrated Care Board</p> <p>Sarah-Jane Smedmor (SJM) Executive Director Children Services, Suffolk County Council</p> <p>Lisa Nobes (LN), Director NHS Suffolk and North-East Essex Integrated Care Board</p> <p>Cllr Andrew Reid (AR), Cabinet Member for SEND & Education</p> <p>Cllr Bobby Bennett (BB), Cabinet Member for Children & Young People</p> <p>Anna Mears (AM) Director of SEND at EAST (Special School Representative)</p> <p>Anthony Deery (AD) Chief Nurse, Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust</p> <p>Catherine Morgan (CM) Chief Nurse, East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust</p> <p>Charlotte Crane (CC) Senior Safeguarding Manager for SEND, NHS England</p> <p>Chloe Worboyes (CW) Department for Education SEND Advisor</p> <p>Chris Lee (CL) Assistant Director SEND & Inclusion, Suffolk County Council</p> <p>Chris Morris (CM), Service Director Education, SEND & School Infrastructure, Bedford Borough Council (Sector Led Improvement Partner)</p> <p>Daniel Jones (DJ) CEO Children’s Endeavour Trust (School Representative)</p> <p>Daniel Spooner (DS) Chief Nurse, West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust</p> <p>Emily Williams (EW) Deputy Director of East of England, Department for Education</p> <p>Gareth Everton (GE) Director of Adult Social Care, Suffolk County Council</p> <p>Harriet Wakeling (HW) Assistant Director Commissioning, Performance and Quality, Suffolk County Council</p> <p>Hayley Cullimore (HCu) Head of Inclusion, ASSET Education (Primary Education Representative)</p> <p>Hayley Griffin (HG) Service Director for Social Care, Suffolk County Council</p> <p>Helen Chester (HCh) Department for Education SEND Advisor</p> <p>Jacky Copping (JC) Director of Nursing, James Paget University Hospital Trust</p>

	<p>James Allen-Perry (JAP) SEND Improvement and Intervention Regional Lead Vulnerable Children Unit, East of England</p> <p>Jessica Clarke (JC) Team Leader for Suffolk, East of England, Regions Group</p> <p>Jonathan Fairclough (JF) Head of Delivery for Suffolk & Cambridgeshire, Department for Education</p> <p>Jo Hedley (JH) SEND Consultant, Suffolk County Council</p> <p>Julia Grainger (JG) Assistant Director Education and Learning, Suffolk County Council</p> <p>Kat Willson (KW) SEND Programme Manager, Suffolk County Council</p> <p>Kate Dodd (KD) Communications Programme Manager, Suffolk County Council</p> <p>Kathryn Searle (KS) Deputy Director of Nursing, Suffolk and North-East Essex ICB</p> <p>Louise Warren (LW) NHS England Advisor</p> <p>Nicki Howlett (NH) Service Lead, Suffolk SENDIASS</p> <p>Nicola Roper (NR) Assistant Director Adult Services, Suffolk County Council</p> <p>Rebecca Hulme (RH) Director Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board</p> <p>Sharon Muldoon (SM) Director of Education, Suffolk County Council</p> <p>Sue Willgoss (SW) Suffolk Parent Carer Forum</p> <p>Trudi Rose-Porter (TRP) Director- Transition, Foundation and Inclusive Learning (Post 16 Representative)</p>	
<p>Invited to attend</p>	<p>Rebecca Allen (RA) Head of Public Health & Communities Analytics, Suffolk County Council</p> <p>Martine Simpson (MS) Strategic Lead for Preparing for Adulthood, Suffolk County Council</p> <p>Jen Beaton (JB) Joint Head of SEND Services, Suffolk County Council</p> <p>Lucy Doherty (LD) Joint Head of SEND Services, Suffolk County Council</p> <p>Rachel Cogman (RC) Head of CYP Quality Assurance, Suffolk County Council</p>	

Item No.	Item Description
1.	<p>Apologies:</p> <p>Gareth Everton, Lisa Nobes, Daniel Jones, Daniel Spooner, Trudi-Rose Porter and Anthony Deery</p> <p>Introductions:</p> <p>Rebecca Allen - Head of Public Health & Communities Analytics, Suffolk County Council</p> <p>Sarah Ewum – Interim SEND Governance Lead, Suffolk County Council</p> <p>Martine Simpson - Strategic Lead for Preparing for Adulthood, Suffolk County Council</p>
2.	<p>Review Minutes and Action Log</p>

	<p>The minutes from the previous SEND Improvement Board meeting (18 December 2025) were presented and approved as an accurate record, subject to two amendments: correcting 'Mental Health in Schools Team' to 'Mental Health Support Team' and providing further clarification on the distinction between the Quality Assurance Framework and the EHCP Quality Assurance Programme.</p> <p>A delay in the approval of the Coproduction Charter was noted through the Action Log. The Board also requested further clarification on the conditions and circumstances for when coproduction should take place.</p> <p>SIB171 ACTION: Through the Coproduction Charter action, ensure that the level and approach to coproduction are appropriately calibrated across the system. – Owner: Chris Lee</p>
3.	<p>Preparing for Adulthood Update</p> <p>The Preparing for Adulthood update was presented as per the corresponding slides.</p> <p>The Board discussed the progress of the Preparation for Adulthood (PFA) strategy, including its governance, co-production with partners, capturing young people's voices, and the development of work streams to support transitions for young people with SEND. The Board endorsed the timeline for the development PFA strategy and reporting frequencies.</p>
4.	<p>DfE Stocktake – Statutory SEND Updates</p> <p>The DfE Stocktake Statutory SEND Services update was presented as per the corresponding slides.</p> <p>Challenge: The Board raised concerns and the need for further clarity regarding the children and young people who have been waiting the longest for Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) and the lived experiences of these CYP and families.</p> <p>Response: It was agreed that regular assurance—capturing both positive and challenging experiences—would be reported to the Board. SENDIASS also offered to share their insights and support forward planning, particularly around key pressure points such as transitions.</p> <p>SIB 172 Action: Provide reporting to every Board meeting regarding the experiences and safety of CYP who have been waiting the longest, ensuring their needs are known and being met as well as possible whilst waiting. Ensure SENDIASS are linked into way forward approach – Owners: Chris Lee and Martin Hole</p> <p>Challenge: The Board raised that it would be more useful to see year to date (YTD) figures as opposed to month-on-month figures for EHCP timeliness.</p> <p>Response: The Board confirmed that the Local Area Partnership is further developing their use of data with the support from Bedford Sector Led Improvement Partner via the SEND Data Scorecard. An updated format for reporting would be brought to the next Board.</p> <p>SIB 173 Action: Ensure reporting is updated to present year-to-date (YTD) figures, aligning with the new SEND Data Scorecard. – Owners: Martin Hole</p> <p>Challenge: The Board noted that families are likely to welcome the improvements outlined in the stocktake update. However, they emphasised the importance of ensuring accuracy and quality of plan and careful consideration in how these improvements are communicated to families.</p>

	<p>Response: It was agreed that updates on timeliness should be communicated with context. The Board also sought assurance on whether the quality of communication and engagement is improving and whether there have been any tangible improvements in lived experiences.</p> <p>SIB 174 Action: Agree an approach to communicating improvements on timeliness to families. Report to be shared at April 25 SEND Operational Group – Owner: Chris Lee</p> <p>SIB 175 Action: Ensure that an update on communication—covering how communication is being managed by teams and the experiences for families—is added to the forward plan. - Owner: Chris Lee</p> <p>Challenge: The Board sought clarity for CYP without a named education setting in their EHCPs, how many should have a named setting but don't and is their EHCP provision being delivered whilst they are not in school? It was also raised that schools are currently experiencing an increase in requests for flexi-schooling, with a high proportion of these CYP having EHCPs.</p> <p>Response: Assurance was provided that the Local Authority now has a stronger understanding of this cohort and is in a better position to identify and regularly review children and young people (CYP) where there are concerns or emerging issues. Proactive action is taken to mitigate risks and address challenging situations, including bringing forward annual reviews where appropriate. This work is being managed through the Non-School Alternative Provision (NSAP) team. Flexi-schooling links into the children not in school workstream and a broader discussion needs to take place to agree approach.</p> <p>SIB 176 Action: A meeting to be held outside of the Board to review data and the processes in place in the service for children and young people (CYP) with EHCPs who do not currently have a school placement, and to help shape the Non-School Alternative Provision (NSAP) team. - Owners: Lucy Doherty, Nicki Howlett and Sue Willgoss</p> <p>SIB 177 Action: Flexi-schooling to be taken forward through the Strategic Solutions Subgroup, with SENDIASS appropriately linked into this work. – Owner: Julia Grainger</p>
5.	<p>Children and Young People Data and NHS Health Data Linkage Project</p> <p>The CYP Data and NHS Health Data linkage project was presented as per the corresponding slides.</p> <p>Challenge: The Board raised that relying solely on SNEE ICB data limits the project's ability to gain a comprehensive understanding of local need, noting that Waveney's context and trends can differ significantly.</p> <p>Response: It was described that this is a pioneering project - only the second of its kind in the country - and remains in its early developmental stages. A key technical challenge that is currently being worked through is securing the necessary source data from Norfolk and Waveney ICB. This is compounded by recent organisational challenges, including the merger of the ICBs on the 1st of April which is likely to create a short period of disruption.</p> <p>SIB 178 Action: Rebecca Hulme to meet with Jamie Mills and Rebecca Allen regarding N&W ICB CYP source data, how this is currently being recorded and possible solutions to ensure Waveney data is included within the CYP Data and NHS Health Data linkage project. – Owners: Rebecca Hulme, Jamie Mills and Rebecca Allen</p> <p>SIB 179 Action: Further analysis of trends and themes to take place through CYP Data and NHS Health Data linkage project and reported back to SEND Improvement Board, following</p>

	<p>the appropriate governance route (SEND Quality Assurance and Performance Subgroup, SEND Operational Group) – Owners: Rebecca Allen and Harriet Wakeling</p>
6.	<p>Education Representatives Update</p> <p>The Education Representative update was presented as per the corresponding report.</p> <p>Challenge: It was noted that the current reporting and governance processes, including the route through SEND Operational Group, needs further development to ensure that information presented to SEND Improvement Board is aligned to the priority actions.</p> <p>Response: The Board acknowledged this and confirmed that the governance and reporting arrangements are being reviewed to improve alignment and timing.</p> <p>SIB 180 Action: Accelerate the review of governance and reporting processes to ensure education updates follow an effective route with clear expectations. – Owners: Education representatives, Julia Grainger and Sarah Ewum.</p>
7.	<p>Suffolk Parent Carer Forum Update</p> <p>A verbal update was provided on recent SPCF activity, highlighting the recruitment of new team members, the growing cultural and linguistic diversity within the forum, and the ongoing success of the Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) project. The update also included reflections from ‘Tell Us Tuesday’ themes on areas requiring further improvement, such as, quality assurance.</p> <p>Challenge: The Parent Carer Forum raised that current reporting processes and timings, including ‘You Said, We Did’ responses are not yet aligned with SEND Operational Group and SEND Improvement Board cycles.</p> <p>Response: The Board acknowledged this and agreed that the reporting cycle needs to be further developed. Members also recognised the breadth of work the Forum is currently undertaking and thanked them for this.</p> <p>SIB 181 Action: Align SPCF updates with Tell us Tuesday themes, ‘You Said, We Did’ reporting and SEND Operational Group and Improvement Board cycles. – Owners: Chris Lee, Sue Willgoss and Sarah Ewum</p>
8.	<p>You Said, We Did</p> <p>The ‘You Said, We Did’ update was presented as per the corresponding slides.</p> <p>The Board reaffirmed the importance of maintaining a consistent flow of reporting, as highlighted in the SPCF update, and agreed with next steps to clearly evidence impact in future reports.</p>
9.	<p>Local Area Inclusion Plan and SEND Reform Plan</p> <p>The Local Area Inclusion Plan (LAIP) was presented as per the corresponding slides, The Board approved the LAIP and granted formal sign-off.</p> <p>The Board provided positive feedback on the coproduction of the LAIP, noting that parent carer voices had been clearly reflected. The Board supported the document’s structure, the</p>

	<p>embedded governance arrangements, and the use of a live tool to track progress and improvement.</p> <p>Challenge: The Board questioned whether the LAIP would drive the improvements agreed within the Priority Action Plan (PAP), and whether it would help to support risk articulation and associated processes. The Board emphasised that it would need to remain laser focused on monitoring progress and impact of the priority actions as defined within the LAIP via focus on monitoring progress and impact as defined within the LAIP.</p> <p>Response: Reassurance was given that the priority actions and improvement areas within the PAP are fully aligned with the LAIP's Building Blocks, and that the associated risk register is currently being developed. Progress will be closely monitored through the relevant subgroups and routinely escalated to the Improvement Board. A review mechanism for the LAIP linking to evidence for the PAP items needs to be agreed.</p> <p>SIB 182 Action: LAIP review plan (termly) to be agreed with clear forward plan aligned to the Sub Groups and SOG processes. – Owner: Sarah Ewum</p>
10.	<p>Quality Assurance & Performance</p> <p>An update on the Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) Quality Assurance Audit Programme was presented as per the corresponding presentation.</p> <p>Challenge: The Board sought clarity on how the programme aligns with social care, specifically how EHCP quality auditing connects with social care quality assurance processes to demonstrate coherent partnership planning and impact.</p> <p>Response: It was acknowledged that current arrangements are not yet fully holistic; however, this forms part of ongoing development. The intention is to move toward whole system auditing that reflects the full experience of children and considers their SEND needs wherever they sit within the system. This approach will take additional time to fully embed.-system auditing that reflects the full experience of children and considers their SEND needs wherever they sit within the system. This approach will take additional time to fully embed.</p> <p>Challenge: The Board noted that some families report satisfaction with the Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment process, but the subsequent EHCP was found to be inadequate. They also queried whether the audit programme will focus solely on new EHCPs or include existing plans, both pre and post annual review.- and post-annual review.</p> <p>Response: It was confirmed that the programme will audit a mix of new and existing EHCPs. Plans are also being developed to deliver future family led workshops to deepen understanding of lived experience.-led workshops to deepen understanding of lived experience.</p> <p>SIB 183 Action: Organise family led workshops to gather insight on experiences, learning, and how this learning will translate into improvements and measurable impact. – Owner: Rachel Cogman</p> <p>Challenge: The Board requested greater visibility of EHCPs rated as 'good' and asked for increased detail in reports regarding timeframes for next steps and recommendations.</p> <p>Response: Assurance was provided that improving quality remains a key priority, and that there will be continued focus on strengthening connectivity and learning loops working across the LAP system.</p>

	<p>SIB 184 Action: Ensure DfE/CQC Advisors are engaged in the EHCP Quality Assurance work and include timescales in the next EHCP QA Programme report. – Owner: Rachel Cogman</p> <p>Challenge: The Board highlighted the challenges schools face in managing annual review processes, particularly the scale of demand, which can in turn impact the quality of reviews and subsequent EHCP amendments.</p> <p>Response: It was confirmed that this issue is recognised, and that actions are already underway to review annual review paperwork and processes in partnership with Bedford SLIP and education representatives within the SEND Statutory Service. A co-produced item will also be brought to the SEND Operational Group, setting out a structured approach to addressing the annual review backlog.</p> <p>SIB 185 Action: Agree date and report for EHCP Annual Review processes and restructure work. – Owners: Rachel Cogman and Chris Lee</p>
11.	<p>Performance and Data</p> <p>An update on the SEND Data Scorecard was presented as per the corresponding slides. The Board reiterated that the partnership was getting into a stronger place around performance monitoring, data curiosity and knowing itself which will be furthered strengthened through the SEND Data Scorecard and governance review.</p> <p>Performance on Autism and ADHD Assessments and CYP Mental Health was presented as per the corresponding slides. A verbal update was given on the recovery work, which confirmed that recurrent funding has been granted to support those who have waited the longest (over 52 weeks) for a neurodiversity assessment, a three to fourth month timescale has been put into place to ensure this work is mobilised at pace.</p> <p>Challenge: The Board questioned whether the recovery work could be delivered at pace without losing sight of quality and ensuring minimal impact for support services.</p> <p>Response: Reassurance was given that pace would not come at the expense of quality. While the funding must be spent by the end of March 26, ongoing work with partners will ensure this is delivered in the most effective and considered way.</p> <p>SIB 186 Action: Meeting to take place to ensure there is a joined up and considered approach across the ICBs to the time-bound recovery work. Owners: Sue Willgoss, Jamie Mills and Rebecca Hulme</p>
12.	<p>Forward Plan and Any Other Business</p> <p>The Broken Promises: Autism Action Report and the Local Area Maturity Assessment (with a date to complete the assessment as a partnership to be scheduled in the near future) were raised under AOB.</p>
	<p>Dates of Future Meetings</p> <p>Thursday 26th March 2026, 11AM – 13:45PM</p> <p>Thursday 21st May 2026, 11AM – 13:45PM</p> <p>Thursday 2nd July 2026, 11AM -13:45PM</p>

