

SEND IMPROVEMENT BOARD UPDATE:

Dear Colleagues,

I chaired and introduced the meeting this month, as John Coughlan, our DfE appointed SEND Commissioner, could not join in person and attended the meeting virtually.

It was a packed room and a packed agenda. We gave a special welcome to several new faces at the meeting. Councillor John Cotton, the new Leader of the Council, was in attendance, as was Councillor Adam Higgs, the new shadow cabinet member for Children and Families. We also welcomed Pam Armstrong, the new Chair of the Birmingham Parent Carer Forum (BPCF). Pam has been a core member of the BPCF for many years but has recently stepped in to chair the BCPF following the resignation of Sabiha Aziz.

In introducing herself to the Send Improvement Board (SIB), Pam formally placed on record her thanks to Sabiha for all her support over recent years, and this was echoed by John Coughlan, who advised that he would be writing to Sabiha personally to thank her for her contributions.



Pam reinforced that the BPCF will continue representing parents, carers, children and young people across the city. She said the forum had supported many of the people and their departments for the past five years, and she looks forward to SIB members getting behind the BCPF and continuing to build trusting and positive relationships.

I also thanked Sabiha for all her hard work in representing our parent carer community and gave my commitment to continuing our improvement journey in genuine partnership. I assured Pam that we would all wrap our arms around her and the BPCF and continue collaborating with them as a trusted partner.

Helen Ellis, Director of SEND and Inclusion, took us through the 18-month stocktake, which evidenced the distance travelled between Dec 2022 and June 2023. Helen noted that much work had been done in creating and approving our joined-up strategies for improving provision and outcomes for children and young people with SEND and committed to publishing an annual report on progress against all our objectives.

Helen and colleagues took us through the work to address each AOSW (Area of Significant Weakness), outlining the progress, evidence, next steps, and priority areas. This prompted some healthy debate, discussion, and feedback, which we will take on board.

During the updates, we were shown a video from Forward Thinking Birmingham. Unfortunately, we suffered from some audio issues, so I've attached a copy of the video for you below.

Taking my chair "hat" off and speaking as DCS, I am pleased to see the substantial work done so far. It is recognised that there is still a lot to do, but the evidence and feedback from parents, carers, BPCF and partners alike demonstrated the positive impact on families. We must remember where we've come from; whilst we're not yet where we want to be, it is better. We will be relentless in improving the system.

On a similar note, we talked about our "Annual Conversation" with Ofsted, where we spent a lot of time reiterating our strategies and plans to the inspectors. In turning these strategies into action, we need to work together as a team across the partnership. Seeing the offers of help, support, and collaboration gives me confidence that this is happening.

Helen Ellis told us about the SIB's focus for the next six months. This will be delivered through our SEND and Inclusion Strategies (these are being formally launched on the 10th July – see below). Helen had a call to action for the group; "please record and supply evidence of the impact on the ground." We need to be proactive for our next Ofsted / CQC inspection and gathering that evidence of impact and lived experience is crucial in our preparation.

Before we closed the meeting, Councillor McCarthy reiterated the need for steady and unbreakable progress. Nothing flashy, just steady and embedded, to ensure our achievements are sustained for the benefit of our young people. This was followed up in closing words by our SEND Commissioner, who remarked on the team pulling together and striking the balance between self-aware and self-critical whilst still celebrating successes. He strongly endorsed Helen's call to action. He reminded the group that there is a collective responsibility across the system to lead improvement, which genuinely impacts our children and their families.

I hope you find this summary useful, and another will follow the July meeting.

Kind regards,

Sue



[Video From Forward Thinking Birmingham](#)

10th of July SEND and inclusion Strategy Launch Event Invite and Details

[Visit the SEND Local Offer Website](#)

