

SEND IMPROVEMENT BOARD UPDATE:

Dear Colleagues,

I welcomed the group and quickly went around the table to introduce any new faces.

Before we started the meeting, I took the opportunity to talk a little bit about the wider context and challenges impacting Birmingham City Council and Schools. I won't dwell on that here, but it was important to reference this at the start of the meeting, particularly as I want to ensure that these contextual challenges do not unnecessarily impact the work we're doing to improve our SEND services.

I also referred to the launch of the SEND and Inclusion strategies on 10th July. The creation and launch of these strategies is the right thing to do, but I recognised that it exposed some negative reactions from some schools on the day, probably exacerbated by the format for the day. That said we can't duck these issues so it is better that they are exposed and understood. We're doing some tremendous work in Birmingham, but we won't make progress without working together in a system that has been under significant duress for many years. Helen Ellis put on record that following the event, she had been contacted by many Heads with positive feedback and ongoing commitment to working together.



As ever, we started the meeting with the "voice of experience". This time, Andy Couldrick shared some feedback from a parent following her experience with the Children's Disabilities service. This case showed the impact when things go right, and it was a very potent case study that the board and I were pleased to hear.

Jo Carney and Helen Price updated us on Children's Joint Commissioning. They outlined the opportunity that is now in place to rethink the approach and build on the work already done across the city but brings new benefits as a result of joint commissioning, ultimately delivering a more efficient personalised service that puts children at the heart. It was great to see that there are well-thought-out plans to deliver this and a clear pathway to mobilise. This prompted lots of positive discussion and questions from the group, and the board overwhelmingly endorsed the approach. It was clear that the board will want to see regular updates on this, so I will look forward to seeing this progress. It is another positive example of excellent which needs to impact on delivery.

David Bridgman then took us through the sufficiency strategy. To date, there hasn't been such a strategy in place in Birmingham, and as more data becomes available and feedback is received, this will undoubtedly change and improve over time. The challenge is to ensure there are sufficient school places available for children and young people, including those with SEND. Work is underway to map the current provision and identify gaps based on data-driven forecasts. David explained the actions taken to date to address the sufficiency gap between the current provision and forecast, and whilst significant challenges remain, David outlined the urgent tasks and reassured the board that expansion and satellite schemes are discussed on a regular basis.

Sue reminded us that the Developing Local Provision (DLP) has also provided a tactic to for children to have their needs met whilst they stay in their school setting. This is a testament to the creative school leaders who are providing a real solution. She was keen to reiterate that this programme is to complement the sufficiency strategy and is not a replacement for new school places. I closed this item with some reflections. I do believe this is a strong piece of work and I asked to see another update in six months' time. This segued perfectly into the next item, where Jas Didiaily made her debut at SIB and gave us an update on the new special school places coming to Birmingham through highly successful bids to DfE. Jas shared the proposed locations and confirmed that appropriate stakeholder engagement will now take place.

Helen Ellis then reminded us of the progress made on the APP. We spent the majority of the last meeting going through this in a lot of detail so it was good to see the movement since that meeting.

The meeting closed with me thanking Paul Doddridge, a member of the SEND Improvement Board, for his contribution as primary heads' representative, prior to him leaving us to take up a new opportunity in Telford.

Kind Regards,

Sue