

SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Board Update – December 2025



This update provides a summary of progress across the SEND & Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Board, reflecting activity from local authority teams, education providers, health and care partners, and families.

The December meeting welcomed Sally Rowe as the new Interim Independent Chair, following the improved inspection outcome.

1. Voice of Experience

Staff were welcomed from Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust to provide an update and shared positive developments in speech and occupational therapy support across schools and early years settings. Highlights included:

- Strong feedback for Sensory Circuits, Spill the Tea sessions, and multi-agency planning.
- Targeted interventions such as Fun with Food and Ready Steady Reception showing positive outcomes.
- Improved alignment between health and education, ensuring consistent support for families.

2. SEND & AP Improvement Plan – overview

Progress continues to improve, with more actions completed since September. The six inspection-priority areas have been updated and published on the Local Offer. Risk management activity remains strong. Full comparative reports will be provided in March 2026.

- **The Right Time, Right Place** update by Vanessa Wright. It is progressing well. Key achievements include completing the neurodevelopmental redesign phase, finalising the all-age mental health specification, strengthening EHCP quality

assurance, improving early years take-up, and continued success of the Brokerage service in securing placements. Next steps focus on delivering mental health and neurodiversity plans and addressing inspection feedback on waiting times and EHCP quality.

- **The Engagement and Communications** work update by Lisa Harris says it continues to progress well. Partnership working has strengthened across children's and adults' services, health, and the Parent Carer Forum, supported by improvements in data quality, reporting, and complaints processes, along with website engagement exceeding targets. Next steps include embedding actions arising from the post-inspection review.
 - **Education and Safeguarding**, update by Helen Ellis, it is progressing well. School Improvement Boards are operating effectively, SEND alignment has strengthened, and key roles such as the Head of Attendance and a specialist adviser are now in place. Performance shows improvements in phonics, GCSE results, attendance, suspensions, and reduced waits for specialist placements.
 - **Independent Living** update by Helen Ellis, saying it is progressing steadily with over half of its actions completed. Key developments include improved audits, stronger youth engagement, and the launch of the SEND Employment Forum. Alternative Provision work is also advancing through strategy consultation, better medical needs pathways, additional staffing, and strengthened reporting.
- 3. Deep Dive: EHCP Quality & Consistency** led by Natalie Williams, BCC, highlighted significant progress through monthly audits of over 110 plans, improved health partner input, and strengthened feedback loops supported by new roles such as the DSCO. These efforts have led to fewer plans with major gaps and stronger evidence for tribunal decisions. Challenges remain, including inconsistent operational buy-in, variable health contributions, capacity pressures, and the need for clearer criteria for requesting advice. All new resident doctors at BCHNFT have now received EHCP/SEND training, reporting increased confidence and positive feedback.
- 4. Working Together Programme** - Jodie Newson, BCC and Pam Armstrong, BPCF presented an update on Birmingham securing £700k from the Department for Education's SEND Intervention Support Fund to strengthen parental engagement in schools. Building on existing co-production work and the PINS project, the programme aims to improve relationships and trust between parent carers, schools, and the wider SEND community. Planned activity includes parent peer groups, community events, Working Together agreements, and support from Programme Connectors with lived experience. Success will be measured through increased parental trust, stronger co-production, and improved inclusion, supported by weekly Task & Finish Groups, a monthly Steering Group, and recruitment of programme staff.

Best wishes,
Sally Rowe
Interim Independent Chair