

Minutes

SEN & Inclusion Board Meeting

Thursday 9th October 2025, 2pm

Microsoft Teams Meeting

Present:

Naomi Carter (NC) – Service Director, Education, Inclusion and Access
Beth Dyer (BD) – Service Manager, Education
Rachael Williams (RW) – Inclusion Manager
Nichola Smith (NS) – SEND Manager
Kate Evans (KE) – SEND Quality & Performance Officer
Irina Rowan (IR) – Senior Finance Business Partner
Jodi Smith (JS) – Senior Accounting Technician
Rosie Lister (RL) – Virtual School Headteacher
Hannah Byers (HB) – Team Lead, Specialist Advisory Teacher Team
Rowena Givens (RG) – Early Years SEN Advisory Teacher
Steff Gleeson (SG) – Service Manager, SEND
Poppy Smith (PS) – Education Psychologist
Ellie Furmidge (EF) – Business Services Officer

Apologies:

Hannah Pye (HP) – Team Lead, Speech and Language Therapy

Summary of Actions
Action: HP to find out how many of the 60 Autism consultations go through to assessment.
Action: HB to email NS a list of children with hearing or vision as Primary Need.
Action: NC to put together a set slide deck for circulation prior to the next meeting so staff can add updates.

1. Welcome

Welcome and apologies

NC welcomed everyone to the meeting including the new members and apologies were noted. NC explained the purpose of the meeting and that the Safety Valve agreement had been re-written after the split from Hampshire and these meetings give teams opportunity to report on their areas, provide strengths, concerns and ways to better improve and help children with SEND.

Minutes from the previous meeting

The minutes from the previous meeting were reviewed and agreed correct.

Action tracker

The following updates were shared: NC had sent both the formal agenda structure and details on the Local Offer to CH and these were circulated. EF hadn't seen any updated from HP regarding the Autism assessments. NC asked this remains an action. EF advised there was no data from DW circulated with the previous minutes. NC noted DW is off sick.

Action: HP to find out how many of the 60 Autism consultations go through to assessment.

2. Strategic Leadership and Governance of System

Financial update on High Needs spend

IR shared the financial report from August 2025. IR highlighted the £4.1 pressures on the high needs block and the current £5.2m overspend. She reported this was mostly due to increase in numbers of EHCP above those currently funded as well as increases in independent placements, EOTAS packages and placements etc. NC highlighted the importance that these projections are large but could get worse saying there are also pressures from the Isle of Wight College, particularly those on Pathways to pay a large bill (approximately £3.6m). NC explained in simple terms the £12m deficit was essentially wiped and set at £0, but instead of stopping EHCP's we are working to be better and smarter around things, looking at early intervention, ceasing plans were appropriate and supporting routes into adulthood. IR reminded that in these figures the pressure from the IOW College is not included so this is a changing picture.

IR reported that with £17m forecast deficit we are not on track and as shown in the unmitigated and mitigated forecast, we are achieving significant savings but there is still a gap in funding received from the DfE for high needs block.

NC shared that lots of LA's are cutting services, but we aren't doing this. NC expressed her wishes to look at an outreach model at some point, but this needs to align with REST and School Improvement and although will add pressure to the high needs block, we view these services as essential. NC said schools need to recognise what resources they have available and understand that the system is the problem, but they can be part of the solution. NC mentioned the £1.5m transfer from the Schools Budget to the High Needs Block each year, although Schools Forum may look to stop this.

Local Offer

KE advised of no real update, but shared that the PCF (Parent Carer Forum) has now been set so hopes to move this forward.

Outcome of Area SEN Partnership Board & Sub Group

NC advised of a verbal update in the Summer but will have a more robust update at our next meeting. NC reported there was a dry run of what documents are required for the Area SEND inspection and she thanks KE and others for pulling this together as she has confidence that we are in a good place and know what is required should we get the call.

3. Oversight of statutory process

SEN performance (EHCNA and timeliness) and trends/patterns

KE reported on behalf of NS, that there are currently 1914 EHCP's. There are 60 active tribunal cases (75 for 2025 so far), with 41 mediations from June-September 2025. Last

Academic Year, there were 385 ECHPA requests, 167 of which are parental requests. There are currently 90 EOTAS/EOTIC pupils. JS questioned this number as a report from EMS stated 82 and she is currently aware of 71 paid for and 9 additional that are not being funded. KE confirmed that 90 is a correct figure, as they have recently had to agree some via Tribunal that may not have reached JS yet.

KE advised of a Phase Transfer engagement event that took place with good turn out and another scheduled for Saturday 18th October.

The Phase Transfer process has started with all annual reviews uploaded to the Hub so that will be easier for the team. BD and NS have provided SENCo's with training around this process and further termly SENCo training has been rolled out across schools.

KE said NS has been working on an audit tool and Senior Officers have also been carrying out regular quality assurance on EHCP's.

KE reported that meetings have been set up with the PCF, but sadly nobody turned up, but there input is needed on workstreams moving forwards.

Annual Review

KE reported 224 Post-16 EHCP's as of 1st September 2025, which are being looked at as a priority to assess whether there is a need to maintain. There were 31 requests for assessment and 45 EHCP's agreed in September. KE said parents of Phase Transfer students have until the end of October to submit their preferences. In terms of timeliness, KE said Health has improved and information is being provided sooner. NS thanked Dana and RW said she has been proactive and generally good to work with.

KE shared that area of need was highest in Primary. RW questioned this and asked if this would move up to Secondary and whether we should be planning for this. KE explained that the trend in Primary was due speech and language and this wouldn't always carry over into Secondary, but suggested this may be worth looking at. HB asked if they could work on figures as she is aware of some inaccuracies and Primary Need may not match up, suggesting she can easily provide a list of names of those who are on a plan with hearing or vision as a Primary Need. NS asked for this list.

Action: HB to email NS a list of children with hearing or vision as Primary Need.

Quality Assurance

NC said she was aware that NS had pulled a document together and sent this to Ashley.

4. Specialist Places

Capital/Sufficiency of places

NC reported that work is currently taking place and going well at Chillerton and Rookley as part of Medina House expansion and the Cowes site as a medical expansion of Lionheart. Work is taking place to align all Primary RP's to 12 places and Secondaries to 20 places, with conversation ongoing with St Francis, Medina and Carisbrooke. NC advised Glenn and Emma are working on a new paper regarding further SEND expansion plans in Early Years. NC reported approximately 30 children identified, which is high and as part of early planning SG is going to carry out visits to assess need.

Commissioning of places

NC mentioned that there is some important work to be done around this, making sure that all placements are on the DPS and are commissioned properly with appropriate checks carried out. NC is working with procurement on this and whether they move over to a framework as currently we are non-compliant and not working to KCSIE. NC said they will rank the importance and QA visits must be carried out and we really must tighten up on this to safeguard children.

5. Services for Schools

Early Years SEN

RG reported there are currently 246 children open to the service, with 114 in current Reception, 87 due to start in Sept 26, 39 starting in Sept 27 and 6 starting in Sept 28. There are 47 home visits from portage and 16 on the waiting list. RG said she has been into 9 schools so far this year who are asking her for support. She has 2 portage staff members and 2 SEN advisors working with Pre-Schools. RG reported she is also working closely with Health Visitors for early intervention and there are a couple of cases that have been missed at 2-year checks. RG has a list of these and will check the reasons this may be for example, moving in from the mainland etc.

School Improvement Offer/Training/Networks

BD confirmed there is traction with development sessions and said the SEN sessions this year are free to schools as they are aware of the need for these and the legal base point. BD reported they are finding that School Development Plans don't have staff development around SEND needs as a focus and they aren't developing the people who are delivering the sessions to the pupils.

REST

BD reported there are referrals coming through with no significant trend but the approach is streamlined and a sustainable model in place working with both young people and adults, developing whole school structures.

Specialist Teacher Advisers

HB reported caseload numbers at 60 VI and 120 Deaf with 31 additional complex VI and 35 additional complex need Deaf. HB mentioned 1 student who had successfully transitioned back to the Island at St Catherines from Mary Hare as they could now meet need.

HB confirmed the team are reviewing their categorisations based on medical evidence as in some cases this has been lacking.

HB shared the team have some priority areas which include the referral pathways into specialist services and improving/skilling up mainstream staff.

Speech and Language Therapy

SG on behalf of HP reported 480 current cases in mainstream, with members offering one day a week support at St Georges, as well as the IOW College and HTP. There are 20 statutory assessment requests since the Summer which is 27% of last years total.

SG said there is a Speech and Language Therapist Assistant starting in Nov FTE but they had not recruited to another position that she wasn't sure if HP was going back out to

advert for. HP was reporting pressures on CAL outreach. NC confirmed this service wasn't being stopped or pulled, but just paused as we are struggling to recruit.

6. Ordinarily Available Provision

NC asked Poppy to provide an update but appreciated she is new to this and may not have much on graduated response. PS confirmed she is currently visiting all schools as a priority and in the early stages of planning. She reported she has spoken to every SENCo about OAP and most seem keen to work with her on something. PS said that she hopes to set up a SENCo working group so that a document can be created alongside CPD on high quality first teaching. She also has ideas on including child voice but will work on this as the workstream progresses and would also like to reach out to other teams for input and support. NC confirmed it is important to build up a relationship with the schools first and look at high standards and quality teaching as this isn't seen across all schools. PS confirmed lots of schools have started to create their own documents and some have agreed to come together to create one main one. NC suggested PS and BD moderate this and work together.

7. Children and Young People

Schools and School Improvement

BD didn't have anything further to add but confirmed she will look at the validated SEN data from a School Improvement point of view when validated in December.

HB raised the issue with one school and the quality of training, for example the VI training was given to staff, but not those that specifically worked with the student. HB confirmed she had challenged this but will pick up with BD outside of this meeting. BD reiterated the trend found where schools are not developing the staff that are directly delivering to the young people.

Inclusion - Suspensions/PEX/Medical

RW reported that the current attendance figure is 93.4% which is just higher than last year. The Primary figure is 95.6%, Secondary 91.9% and Special 88.5%, of which secondary is the biggest concern with certain schools pulling this figure down, so they will be focusing on those.

RW confirmed a total of 177 suspensions so far with 28 in Primary which is 16% and is a higher proportion than usual with some of the reasons being persistent disruptive behaviour and verbal abuse against an adult.

RW advised of 5 permanent exclusions issued, 1 EHCP, 2 SEN K, 4 of which have been reviewed and 2 could potentially be cancelled. The reasons included physical assault against a pupil, persistent disruptive behaviour and criminal damage.

RW confirmed, there have been a total of 18 Section 19 referrals of which 10 were accepted, 4 declined and 4 are to be heard with two involving disordered eating.

EHE

RW reported that there are currently 685 EHE pupils, the highest it's been at this point in an academic year. There have been 84 so far this year, with the reasons being

dissatisfaction and mental health as reported by the schools, however RW confirmed this data gets updated when reasons are later provided by parents.

NC said it would be good to have SEN and non SEN data so this can be drilled into further.

Virtual School

RL confirmed there are currently 268 cared for children, not all of whom are on the Island. She added 108 are SEN K and 64 have EHCP's. There are 18 transferring from Year 6 to 7 next year, 10 of whom have an EHCP with 5 specialist placements possibly needed based on current plans.

RL reported 49 Post-16, 13 who are NEET but all have an engagement plan and 3 having just been on a building brighter futures event with John Lewis with 1 having committed. She confirmed they are working with Julie around Post-16.

In terms of training RL confirmed they have Designated Teacher and DSL Training and training around Speech and Language needs both scheduled for next week. RL also confirmed the launch of a progression tool in September. 48 staff members have been trained in trauma informed practice and the team have been supporting at Medina House, St Georges Studio and Lionheart.

RL reported 95% attendance in cared for children, with this figure being affected by a couple of new students who've moved into the area.

82% of pupils are on a CIN or CP with 500 current plans. RL advised they are monitoring this attendance through Asset and have been updating SEN coding to drill down and sending weekly emails around attendance.

Post 16

No update was given on Post-16 as JL was not in attendance.

8. Any other business

NC thanked colleagues for their updates and highlighted the variety of areas and work taking place. NC suggested that in future there is a set slide deck that SandL can circulate 2 weeks in advance of the meeting for staff to update and send back so it can be collated. NC said she is happy to take advice on how this should look or be done. NC confirmed IR's finance update will be a little different and can be presented in the same way as today.

Action: NC to put together a set slide deck for circulation prior to the next meeting so staff can add updates.

NC reminded the group of the importance of SEND and to make sure we pool resources. She thanked all for their hard work and everything they are doing.

Meeting closed 3pm