

Minutes (Anonymised)

SEND Improvement & Assurance Board Meeting 13th January 2026

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| 1 | WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS |
| | <p>The Chair welcomed a new Vice-Chair to the group and thanked the previous Vice-Chair for their time and support.</p> <p>The Chair also welcomed a returning Board member who will be assisting with their team in the transition of administrative support to the Board.</p> <p>The Chair introduced a new member, who welcomed the Board to Bury College. They highlighted some of Bury College's provisions for Young People and Adult learners, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their focus on needs not diagnosis• A whole college approach, with SEND at the forefront• The resources and staff needed to support at-risk students, including training measures to prevent anyone from slipping through the cracks• The College's Multi-Agency panel meets weekly with advisors and managers to review at-risk students and identify any additional support required. <p>The member expressed that they are keen to work with the SIAB and advised that they are happy for their email address to be circulated to the group for future contact.</p> |
| 2 | MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING |
| | <p>The Chair reviewed the minutes from the previous meeting, held on 16th December, and asked the Board if any amendments were required.</p> <p>An attendee requested a correction for Page 4, 2nd Paragraph, 2nd Sentence, advising the letter to the ICB was intended to raise concerns about both the Neuro Development Pathway and the Neuro-Hub, not only the Neuro-Hub.</p> <p>The Chair referenced an update regarding Page 12, about areas that are in intervention.</p> <p>No further amendments were requested, following amendment, the Board accepted the minutes as an accurate record of the previous meeting.</p> |

3 ACTIONS AND RISKS LOG

The Chair asked to review the action log with a specific focus on upcoming/due actions.

- **Action 292** – Provide updates on timeframes for Comms work (including Instagram, requested by the Changemakers), for Board prioritisation assurance – now due 9th February

The action owner advised that a new Instagram account with robust safeguards in place will be rolled out at the next Changemakers meeting. The Chair welcomed this and discussed ongoing work to the Local Offer including a mapping exercise to index the Local Offer.

Copies of communications distributed in the past four months were passed out to remind the group of recent outputs. Pointing out that these updates are shared through the Local Offer and posted on multiple social media platforms.

The Chair asked for an update on Changemakers' events across schools and confirmed Changemakers' representatives were aware of this. The action owner advised that they were currently waiting for some further information before this can be completed.

- **Action 192** - Develop the next stages of alignment of the model to Neighbourhood delivery – now due 9th February

The action owner added that to explore the opportunity to broaden the Early Help offer and a broadening of the SEND offer and the Families First programme. They added there were ongoing conversations around an early help focused SEND offer.

- **Action 194** – Next set of actions working with providers on reducing the waiting times – now due 9th February

The action owner updated on waiting times, advising that the health department now routinely report data.

- **Action 195** – Ensure parents understand the support available, keep them informed on changes and manage expectations – now due 9th February

The action owner advised that this is ongoing work, there is a newer action which is to be clear about the increasing support available on the Neurodevelopment Pathway.

- **Action 266** – Arrange and confirm dates for initial co-production engagement sessions with key stakeholders – now due 9th February

One of the action's owners updated that the corporate side of this action was done as discussed at the last meeting, with the council's 'Together' month and the co-production masterclass launch was completed as a part of that, which has since been adapted into the 'Manager Essentials' programme. The

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| | <p>remaining SEND specific work will be progressed at the upcoming Data and Communications groups.</p> <p>Another owner provided an update on the Co-production Charter and explained that future sessions have been mapped out. On 3rd March there will be a Strategy to sign off, and on 17th March, there will be a session to formally review. It was confirmed that there will be a Bury2Gether member in attendance for this.</p> <p>The Chair highlighted co-production, emphasising the need to work collaboratively with others rather than imposing work on them. She stated that it is to integrate this approach into everyday professional practices.</p> <p>The remaining actions were acknowledged but concerns raised about how slowly risks are updated in the log. The Chair recommended this is investigated with the Data Sub-Group and an update will be provided on Risks at the next Board.</p> <p>Action points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An update on risks to be provided at the next Board on 16th February 2026. |
| 4 | <p>CONTRIBUTIONS FROM, AND ENGAGEMENT WITH, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE</p> |
| | <p>The Chair asked the Bury College students in attendance for an update, also attending with the students was a Bury College Jobs Coach.</p> <p>A presentation was made to the Board, the presentation provided stories of students' 'reasonable adjustments', with particular attention to changing adjustments whilst progressing through educational settings.</p> <p>Before inviting students to share their experiences, the coach emphasised Bury College's commitment to making adjustments. Students noted that Bury College is very accommodating. They highlighted the helpful presence of dedicated job coaches who support students in transitioning to employment after college by assisting with placements and job readiness. The availability of quiet rooms, offering a relaxing and safe space at any time, was also mentioned. Additionally, students described exam adjustments such as the use of coloured paper and extra time. Other adjustments mentioned were the use of laptops. One student said that a scribe had been made available: a person who the student can dictate too and can then write on the student's behalf. Students can work in reduced group sizes aimed to reduce social anxiety, which has enabled some of the students to work closely together and to develop lasting friendships. The College encourages the students to widen their social 'bubbles'.</p> <p>The coach asked the students if they had struggled with reasonable adjustments at work placements, speaking to the students' positive impact in the workplace.</p> |

One student spoke of their desire to work in a particular industry and Bury College had collaborated with an employer to facilitate reasonable adjustments to allow the student to acclimate to working life in their desired industry.

Discussion continued around the need to find working opportunity for students with additional needs. The Chair asked the Board to consider how the offer can be improved to better offer opportunities to young people when leaving Education. The Chair asked for this to be communicated to communicate this, with an attendee adding that employers are missing out if they do not offer reasonable adjustments and suggested this should be highlighted in the communication.

The potential for work experience opportunities to be widened within Health and at GP Practices was discussed, The Chair suggested this could be an action for the Changemakers in relation to 'You said, we're doing.'

An attendee mentioned meeting with representatives from Bury College and commended the college's principle of providing every Bury learner with a college place.

An attendee then reiterated the eagerness of young people with additional needs and their fantastic work ethic, emphasising that creating working opportunities for such people can only be a positive.

The college also updated on the work to support young people into work experience and employment, and they confirmed they work with BEST (the Bury Employment Services Team) to facilitate opportunities for some.

Another member added that many students with additional needs leave the College with great qualifications for working life, only needing additional support when bridging into employment opportunities.

The Chair urged Board members to consider employment opportunities for young people with additional needs in their own departments, asking each member to update at the next Board with information relating to opportunities available.

The Chair asked for an update on the training the Changemakers have created and are going to deliver. It was confirmed that there is a delay due to ongoing internal discussions but spoke of an upcoming discussion where a trial-run will take place, with members of the Communications and Education teams taking part.

An attendee spoke in relation to the need for a medical diagnosis for reasonable adjustments, asking another attendee if following discussions in previous Board meetings, they had any update after speaking with the Changemakers group. They declared intentions to take concerns to School Leaders, adding that the important thing for Leaders to note, is that common sense should prevail if a diagnosis is not present.

Another member added that it was refreshing to hear the aspirations of the Young People in attendance.

The Chair highlighted that it is important that the Board prioritise the actions from this Board to improve outcomes for young people including those in the care of the Local Authority.

The Board was advised that there is a planned meeting about supported employment coming up, between representatives from Bury's Skills team and GPs.

Action points:

2. All Board members to update on work opportunities explored for SEND students, and to provide information on what has been done to improve this – due 16th February
3. Changemakers representatives to liaise with Health on work experience opportunities in relation to 'You said, we're doing' ahead of the next Board – due 9th February
4. A communication is to be made on the positive impact of reasonable adjustments in the workplace ahead of the next Board – due 9th February

5 STATUTORY DUTIES

Input was provided on the Statutory Duties Refresher. The Chair thanked Board members that had helped to put this together.

Another attendee clarified that there are ongoing changes to ICBs for Greater Manchester, advising there is no gap in accountable officers, despite the changes.

The Chair asked the group to consider the presentation, and that everything that 'must' be done is being done. And asked what confidence the Board has that the 'musts' are being done.

The Chair asked the room for input, one member advised that this would be a good topic to discuss with teams.

An attendee added that a piece of work for the 'must, should and could' would be of benefit, The Chair highlighted that this would be a piece of work that could reassure the Board at the next meeting.

The presentation continued, discussing EHCPs and advised that there are national issues with EHCP delivery. With failure to complete EHCPs within agreed timescales being a particular issue.

An attendee highlighted that when 'musts' have been missed, the expectations of what 'should' be delivered are raised, increasing the likelihood of poor outcomes.

The Chair addressed historic issues and reminded the group that the SEND Code of Practice is still aspirational and emphasised the need to bring the partnership together.

An attendee added that currently there is a tendency for money to be spent on the system rather than on children directly, adding that there is an ongoing shift in the priority of spending, to ensure the focus is on children.

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| | <p>One member asked another about EHCP compliance as the data pack suggests Bury are in a good place, versus national averages. The member in question confirmed that there is very good performance against timely plans being completed and that they are working to demonstrate improved quality as well with initial positive progress being seen in the audit of plans.</p> <p>The Chair asked the group to remain focused on the task at hand, recognising the 'must, should and could' areas of the current environment need to be address even in the face of upcoming changes.</p> <p>The Chair suggested that it would be useful for Board members to refresh themselves with the SEND Code of Practice.</p> <p>The member then added that a simpler document exists which summarises the Code of Practice, this document is to be uploaded to the Local Offer and would be useful for this exercise and would be a useful resource for parents.</p> <p>Another attendee added that the wording of certain elements of the Code of Practice suggest EHCP plans are outside of mainstream settings, as if the two are opposing, rather than extensions of one another. It was suggested that this shows the age of the document and the development of the work going into support for additional needs. The Chair agreed that the need for increased specialism has never gone away.</p> <p>It was suggested that there are historical inconsistencies with Annual Reviews of the document, feeling this could have been done more and should be a focus going forward, suggesting that certain recommendations are not fulfilled.</p> <p>An attendee added that there has been a long-standing backlog of Annual Reviews. But the reviewing duties have improved over the last 12 months, with more than a half of children with Education, Health & Care plans now having an annual review completed in the last 12 months. There are now reports which can help to improve the speed of the process, identifying areas of need earlier.</p> <p>One member pointed out that earlier in the service there were historic issues, and a decision was made to prioritise securing a plan. Adding that achieving some level of compliance was a positive indicator of progress being made.</p> <p>Action points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5. A piece of work on 'Must, Could, Should' for statutory duties to be done – due 9th February 6. All Board members to review the SEND Code of Practice – due 24th March |
| 6 | <p>THEME 2 PAPER REVIEW</p> <p>The Chair requested an update regarding the Theme 2 report.</p> <p>It was explained that the report combined three main components of the priority impact plan: PIP2, PIP3, and section 6.1. These cover early intervention and Graduated Approach, support whilst waiting, and the education, and health and care plans.</p> |

It was added that efforts have centred on further developing the Communities of Practice and the Graduated Approach, so that these are now clearly understood throughout the system. Key highlights being the Graduated Approach Champions, who have been working evidently in the area.

The attendee continued that there is now a need to step forward and show how much our families understand and welcome the offer. Engagement sessions are particularly well supported in Primary and Secondary sectors, with a high percentage of the secondary sector now engaging in sessions.

They advised that over the coming weeks, parent engagement sessions and drop-in sessions will also be incorporated. There is strong evidence that the Graduated Approach is now much better understood. They continued to discuss the national view and how it is important to note how that is landing and being communicated.

Speaking of the improvement from November 2024 to December 2025, demonstrating a positive trajectory of improvement. There was mention to the auditing process and the monthly multi-agency termly audit, which identified strengths and areas of improvement, suggesting this is where focus should shift to ensure continued improvement.

Another attendee updated on the report from an NHS perspective. They commended the positive progress on waiting times generally, with mention of several areas of concern which will need to be monitored and addressed. They specifically addressed waiting times for Community and Paediatric Health and for Autism and ADHD assessments.

They concluded that another key area of focus was the SEND Health Visiting team, which has shown significant progress. Notably, the agenda pack contained a case study on the very positive impact of the SEND HV team for one family.

The Chair opened the discussion to the Board, and one attendee spoke on the Graduated Approach and suggested a communication piece around it to highlight this success.

Another member asked if we are capturing all the PVI (Private, Voluntary and Independent Sector) involvement. Another added that working with in tandem with other Board members, there is a need to share best practice across early years and family hubs. Highlighting that Primary settings need to feedback on where children are not ready and practice could be improved. The member confirmed that this an action from a previous meeting was to ensure this is done effectively moving forward.

A different attendee added that there is more work to be done, for example with 'Ages and Stages' questionnaires and questions, to investigate if children are accessing provisions.

The reduction of waiting times presented earlier was welcomed, but an attendee spoke about issues surrounding re-referral and the importance of

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| | <p>diagnosis for family support and the financial burdens that accompany longer waiting times.</p> <p>The Board was asked about culture change in schools and meeting the needs of children at the first run of the Graduated Approach. Suggested that those not involved with the meetings may be those with the most need. One member pointed to the Communities of Practice and how the model will help to close this gap.</p> <p>The need to track which schools are engaging in these events was then raised.</p> |
| 7 | <p>PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE AND OUTCOME REVIEW (INCLUDING THE MOST RECENT DATA PACK)</p> <p>An attendee stated intent to bring the overview of all themes to each Board and added that it is an evidence based in approach. Adding that it would make sense for each section of the data pack to have an owner for accountability going forward. The next step would be for the Delivery Group to work through the pack, slide by slide to ensure it remains on track.</p> <p>A presentation was shared which displayed progress made, highlighting the percentages of standards across multiple ratings.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the group for their help and welcomed the use of data to evidence progress. The presenter added that going forward the introduction of Communications to the Data group would also ensure that the impact of this insight will also support how the system works with children, young people and parents.</p> <p>On the back of the feedback, a member added that teams have been able to review the advice offered but recognise that advice from the wider services has been less robust and new arrangements have been made to improve Social Care.</p> |
| 8 | <p>NEW MODEL OF CARE FOR GREATER MANCHESTER NEURODIVERGENT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE</p> <p>The Chair handed asked for an update on waiting times and highlighted that some wait times are unacceptable, referencing the data pack. This has been validated by surveys carried out by Bury2Gether.</p> <p>An attendee updated, listing several excessive waiting times before suggesting a standardised process, to ensure the children who are most in need are supported quickly.</p> <p>The importance of ensuring families feel confident in the range of services available to them was raised and it was stressed that the focus should remain on assessing need. They referenced the proposal for implementing a triage system and establishing processes to invite current providers to collaboratively address the existing waiting list. Funding will be allocated to support these assessment activities.</p> |

They ended by stating there is currently an untenable situation in regard to demand on the Neuro Development Pathways and appreciated the implications on families that are not getting assessments in a timely manner. There is a need to ensure the model can be amended over time, and we need to listen to children, parents and carers.

The Chair asked if there was a Risk Register in place about it, and the attendee confirmed there is.

An attendee representing Bury2Gether added that there are issues. Firstly, with co-production not taking place soon enough, adding that the timeline of co-production had a large gap of over 12 months from inception to instigation (February 2024 to October 2025), making families feel this is being done 'to' them rather than 'with' them.

They questioned if the current offer is the only solution, pointing out that information is not being relayed to families fast enough. The language used in reporting was also highlighted, further suggesting a lack of co-production. With regards to the Neuro-hubs, Bury2Gether do not agree that the diagnosis option can be removed until it is evident there are services available and no gaps.

They asked what is being done to mitigate risks and believes there is a need for reflection on whether this has been co-produced correctly.

The Chair agreed with this concern around risks and suggested this may be something that should be put in writing to address these concerns to the GM ICB. And that this could be done as a response to the letter from GM ICB following the escalation of concerns from the Chair previously.

Another member added that children and young people feel similarly, where many were distressed by the prospect of this, feeling the changes were affecting them personally. They added that more appropriate communication is needed to keep children updated and that she is struggling to effectively communicate some of the messages from the Board to young people.

The Joint Council for Qualifications was discussed by another member; they also added that an early diagnosis impacts the entire process and the need for a smoother process to take place.

Another attendee reasoned that currently there is not an effective service, and that difficult choices will likely need to be made to improve the service.

Another member added, NHS GM changes and asked if we could look toward other areas and asked if this will be an early version of a wider National issue. The Chair agreed that this is a wider issue but suggested that as GM ICB is at the forefront of this decision it is important to ensure effective learning is done to minimise the risks involved.

An attendee explained that they understood a number of ICBs nationally were progressing similar proposals to that proposed by NHS GM in response to the very challenging demand pressures from services.

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| | <p>The Chair asked the Board what it believed is the best response to the concerns, to effectively progress the work.</p> <p>It was added that there is a scale of need that unfortunately the systems are not set up to manage, highlighting a need to help those that need it most, whilst understanding the risks and issues associated with that moving on.</p> <p>The importance of getting answers to Parent and Carer Forums quickly was noted, adding that there is widespread opposition to this proposition so far.</p> <p>Following discussion, it was surmised that members had a difference in opinion on the level of co-production in Greater Manchester. One member added that Parent Carer Forums across the GM ICB footprint (10 in total) will likely be putting the concerns in writing.</p> <p>The Chair added that the feeling of a lack of co-production is there and that consultation is not the same as co-production. The Board were asked for thoughts on a letter to the ICB.</p> <p>Another attendee added that it may be beneficial if the three colleagues identified have a discussion suggesting this may be the appropriate and considered thing to do, following which a decision might better be made. A second attendee agreed with this suggestion, adding the more pressing issue may be the anxiety of children, parents and carers and ensuring that the community understand what it is we are going to do with the information available to us now. She suggested a multi-agency approach, having focused conversations and providing additional support to affected families, which fits in with the commitment to the Graduated Approach.</p> <p>It was noted that the offer of support whilst waiting can mean a great deal to families.</p> <p>An attendee mentioned that plans have been made and communications will be developed together with parent and carer forums, these updates will be distributed.</p> <p>The Chair ended the conversation due to time constraints and asked members to request more time for this discussion at future Board meetings.</p> |
| 9 | <p>TERMS OF REFERENCE REVIEW & TRANSITIONING TO LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIP</p> |
| | <p>It was confirmed that the Terms of Reference had been updated and for Board members.</p> <p>There were two items in the Terms of Reference that members of the Board were asked to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have all Board members met with the Changemakers • Who from the voluntary sector would be a good addition to the Board <p>Action points:</p> <p>7. All Board members to confirm they have met with the Changemakers to be confirmed at the next Board - due 16th February.</p> |

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| | <p>8. All Board members to consider and suggest candidates from the voluntary sector as an addition to the Board, to be followed up at the next Board - due 16th February.</p> |
| 10 | <p>ALTERNATIVE PROVISION STRATEGY UPDATE</p> <p>It was confirmed that the updates from the previous Boards had been included. The Board agreed to sign the strategy of with one very small addition.</p> <p>Action points:</p> <p>9. Amend page 8 of the Alternative Provision Strategy to refer to SIAB as the SEND Improvement and Assurance Board, not the SEND Partnership Board – due 9th February</p> |
| 11 | <p>SUMMARY OF KEY MESSAGES FROM TODAY’S MEETING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of the new Vice-Chair. • Upcoming monitoring inspection appears imminent. • Board members to review terms of reference, and the code of practice. • Reasonable adjustments, how do we extend the reach of good practice. • Is the updated graduated approach taking hold? Gather insight and a case study. <p>Board members are to review these take aways then cascade and discuss with practice groups and stakeholder groups as discussed at the meeting.</p> |
| 12 | <p>AOB</p> <p>Action points:</p> <p>10. An update is required on Project Safety Valve for March’s SIAB meeting – due 17th March</p> <p>11. A self-evaluation is to be prepared and presented at the February Board - due 16th February</p> <p>The Chair flagged the likelihood of the Monitoring Inspection soon and asked the Board to keep this in mind.</p> |
| 13 | <p>UPCOMING MEETING DATES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 16th February 10.00 – 13.00 Town Hall - 24th March 10.00 – 13.00 Town Hall - 14th April 10.00 – 13.00 Town Hall - 12th May 10.00 – 13.00 Town Hall - 23rd June 10.00 – 13.00 Town Hall - 14th July 10.00 – 13.00 Town Hall |