



---

# SEND BIRMINGHAM

## The Partnership Newsletter



## SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Board - July 2024

The July meeting of the SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Board was entirely focused on the 36 month stocktake of the Accelerated Progress Plan. The local operational leaders provided updates on the progress of our remaining 11 areas of significant weakness to NHS England and DfE colleagues. The stocktake meeting provided a chance for the Board membership to assess progress, then support and challenge our local partnership. Colleagues leading on each of the areas (of weakness) attended to present updates. The overall consensus was the local area is making positive strides forward in a number of the areas of weakness. However, it is still recognised that there were improvements still required and that the pace of improvement must increase.

The meeting allowed the opportunity for a number of videos to be played, clearly demonstrating the lived-experiences of our children and young people. Our thanks and appreciation go to those families for sharing their experiences and allowing us to gain valuable insight into their unique perspectives, challenges and triumphs. These videos really bring to life the work our teams are delivering and are a great way to critique and celebrate the work we are delivering across the partnership.

Although some progress had been made with inter-agency protocols and understanding of roles and responsibilities, it wasn't sufficiently consistent or cohesive enough for the lived experience of families. It was agreed therefore, that a deep dive into this area would be undertaken, led by Pat Tate, DfE SEND Advisor and Deborah Ward, Children & Young People Learning Disability & Autism and SEND Senior Manager (West Midlands) NHS England, together with a range of stakeholders including parents, carers, headteachers, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators, Early Help colleagues and young people. Feedback

will be provided from the deep dive at the 3<sup>rd</sup> September Board meeting. We also look forward to receiving formal feedback on the whole stocktake from DfE and NHS England on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September.

Work to improve the [Local Offer Birmingham](#) website has been comprehensive with good results. There has been a considerable increase in website visitors/users compared to the previous years. The team work closely with [the Hive College](#) students, ensuring the website is more accessible, and co-producing specific areas for improvement. Feedback received from the Parent Carer Forum is that the website was proving much easier for users to navigate, but we need to promote it more effectively.

The coordination of assessments of children and young people's needs has improved with significantly increased collaboration and commitment between agencies. A new operating model for those transitioning into adulthood has been created, including more effective training and quality assurance around the provision of advice returned. Work will continue to ensure the systems and processes are fully embedded and operating as business as usual.

Considerable work has been undertaken to improve the quality of Education and Healthcare Plans. A much more robust quality assurance process is in place, with checklists feeding into staff supervision to identify areas of training that may be required. Pam Armstrong, Chair of the Parent Carer Forum, kindly offered assistance in co-producing the training and this is being discussed for the future. Other areas of improvement included:

- an increase in the number of monthly audits to 90-93 compared to an average of 26 audits being undertaken in other local authorities
- the introduction of 'SEND in 10' – a method by which anomalies are picked up sooner, communicated effectively and discussed with the appropriate teams
- new documentation fully co-produced with all partners

The waiting times for children and young people to receive an assessment of need and/or to receiving the relevant support from therapists, educational psychologists, CAMHS and those needing a neurodevelopmental pathway remains a real challenge for the local area. Our waiting times are an area of significant weakness and in many cases have got worse. There was positive news in that when seen by professionals, the assessment and the interventions are very well received with feedback from children and young people and their families being generally positive.

It is clear that waiting times must be tackled as a matter of urgency. The Board recommended the calling/organisation of a 'Health Summit' for a deep dive into this area. We will report back on this in more detail in due course. Health colleagues across the local area with education and social care leaders will be coming together to agree and drive the way forward.

Our co-production training programme continues to make a real impact on 'lived experiences' where services are involving our children, young people and families in decision making. Thank you to the Parent Carer Forum for the positive feedback that *'Birmingham is a lot better and that the Parent Carer Forum is now in the thought process rather than an afterthought.'* Our co-production values will continue to be strongly embedded in the local area.

We continue to work more collaboratively with our schools across the city and there is a much stronger grip on school improvement, attendance, exclusions/inclusive practice and ensuring students with SEND are accessing and attending the provision identified in their EHCPs. There is also exciting work taking place in partnership with Heart of Birmingham Vocational College, MENCAP and [DFN Project Search](#) with a supported internship at Amazon for young people aged 18-24. All designed to help our young people with SEND have opportunities to enter paid employment.

We will also be arranging focused, deep dives on:

- the outcomes of/for Birmingham children with additional needs
- the attendance and exclusion support for families and education settings (for those with additional needs)
- the post 16 opportunities and pathways for those with additional needs

Our thanks to all who are doing excellent work across our SEND Partnership to improve the lives of those we support. Birmingham SEND delivery is moving in the right direction but there remain some specific areas of weakness we need to maintain the pace of improvement with.

We will provide an update after the September Board meeting.

With our very best wishes

**Dr Sue Harrison – Strategic Director for Children and Families**

**John Coughlan – SEND Commissioner**