

SEND and Inclusion Executive Board, Friday 21st March, 09:30 to 11:30 Civic Centre

Present

- Cath McEvoy-Carr** (Chair), Director: Children and Families, NCC
Andrew Graham (AG) Principal Adviser, CES Commissioning and Strategy, NCC
Deanne Taylor (DT), Head of SEND, NCC
Jenny Hicken (JH) Network Delivery Manager, ICB
Mark Patton (MP), Assistant Director Children and Families, NCC
Ian Dawson (ID) Head of Educational Development and Inclusion, NCC
Steve Gittins (SG), Chair of SEND subgroup on behalf of the Promise Board
Gareth Smith (GS) Headteacher, Walker Riverside Academy
Christopher Richardson (CR), CEO, Prosper Learning Trust
Johnathon Jamison (JJ) Assistant Director Community Support, NCC
Gail Ballance (Head of Children, Young People and Community, ICB)
Rachel Gibson (RG) Assistant Director at Newcastle College, Representative of the post 16 sector, Newcastle College)
Rachel Gallagher (RGa) Public Health Portfolio Lead, NCC
Karen Parker (KP), Acting Headteacher, Sir Charles Parsons School
Vicki Whincup (VW), SEND Voice Lead, NCC
Linzi McMeekin (LM), Program Lead for Commissioning and Procurement, NCC
Ann Banks (AB), SEND Service Improvement Lead, NCC
Louise Melling (LM), Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) Lead, NCC
Dawn Robson (DR), Designated Clinical Officer SEND, ICB
Rebecca Coulter (RC), Pathway Manager, NHS
Emily Nesbitt (EN), Service Improvement Assistant, NCC (minutes)

Apologies:

- Stella Wilson, Director of Operations, Family Health Clinical Board, NHS
 Kirsty Sprudd (Deputy Director of Delivery Fraud ICB)
 Marie Leddy (Chair of Parent Carer Forum)
 Richard Scott (Director of Nursing North, ICB)
 Helga Charters (Associate Director of Nursing; Safeguarding, Learning Disability, MCA)
 Claire Taylor (Chief Executive Officer, Footsteps)
 Sarah Kerrigan (Service Manager, NCC)
 Adele Moore (Lead Assistant Director CSC & EH)
 Kelly McGuinness (Designated Social Care Officer, NCC)
 Anna Williams (Transformation Manager, NHS)

1	Welcome and Apologies	Action
	Chair welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies were noted.	
2	Minutes of last meeting	

	Minutes agreed as correct and actions updated, as shown in action summary.	ALL
3	SEND Voice Update– Vicki Whincup	
	<p>Paper shared in meeting pack:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VW provided an update on the SEND Voice work plan for 2025/26, which is set to start next month. The work plan includes various initiatives aimed at improving the local offer and supporting transitions for young people • The plan includes setting up a separate website for the local offer, designed by children and young people. This initiative aims to make the local offer more accessible and user-friendly. • There is an emphasis on transition with the post-16 group, including adaptive annual review paperwork to gather child and young person voice. This initiative aims to ensure that transitions are smooth and that young people's voices are heard in the process. • There is a strong need to join up various transition work across different areas to avoid missing opportunities. As well as mapping of ongoing transition work to ensure comprehensive coverage. • The new interns are starting on the 2nd of April in supporting the SEND Voice work. There will be an Introduction of interns to different teams and meetings. • There will be work with youth councils and forums, following their tried and tested model. This initiative aims to engage young people in the decision-making process and ensure their voices are heard. • There is potential for panel youth inspectors to evaluate services and link with safe city work. This initiative aims to involve young people in the evaluation of services and ensure their feedback is considered <p>Discussion Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair commented on the significance of the accessibility strategy and how to promote it across the Council and other venues as well as championing the strategy through various management governance structures. • There is also the potential for young inspectors to evaluate services and link with safe city work. As well as collaboration with Vicki Hartley on developing the young inspector's service. <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEND Voice to be added on the forward plan for every SEND Exec Board 	ENE

4	Partnerships for Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) Update – Jenny Hicken	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JH provided an update on the Partnerships for Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) project, which aims to support schools in the Newcastle Local Authority area. • The project offers training for teaching staff to improve their understanding and support for neurodiverse students. This initiative aims to enhance the skills and knowledge of educators in addressing the needs of neurodiverse students. • The project includes parent engagement through coffee mornings, organized by the Parent Care Forum. These coffee mornings provide an opportunity for parents to connect, share experiences, and receive support. • Some schools have not fully engaged with the training offer or the parent engagement element of the project. This has been a missed opportunity for those schools, but efforts will continue to engage them in the second phase of the project. • A parent survey was conducted at the start of the project to assess how parents felt their school was supporting them. A follow-up survey will be conducted by May to evaluate any improvements. • The second phase of the project will focus on embedding the training in schools and continuing parental engagement. The goal is for schools to independently facilitate coffee mornings and support parents. • The future funding of the project is uncertain due to changes within the NHS and the ICB's budget management. This has created a grey area around the ongoing facilitation and funding of the project. • The project includes an evaluation program to assess the impact of the training and parent engagement. The evaluation will look at modifications to behaviour policies, staff awareness, and relationships with parents and carers. • There is potential for expanding the project to secondary schools, depending on future funding and the needs of the schools. <p>Actions: Evaluation results to be added to forward plan for 25/26 SEND Exec Board.</p>	EN
5	SEND Strategy Progress Update – Deanne Taylor	
	<p>PowerPoint presentation shared:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DT went through some key priorities in terms of getting the right support at the right time and getting it right together. • Graduated Response: Ensuring a robust and agreed core offer across all schools, using the descriptive need to help consistent identification of need and alignment of support through ASAP and LIPs. • Capital Works Investment: Investment in capital works to improve accessibility in mainstream schools, with 24 schools receiving 	

	<p>modifications as of December. Newcastle is the only local area in the Northeast region using SEND high needs funding for this purpose.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Therapy Services. Redesigning therapy services, including speech and language, to address significant waiting times and improve access. • Specialist Provision: Increasing capacity in special schools and additionally resourced provisions, with a public consultation for further expansion at Thomas Bewick. • Co-production and Timeliness: Improving co-production, timeliness, and quality of EHCPs. The audit process has shown improvements, but sections E and F (outcomes and provision) still require some targeted focus. • Audit Results: The audit results indicate fewer inadequate plans but more good overall. The focus remains on improving the quality of EHCPs. • There are challenges in redesigning therapy services, particularly speech and language, due to significant waiting times and system complexities. There is the need for a clear timeline and response to individual cases. • There is the importance of capital works investment in mainstream schools to improve accessibility and align with the government's agenda. • The audit process has highlighted areas for improvement in EHCPs, particularly in outcomes and provision. Feedback is being provided to advice writers and schools to improve the quality of plans. <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DT highlighted that the audit tool rates the quality of each section of the EHCP, and it is benchmarked across all the areas of the country that use it. • Chair reinforced how useful and easy to use the template is and that it is a great assessment tool. 	
6	<p>SEND Strategic Risk – Deanne Taylor</p>	
	<p>Papers shared in meeting pack:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SEND strategic risk has been included in the Local Authority corporate risk register to ensure it is monitored and managed effectively. This inclusion was requested by the Chief Executive due to the significant risks attached to SEND, including financial, reputational, and service delivery risks. • The SEND strategic risk will be kept under review and reported on a quarterly basis. An annual review will determine whether the risk needs to remain in the system. • The Integrated Care Board (ICB) also manages risks related to SEND, with reports submitted to NHS England and the senior leadership team 	

7	Review Terms of Reference – Cath McEvoy-Carr	
	<p>Papers shared in pack ahead of meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The board will consider assurance, risk, and issues reports. • Delegation to SEND Workstream meetings for progress reports, which will provide assurance and highlight risks and issues using reporting templates and toolkits. • CMC currently chairs SEND Exec Board and KS is the deputy. There was discussion if it needed to be an independent chair. • There is a need to confirm KS continued role and explore if anyone else from the ICB would like to chair. • There are regular updates to the relevant cabinet member, Leslie, who works full-time and finds it challenging to attend meetings. • Risks to be escalated to the Chief Executive and senior leadership team. The ICB also manages and reports on SEND-related risks to NHS England and the senior leadership team. • There should be Regular reports to the DfE and NHS England, with annual engagement meetings with Ofsted and CQC. There are also separate meetings with NHS England around SEND agendas. • There are Board Membership Principles which members should sign up to. • There was a consideration of representation from the VCSE sector. CMC currently meets with Lisa Goodwin quarterly and will discuss potential representation. • There should be transparent arrangements for direct engagement with the board. There is the potential involvement of interns to review and suggest appropriate engagement methods <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CMC asked if anyone else did want to chair the meeting to send over their interest to her or EN. • There was a discussion on extending an invitation to opposition group leads to enhance cross-party oversight, transparency, and assurance and whether this would be suitable. <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair to confirm KS continued role and explore if anyone else from the ICB would like to chair. Chair • Chair and MP will raise the issue with the Cabinet Member, Leslie, to ensure she is kept informed and consider a dedicated session for her attendance. Chair/MP • Chair will raise the issue with Councillor Taylor to ensure opposition leads are aware of the board's existence and how to seek information. Chair • Email to be sent to all board members with the principles and an option sign this electronically. EN • Chair to speak to Lisa Goodwin with regards to VSCE Sector representation. Chair 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair to speak with the opposition leads to ensure they are aware of the Board and where to get information. • ID job description to be amended in the TOR document. 	<p>Chair EN</p>
8	Speech and Language Update – Gail Ballance/Linzi McMeekin	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcastle Hospitals deliver speech and language services, with some delivery by CNTW services. There have been ongoing meetings to address the redesign of community changes to reduce wait times. • There have been reduced wait times from triage to assessment, but no reduction from assessment to treatment. • There have been significant challenges in the speech and language service, including long wait times and difficulties in data sharing. • Internal changes in allocation and triage processes have been made and further work is being done to address system support and specialist provision. • The Northside Autism assessment pathway accessed through the speech and language service has significant numbers of children waiting. Investments have been made to increase capacity for autism diagnosis, aiming to redesign pathways and improve clarity and ease of access. • The recent NHS changes have created uncertainty and potential risks to the system. Operational cost reductions and changes in service delivery are expected to impact the progress of the redesign efforts. • There will be continued work with providers to improve the service. As well as escalation of concerns and risks to senior leadership and national government for further support and clarity. 	
9	Children's Continuing Care – Dawn Robson	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are ongoing internal reviews and discussions related to children's continuing care (CCC). • Concerns have been raised about the transition from children's continuing care to adult continuing healthcare (CHC), with evidence that some children are not always receiving effective transition services. • There are examples within Newcastle where children have been on CCC but faced challenges when transitioning to adult services, leading to local authority adult services stepping in to support care packages • A meeting was held last week to address these issues, and further work is being done to understand and resolve the challenges. • There is a reluctance to engage with individual local areas due to the expectation of applying the same standards across the region. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need for better communication and join-up between children's and adult based services to ensure smooth transitions. • There is importance in addressing eligibility criteria for CCC and ensuring that children who meet the criteria receive the appropriate funding and support. • There are concerns about the high bar for eligibility criteria and the need for a review to ensure it meets the needs of children with complex care needs. • There is a workshop planned for May to review transitions and identify best practices and areas for improvement. 	
10	Outcomes from Annual Reviews – Ann Banks	
	<p>Paper shared in meeting pack:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A manual exercise was conducted to review how schools are assessing outcomes in annual reviews. The exercise involved checking individual files for each child to determine if outcomes were achieved. • The exercise serves as a baseline and will be carried out annually. • Individual reports for secondary schools will be created to prompt discussions between caseworkers and SENCOs. • Discussions will focus on whether children are achieving their outcomes and if there is a need for EHCPs. • The exercise showed the importance of clearly articulating outcomes in EHCPs to ensure they can be assessed accurately and the need for support for SENCOs to challenge EHCPs that do not have well-articulated outcomes. • There is also the potential for discussions around whether children who are achieving their outcomes still need EHCPs. 	
11	Getting Ready for Next Steps Progress Update – Louise Melling	
	<p>Paper shared in meeting pack:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The transitions guide has been published and is continuously being reviewed based on feedback and efforts are being made to extend the reach of the guide to year nine students. • There have been surveys of secondary and post-16 settings identified areas for improvement in year nine PFA annual reviews. Discussions around supported internships and employment opportunities were lacking in some reviews. • There are increased internships within the city through the DfE Internship work program. Efforts are needed to ensure schools are aware of these opportunities and vocational programs. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pilot program with the NE Combined Authority focuses on year nine aspirations and interests. The information gathered will help support students year on year. • There is a collaboration with Sir Charles Parsons, Newcastle College, and Newcastle City Learning where students from Charles Parsons attend Newcastle College on Fridays to become familiar with the college environment. • There have been coffee mornings with parents with a focus on PFA and transitions, involving various partners. As well as informal discussions with parents to gather feedback and support. 	
12	Getting it Right Together Audit Update and Improvement Plan – Deanne Taylor/Dawn Robson	
	<p>Paper shared in meeting pack:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 100 participants took part in the audit, exceeding the initial ambition of 50. • There were specific areas of improvement identified including outcomes and provision. • The audit highlighted the need for better join-up with children's social care and health services. • A detailed improvement plan is being developed, focusing on each section of the audit. • The plan includes specific improvements for social care and health services. • The detailed improvement plan will be presented at a future meeting once completed. 	
13	Community Short Break Offer –Linzi McMeekin	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback on the offer highlighted concerns around the budget. Transport costs were identified as a barrier for families accessing short breaks. • The offer has been updated to include transport costs, making it easier for families to access short breaks. A rationalisation process will be implemented to address transport issues and ensure families can access the offer. • The updated offer is planned to start on the 1st of July, pending finalisation of details. 	
14	AOB	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case Reviews: Update on the case reviews conducted by Marion Cullen and the learning from these reviews. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access Fund: Discussion deferred due to Claire Taylor's absence. • Thomas Bewick Expansion Consultation: Public consultation to increase capacity at Thomas Bewick using space at Kenton Bar. 	
--	--	--

Action summary from this meeting

Agenda Item no. Date of mtg	Action	Owner	Due by date	Status
3. 21.03.2024	SEND Voice to be added on the forward plan for every SEND Exec Board	EN	May	Open
4. 21.03.2024	PINS Evaluation results to be added to forward plan for 25/26 SEND Exec Board.	EN	Sept	Open
7. 21.03.2024	Speak with Cabinet Member, Lesley to ensure she is kept informed and consider a dedicated session for her attendance.	Chair	May	Open
7. 21.03.2024	Chair to confirm KS continued role and explore if anyone else from the ICB would like to chair.	Chair	May	Open
7. 21.03.2024	Chair will raise the issue with Councillor Taylor to ensure opposition leads are aware of the board's existence and how to seek information.	Chair/MP	May	Open
7. 21.03.2024	Email to be sent to all board members with the principles and an option sign this electronically	EN	May	Open
7. 21.03.2024	Chair to speak to Lisa Goodwin with regards to VSCE Sector representation.	Chair	May	Open
7. 21.03.2024	CMC to speak with the opposition leads to ensure they are aware of the Board and where to get information.	Chair	May	Open
7. 21.03.2024	ID job description to be amended in the TOR document	EN	May	Open
11. 11.11.2024	Proposal on the Question Time Panel to be shared at the next SEND Executive Board Meeting. Deferred to next Board Meeting.	VW	May	Open