

MINUTES

Title of Meeting:	SEND Improvement Board
Date:	Thursday 18 th December 2025
Place:	Hybrid Teams Meeting & Endeavour House, LIME B2F4R2
Times:	10:00 – 12:45
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 (ADe) 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) SEND Sufficiency Lead, Suffolk 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>Garry Joyce (GJ) Assistant Director CYP Suffolk and North-East Essex Integrated Care Board</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>Josette Kennington (JK) Head of SEND Transformation, 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>	
Invited to attend	<p>Lisa Shepherd (LS) – Strategic Service Improvement Partner</p> <p>Andrew Bennett (AB) – SEND Communication and Web Manager</p>	

Item No.	Item Description
1.	<p>Apologies & Introductions</p> <p>Apologies:</p> <p>Nic Roper</p> <p>Nicki Howlett</p> <p>Jonathan Fairclough</p> <p>Trudi Rose Porter</p> <p>Anna Mears</p> <p>Daniel Jones</p> <p>Introductions:</p> <p>Michael Lozano (NSFT Director of Quality) Covering for Anthony Deery.</p>

	Phoebe Cheung (PA/ Project Coordinator SEND CYP) Covering maternity leave for Victoria Hammond.
2.	<p>Review Minutes and Action Log</p> <p>The minutes from the previous SEND Improvement Board (06/11/25) were presented and accepted as an accurate record apart from one inaccuracy which concerned removing the terminology 'Neurodevelopmental Disorder'.</p>
3.	<p>SPCF Update</p> <p>The SPCF update was presented as per the SPCF December SEND Improvement Board report.</p> <p>Challenges:</p> <p>The Board encouraged a more strategic approach and evidence of how SPCF feedback is shaping improvements.</p> <p>The Board highlighted concerns regarding the inclusivity of some Post-16 and college settings, as well as Higher Education. It was noted that these areas are reflected within the Local Area Inclusion Plan, and that related themes and improvement actions will be addressed through the Preparing for Adulthood subgroup.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <p>SIB156: Integrate themes from SPCF 'Tell Us Tuesday' and other recurring feedback into a strategic reporting process for the SEND Operational Group and SEND Improvement Board, building on existing SPCF reporting - Owners: Jo Hedley; Sue Willgoss</p> <p>SIB157: Cllr Reid to be invited to SPCF weekly meeting – Owner: Jo Hedley</p>
4.	<p>You Said We Did</p> <p>The 'You Said, We Did' (YSWD) update was presented as per the corresponding slides.</p> <p>Challenges:</p> <p>The Board emphasised the need to 'close the loop' by ensuring that YSWD reporting clearly shows how feedback has been revisited, what impact has been achieved, and provides assurance that key themes are being tracked and addressed through the LAIP workstreams.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <p>SIB158: Building on strategic SPCF reporting, ensure that closing the loop and evidence of impact is captured within YSWD - Owner: Josette Kennington</p>
5.	<p>SPCF Survey Action Plan</p> <p>Updates on the SPCF Survey Action Plan were presented as per the corresponding slides. It was raised there had been delays due to capacity and access to raw survey data. Opportunities have been identified to improve the information gathered as part of the next annual survey. SPCF are keen to work with the partnership to gather meaningful data from parents and carers that can be effectively used to influence service improvements.</p>

	<p>The Board were assured that actions identified within the SPCF Survey Action Plan would be finalised in January 2026 and embedded within the Local Area Inclusion Plan.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Performance and Data</p> <p>The Suffolk Health Data Dashboard and SEND Data Exceptions Report were presented as per the corresponding slides.</p> <p>There were discussions that focused on translating data into meaningful intelligence — exploring the ‘so what’ behind the numbers —, examining how successes, challenges, and emerging insights are flowing through the system and also ensuring the partnership do not solely focus on EHC plans.</p> <p>Discussions were also had around Suffolk’s number of applications for Education Health Care Needs Assessment, and how this links to Sufficiency and the best start in life, graduated response and Families First approach. It was suggested that these discussions should be furthered at the Belonging and Inclusion event (30/01/2026) with education settings and leaders.</p> <p>Challenges:</p> <p>The Board noted that the Mental Health Support Team (MHST) data and performance was presented at SEND Operational Group and the Board requested for MHST outcomes to also be reported through the Suffolk Health Data Dashboard.</p> <p>The Board challenged the NSFT Advice Requests and the number that were overdue or not responded to. It was clarified that this is being investigated and that it is likely an issue with current reporting.</p> <p>The Board also challenged the support for mental health in schools and how this links to Ordinarily Available Provision and EHCPs, and the pace around timeframes for evaluating Neurodevelopmental data.</p> <p>The Cease to Maintain process was raised as an area that needs further clarification.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <p>SIB159: Ensure MHST reporting is captured within Health Data Dashboard updates for SEND Improvement Board – Owner: Kathryn Searle</p> <p>SIB160: Investigate NSFT Advice Requests overdue/not responded to and provide assurance to next SEND Improvement Board – Owner: Kathryn Searle</p> <p>SIB161: Ensure wider discussion around mental health support team and ordinarily available provision is added to SEND Operational Group forward plan – Owner: Kathryn Searle</p> <p>SIB162: Provide the board with clear timeframes on the development of the integrated partnership data scorecard and rollout – Owner: Harriet Wakeling</p> <p>SIB163: Cease to Maintain process to be explored operationally and reported back via. You Said, We Did – Owner: Jo Hedley, Josette Kennington</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>SEND Sufficiency Strategy</p> <p>The draft SEND Sufficiency Strategy was presented for approval. It was explained that there are further plans to develop an Executive Summary and an Easy Read version of the Strategy.</p>

	<p>The Board approved the SEND Sufficiency Strategy noting a few minor changes raised by members, including having a breakdown by age group/key stage and removing the term ‘rapid growth in demand.’</p> <p>Challenges:</p> <p>The Board challenged the anomalies in Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) and Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) identification and the assumptions about the percentage of Children and Young People (CYP) with SEND accessing specialist vs. mainstream settings and how this may not align with SEND reforms.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <p>SIB164: Investigate MLD decline and SLD patterns with Educational Psychology input — Owner: Chris Lee</p> <p>SIB165: Review the assumptions on the percentage of CYP with SEND accessing specialist settings in light of SEND reforms — Owner: Chris Lee</p>
8.	<p>Quality Assurance & Performance</p> <p>An update on Quality Assurance and Performance subgroup and activity was presented as per the highlight report and EHCP QA Audit Programme report. It was recognised that there needs to be moderation and calibration of current EHCP quality assurance before returning to SEND Improvement Board and that this will be driven through the Quality Assurance and Performance subgroup and SEND Operational Group.</p> <p>It was also noted that the SEND QA team has now moved into CYP wide quality assurance team, which is led by Rachel Cogman, Head of Quality Assurance.</p> <p>Challenges:</p> <p>The Board raised a challenge on the pace of the development of SEND Quality Assurance Framework, asking for assurance on timescales. The Board also challenged the limited oversight of early findings relating to quality of EHCPs through the EHCP Quality Assurance Programme.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <p>SIB166: Ensure a Final SEND QA Framework document is developed by end of March 26 – Owner: Kathryn Searle; Jo Hedley</p> <p>SIB167: Provide early moderated EHCP QA insights from the EHCP Audit Programme to the next SEND Improvement Board – Owner: Rachel Cogman</p>
9.	<p>Education Representatives Update</p> <p>The Education Representatives update was presented as per the corresponding report.</p> <p>Challenges:</p> <p>Discussion was held regarding the partnership wide approach to inclusivity, including joint working across education settings and local authority.</p> <p>Actions:</p>

	<p>SIB168: Ensure conversations around partnership working with education representatives continue outside of SEND Improvement Board and that an update is brought to SEND Operational Group – Owner: Julia Grainger</p>
10.	<p>ASEND Inspection Prep</p> <p>An update on the preparations for the ASEND monitoring inspection was presented as per the corresponding slides.</p> <p>The Board discussed the need for the partnership to sharpen its shared narrative, ensure Annex A evidence is inspection ready, clarify roles and responsibilities for inspection weeks, and clearly demonstrate impact through well prepared case studies.</p>
11.	<p>LAP Strategic SEND Communication Strategy</p> <p>The Draft LAP Strategic SEND Communication Strategy was presented for approval.</p> <p>The Board endorsed the strategy overall, noting the need to ensure alignment with the Coproduction Charter and the requirement for an accessible summary version to be produced.</p> <p>The Board also discussed further development of the LAP’s social media presence to strengthen engagement with parents and carers and improve accessibility of information, with support from the Bedford SLIP to be provided.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <p>SIB169: Ensure the communication strategy is aligned to the Coproduction Charter and that a two-page accessible summary is produced – Owner: Andrew Bennett</p>
12.	<p>Preparing for Adulthood</p> <p>This agenda item was deferred due to timings, the Board requested a ‘state of the nation’ view on strengths, risks, and transition experiences across education, health and care.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <p>SIB170: Bring PFA paper with strengths/risks, data and lived-experience case studies to next SEND Improvement Board – Owner: Martine Simpson/ Chris Lee</p>
13.	<p>Forward Plan</p> <p>The Board reviewed the Forward Plan and noted the addition of the following items: ‘Overlay of data between education and waiting lists for ADHD/ASD - PHM Data’ to Jan 2026 SEND Improvement Board and ‘Public Health Mental Health Needs Assessment’ to May 2026 SEND Improvement Board</p>
14.	<p>AOB</p> <p>The Board raised the need to ensure that the latest DfE and CQC communication on the SEND Reform Plan is fully reflected within the partnership’s existing programmes of work, including clear alignment with the LAIP, Sufficiency Strategy and other relevant workstreams.</p> <p>The Board approved the new minutes format which emphasises challenge, response and action.</p>
	<p>Dates of Future Meetings</p>

	Thursday 29th January 2026, 10AM – 12:45PM
	Thursday 26th March 2026, 10AM – 12:45PM
	Thursday 21st May 2026, 10AM – 12:45PM