
Minutes (Anonymised)

SEND Improvement & Assurance Board Meeting 16th February 2026

1	WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS The Chair welcomed the group and thanked all for attending online before apologies were shared.
2	MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING The Board members reviewed the minutes from the previous meeting held on the 13 th of January. The minutes were agreed to be an accurate record of the meeting.
3	ACTIONS AND RISKS LOG <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Action 259 – Ongoing comms support for Workforce Strategy Board. Plans around workforce strategy and training are being developed, this will continue to progress as plans develop.- Action 292 – Provide updates on timeframes for Comms work (including Instagram, requested by the Changemakers), for Board assurance. This is being progressed alongside the Data meetings. This interlinks with Action 211, an attendee updated on the creation of a Changemakers Instagram account, they are building a bank of content before posting begins.- Action 288 – Distribute comms relating to the "Reasonable Adjustments" report from B2G. The action owner confirmed the team are looking to issue communications but there have been discussions with schools, and a future update is required from another Board member.

The Chair discussed the deadlines allocated to actions to ensure that realistic targets are being set going forward and that there is due process followed to agree any new timelines.

- **Action 110** – Look at options for communications to be available in different formats (e.g. different languages, braille, a visual format).

An attendee noted this wasn't due until March but asked the action owners for update on how communications are being made accessible.

One of the action owners advised they have an option that would bring the Local Authority into basic compliance but that this was pending a budget code and partnership approval before further progression.

- **Action 211** – Develop a social media presence for the Changemakers.

The action owner updated on the creation of a Changemakers Instagram account, they are building a bank of content before posting begins.

- **Action 309** – Update on work opportunities explored for SEND students, and to provide information on what has been done to improve this.

The Chair asked Board members to update on progress made.

One attendee spoke of the Bury Employment services team also recommended another Board member consult with the team, the Changemakers group and the Bury Employment Services team to uncover employment opportunities, particularly given their good relationship with NCA in providing opportunities.

Another attendee discussed opportunities for work experience within the Early Years department adding that staff in Family Hubs have offered work experience previously and that this has garnered positive feedback from children and families in the past.

An attendee discussed putting the Care Leavers team in touch with the HR manager at Tower Family Healthcare, creating opportunities within their own practice first before hopefully rolling out opportunities across Primary Care.

Another noted they had collaborated with another to circulate materials to primary and secondary schools. There is potential for SEND students at college level to host drop-in sessions at schools to provide mentorship, particularly for children with similar needs.

Another advised that the Council's Corporate Plan is being finalised for 2026-27 and that neurodiversity and workforce representation is included as a focus under the banner of equalities and inclusion. This will enable

	<p>process changes to how we advertise, recruit and support in the workplace.</p> <p>Another added that colleagues at Persona have restructured their recruitment processes to facilitate a wider diversity in recruitment.</p> <p>The Board was then updated on the supported internship program for 16-25 year olds, adding that another Board member has been asked to review commissioning arrangements and uptake alongside the National Development team for Inclusion.</p> <p>The Chair asked that updates are put in writing when confirmed and subsequently shared with an attendee working in this area, who will then speak to Bury College students and the Changemakers to update on progress.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Action 195 - Ensure parents understand the support available, keep them informed on changes and manage expectations. <p>The action owner recognised Bury2Gether feedback following the recent questionnaire, and while there are good examples it is recognised parents are not feeling or reporting the benefit of the work yet.</p> <p>Action Points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Action 316 – An Ofsted engagement letter is to be shared, for review ahead of the next Board on 24th March. 2. Action 317 - The Chair requested a full review of risks at the next Board on 24th March.
4	<p>CONTRIBUTIONS FROM, AND ENGAGEMENT WITH, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE</p>
	<p>The Board was provided with a presentation on recent Changemakers activity.</p> <p>This included discussions around the use of AI, in which young people implied the use of AI feels less personal and signified a lack of effort if not personalised.</p> <p>Plans for a Changemakers Instagram page have been finalised, and a member has been selected within the group to act as their social media representative for the year.</p> <p>In relation to the SEND Charter review, the young people highlighted areas of concern and suggested amendments. The group also discussed their feelings about working with adults versus young people with positives and negatives highlighted.</p> <p>Staff training, the Changemakers completed a staff training practice run. The presenter referenced the following communication on the training.</p> <p>burycouncil.cmail19.com/t/y-e-awlydt-hdulkhnkt-g/.</p>

	<p>The speaker asked Board members, particularly those involved with schools and trusts, to potentially host training sessions. School representatives in attendance both confirmed they would be happy to host, it was noted that they would also like to work with another Board member on these following previous discussions.</p> <p>A 'you said, we did, we are doing', event is being planned, and it was suggested that this may be delayed until after March. The speaker asked for input from young people for the event, there is a spreadsheet for the event which requires updates from CAMHS and education as well as updates on post-16 options.</p> <p>They then updated on Voice mapping, outlining where contact has been made and responses have been received so far.</p> <p>The Board were advised that the speaker would be stepping away from their current areas of work for several months as they work on a Department for Education funded project to develop a SEND Commissioner role in Bury. They added that a new colleague, had been appointed to take over their responsibilities in the interim, adding that they will also attend the board in their place during this time.</p> <p>The speaker continued to briefly outline the proposed SEND Commissioner role and added that a working group has formed, made up of SEND ambassadors from the wider Greater Manchester area and that the role is still being designed currently.</p> <p>The Chair suggested that a different job title may be useful to avoid negative connotations with other job roles. The speaker clarified that the role title is currently tied into the funding, but that the title will be workshopped with young people.</p> <p>Action points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Action 318 - Representatives to provide an update on voice mapping when more responses are received at the next Board on 24th March.
5	<p>NEURO DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY UPDATE</p> <p>The presenting Board member referenced papers C1 & C2, indicating there are several updates to the pathway. The proposed neuro development pathway has been widely discussed in several forums including the January SIAB and has been used to inform how the model will be implemented locally. Also highlighting the importance of the support during and after the triage process.</p> <p>The importance of co-production was highlighted, with reference to collaboration with Bury Youth Watch, a youth focused version of Bury Health Watch and with the Health Scrutiny Committee, who have reviewed and performed a detailed overview of the work. Discussion with the Changemakers has also continued with workshops to inform Hub development.</p>

They continued to address Bury2Gether's concerns around co-production, noting that meetings have taken place with First Point and thanked B2G for the involvement in that work and looks forward to establishing how the work is fully connected between all parties. They added that the triage process is under review with key partners, to challenge and ensure that the process is transparent and is convergent with all support available. A couple of other localities are further ahead with the process but added this would present an opportunity to review how this works elsewhere to improve our own development. The Hub is still in the early stages of development, but thanked all parties for working together with children and young people and families to inform development.

Another attendee spoke about communications, stating that families feel there has been discussion, but that there has not been effective co-production so far. Highlighting that families have asked for clarification on CAMHS age groups and of the other categories for qualification. They added that families were concerned that the triage process would work differently in other areas, rather than in a consistent service across Greater Manchester. Also citing families concerns with communications from the ICB and from Bury Council.

The speaker confirmed from Bury Council's perspective, their update at this Board speaks to this, with further update to follow from their colleague. They added that this is not presented as a finished piece.

Another Board member updated on the discussion of the Hub pathway and wider around SEND to feed into the GMCA support officer to highlight issues around the pathway and wider SEND issues, they asked The Chair, and other attendees for updates that they could then take to the group in the short term to clarify Bury's position with the hope of GM acceleration around any blockages. The speaker added that they will be chairing the GM SEND Board for the next few months and will continue to work on this all the while.

Another Board member thanked the speaker for their update and echoed another attendee's point, questioning who would be prioritised and how they would be selected. The speaker added that work is ongoing to clarify these priorities moving forward and that this is the current focus.

The speaker's colleague then presented to the group and highlighted the neuro development support offer, setting out what has been developed on a GM level, showing systems in place and systems currently under development. They continued to provide a delivery update on recruitment and sessions delivered. Also adding that First Point have set up a number of focus groups which work with the Changemakers group, noting that the first session was well attended and received positive feedback. They continued with an update on engagement work that had been done with Bury Autism Co-production Network and Bury Youth Watch.

An attendee added that Bury2Gether had not been involved with the Hub name, logo or strapline as had been mentioned in the paper. Adding that this should read 'Neurodiverse' rather than 'Neurodivergent needs'. The current speaker apologised, noting they had mistakenly thought a

	<p>meeting had taken place between First point and Bury2Gether to discuss this already.</p> <p>The Chair stressed this was a point of concern has been raised before and there is a need to co-produce more effectively.</p>
6	<p>THEME 3 PAPER REVIEW</p>
	<p>A new speaker explained that the theme 3 paper brings together priorities across critical points in a child’s journey, including transitions, preparation for adulthood, annual reviews, alternative provision, and education otherwise than at school.</p> <p>They noted that a draft transitions guide had been created alongside a one-page version for parents and carers, which is an easy to digest summary, explaining what to expect at transition points.</p> <p>Speaking of the ‘6-7’ transition, they explained there has been sustained multi-agency progress on transition pathways. Adding that engagement with the 6-7 process remains high, though sustainability is recognised as a risk. They added that 6-7 is not yet fully trusted as a single information-gathering point, citing some technical problems and deadlines being close to major assessments that take place in schools.</p> <p>Improved multi-disciplinary working practices were then highlighted. With Preparation for Adulthood being embedded more consistently through revised EHCP documentation and planning processes, this has been supported by recent training with preparation for adulthood partners.</p> <p>It was noted that revised alternative provision and EOTAS processes are now fully operational, with evaluation planned in the near future.</p> <p>Annual reviews were then discussed, citing statutory compliance has improved, now around 51% completed within the last 12 months. Over 3150 EHCs are currently being maintained. A major achievement was reaching 100% compliance on key stage transfer reviews. With 182 nursery-reception and year 6 into 7 transitions, 170 of which were in line with parental preference. It was noted that this is expected to reduce mediation.</p> <p>They continued to update on quality assurance, highlighted a new QA tool which has launched to grade plans, grading 65% Silver and 35% Bronze. Stressing that annual reviews are the primary mechanism for improvement to plan quality over time whilst recognising this was a small sample size so far.</p> <p>It was also noted that overall, SEND need has reduced compared with the previous year, with positive feedback from parents reporting increased confidence, understanding and practical strategies which could be implemented at home.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the speaker for their update and recognised the positive responses from the Board.</p>

	<p>An attendee noted that participation for 16 & 17 year-olds had dropped and added they hoped to confirm this group is well looked after and that this would be an area to monitor.</p> <p>The Chair added a potential need to widen the scope of the report, to meet all young people’s needs regarding the Preparation for Adulthood core elements. Another attendee seconded this, noting that not all that is going on is being captured.</p> <p>Another attendee asked that the dates within the report are reviewed to ensure they are up to date and truly reflective of progress made.</p> <p>The Chair added that some RAG ratings at the end of the report may need to be reviewed, suggesting areas marked ‘Red’ may be ongoing or simply missing data, noting that marking areas ‘Red’ may be unnecessarily harsh on what is being achieved and not reflective of the actual progress made.</p> <p>Action points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Action 319 – To ensure oversight of all young people, and to improve the sufficiency of offer, to converse with other members and providers with update at the next Board on 24th March.
7	<p>ISF IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE</p>
	<p>A Board member updated on the Intervention Support Fund (ISF), a grant which is open to all Local Authorities under intervention.</p> <p>An area of focus was to extend the reach of the Changemakers group, an appointment has been made for this purpose. This new colleague is currently going through induction and has already met with the Changemakers group. They also have plans to take a number of Changemakers to the National Conference in Birmingham.</p> <p>A scoping exercise was undertaken in January 2026, in coalition with Bury Young Cabinet and our Changemakers group, and by the end of February 2026 a draft toolkit will have been created.</p> <p>A SEND Improvement Delivery Officer was onboarded in December but due to onboarding and notice period, will not be starting until March 2026. In their absence work around Annex A has been distributed across the team in preparation of the monitoring inspection.</p> <p>The team have now created a single point of entry into the SEND team, still being rolled out currently but we are meeting the five-day response time scale, with an aim to reduce this further.</p> <p>Also spoke of the development of the Beebot platform which will be hosting our Local Offer. They continued to update the delay getting the local offer updated, an alternate delivery plan has now been established to extradite the work being reviewed to enable upload to the system.</p>

	<p>The team are also in the early testing period of VITA, which is an AI tool for Education, Health and Care plans and corporate templates. Work is ongoing with the provider Invision, to increase the efficiency of this integration. Additional funding has also been secured to support this from the NWADCS.</p> <p>One of the greater challenges faced has been in effort to implement the TESSA model, which is based on a St Helens model. This is still being assessed with a view to widening our communities of practice approach, with a view to a single referral point into SEND services. It is hoped that this can be adapted to fully utilise the opportunity that the ISF has provided.</p> <p>The Chair noted that we are unsure of additional funding for ISF coming from the Treasury of DfE in April 2026 yet. The Chair also asked to check the time scale around the local offer system migration.</p> <p>Another attendee updated on this, noting that the Beebot team have had the material for a week, they quote two to three weeks for review. They have also been asked to prioritise this work ahead of other work.</p>
8	<p>Inspection readiness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEF update/Position Statement • Full PIP review (summary slides on key improvement areas and PSV KPIs included) <p>Annex A update</p>
	<p>A Board member reviewed the delivery and impact milestones, there has been a focus on wider inspection readiness and a SEF/Position update, a narrative document which has been reviewed by the speaker, another senior Board member and colleagues from Bury2Gether. It was noted that Bury2Gether had some feedback on this, so the document is not ready to be shared currently.</p> <p>They continued to speak of planning in relation to SEND reforms and considered what the White paper is likely to say, noting that the DfE have supported this with by creating a maturity assessment tool, used to measure Local Area partnerships against the seven pillars of the SEND reform.</p> <p>The current phase has involved multiple board members to shape the tool, the next phase of which will be to include colleagues at Bury2Gether.</p> <p>Listing the Pillars of reform as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pillar 1, Co-production, with parents & carers, children and young people. - Pillar 2, Effective system leadership and governance, - Pillar 3, An accurate understanding of needs through data. - Pillar 4, High quality service delivery at universal, targeted and specialist levels to promote inclusion. - Pillar 5, Effective partnership working across education, health and social care.

- Pillar 6, Skilled workforce across the partnership.
- Pillar 7, Targeted, judicious and sustainable use of resources.

The speaker emphasised the scale of the work ahead, adding that the work is ongoing, with work on the maturity assessment tool, planning for SEND reforms, and the cessation of project safety valve. They noted that many of the Pillars are interwoven with the current improvements.

A DfE SEND financial advisor has been appointed to support in these areas going forward.

The Chair asked to review areas of concern highlighted in amber and red.

Another attendee noted that within the pillars there was no mention of the inclusion of the entire 0-25 remit. The speaker confirmed that when speaking of 'young people', this is in reference to the 0-25 age group.

The Chair welcomed the integration of the seven pillars with the Priority Impact Plan, working to integrate the seven pillars and multiple areas, into one coherent plan.

The speaker added that the activity is being geared to simultaneously improving the offer whilst maintaining inspection readiness. Suggesting, the system has matured and now needs to respond to emerging challenges, being SEND reform and inspection ready.

The Chair noted that reforms may not come in for several years, suggesting focus needs to remain on the Monitoring Inspection and delivery against the Children and Family Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice. The speaker agreed but noted that Department for Education colleagues had asked for a plan for local area reform to be ready for Autumn. And suggested a cross reference with the milestones and the priority impact plan to assess current positions.

They then updated on Paper E, the milestone review. Noting that many of the milestones have now been met with a need to now focus on impact.

It was noted that Bury2Gether colleagues had answered a short survey in relation to priority areas which have been tentatively shared.

It was suggested that a line-by-line review of the document be undertaken, with focus on any actions and impact highlighted red.

Co-production is ongoing and needs to remain fundamental with more work to be done in this space. The Council for Disabled Children is providing support.

Communication, the need to improve daily communication between teams and to reach a broader range of people using existing and alternative methods. Positive feedback on the weekly Leadership Matters briefing to education setting leaders was highlighted.

In relation to Quality Assurance, the more effective monitoring of quality across the system, the further embedding of quality frameworks and the improvement of outputs.

Following discussion with the speaker, The Chair asked another attendee to present the document for the Board to review.

The attendee noted the main action still outstanding was around the workforce learning and development plan, but noted this is ongoing work. They added that every other action has been reviewed and they are confident that the first stage of the plan has been completed.

The speaker continued to go through actions marked amber and red in detail. Speaking of the Priority Impact Plan and asked the Board to sense check and reflect on the coherence of the plan, to determine where we currently sit as a system.

The Chair noted there may be a need to address some of the language used when updating the progress of actions, to better indicate where work is underway and better reflect progress.

Another attendee added the need to reframe the wording to better highlight positives and progress already achieved.

The speaker progressed onto an area highlighted red, the effective communication of strategy, noting that it is a key priority to ensure consistent feedback of understanding is confirmed going forward.

They suggested the next update should come as a single document to better indicate progress. The Chair agreed on the importance of a single update but asked for co-production to be considered, potentially creating the update alongside schools, who might better provide analysis ahead of the monitoring inspection.

The speaker agreed and said Bury2Gether's feedback will be noted and will be included when received.

An attendee noted the availability of waiting time data, suggesting this should be amended within the document to at least 'amber', as progress is now regularly updated. They suggested some other health centered actions may also need to be updated due to recent progress. The speaker agreed, suggesting work should be measured against the Priority Impact Plan.

A new speaker then updated on Annex A, noting this is constantly changing with around 120 documents currently, 50 of which were received in the previous week. They added that an update will be distributed to allow Board members to provide their own update and perspective, to better reflect progress and ensure it is evidenced for the purpose of quality assurance to ensure the best update is provided to inspectors.

Key updates have been received in the last week from Health which will be added soon. They added that the document is still a work in progress and will continue to change ahead of submission.

The Chair suggested it might be useful to review Oxfordshire's monitoring inspection as this could prove to be a useful point of reference, linked below.

<https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50291349>

The Chair recommended that due to potential changes to the framework of full inspection at the three-year point, the Board should broaden following inspection to include the wider SEND system.

The first speaker added that this is being considered. Noting the many interlinked areas within the wider system. Adding that they are keen to ensure we move to think in a wider system context after the focus shifts from the priority impact plan review.

Another attendee updated, speaking of ongoing training of the workforce and an improved relationship with the EHCP team, amid a shifting wider focus on the long-term outcomes of young people.

An attendee added that in the context of Education providers, they are hearing positive feedback from schools around progress made. Another attendee also noted an improvement in communication to schools, which has helped to build a more trusting relationship between schools and the Local Authority, fostering improved relations between SENDCO's and educational psychologists.

The Chair asked the Board to consider how to ascertain feedback from schools moving forward.

The speaker welcomed the positive feedback, noting improvements in engagement from schools, particularly around young people with complex needs and feels this speaks to the work being done. They added this ensures the authority continues to work with schools whilst changes are being made. It was also noted that engagement is being tracked with the aim of ensuring that schools not engaging currently will start to do so.

The Vice Chair agreed, knowing who is not engaging currently would be useful and would enable them to better approach these schools to determine why they might not be engaging. Suggesting that as Vice Chair they would be able to approach schools on behalf of the Board.

Another attendee noted an increase in Designated Clinical Officer queries coming directly from schools for support, which they believe to be a direct impact on the communities of practice.

Another member echoed the need for SEND and EHCP teams to work cohesively to provide support, praising the support received at their own school.

	<p>The Chair asks for a section in the next update, on the work being done in Early Years settings specifically in her next report.</p> <p>Action points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Action 320 – Bury2Gether have feedback on the SEF/Position update. The document is to be reviewed again before presentation at the next Board meeting on 24th March. 2. Action 321 – An update is required on specific work being done in Early Years settings in the next report before the Board on 24th March.
9	<p>AOB</p>
	<p>The Chair discussed representation from the voluntary sector at the Board and clarified that the suggestion of further voluntary sector representation would be in addition to Bury2Gether. An attendee suggested representation could come from Barnardo’s, The Chair asked how this could link in with the SENDIASS element of the Board. Another attendee advised they held half-termly meetings with representatives from Barnardo’s. Noting that Barnardo’s receive information from Bury families and that they do hold useful information which they have agreed to share to better serve the working relationship moving forward.</p> <p>The Chair recognised an opportunity now to address Board membership ahead of changes in focus, ensuring that we are not missing any voices, with potential for a reset with some members joining the Board and others no longer being required to attend.</p> <p>Another attendee clarified that the umbrella organisation for the voluntary and community sector in Bury is known as the VCFA, the Voluntary Community Faith Alliance.</p> <p>Another attendee asked the Board if there was enough representation for people aged 17-25 on the Board. The Chair noted this had felt absent in recent meetings, the Chair was assured that representatives for 17-25-year-olds were very engaged with what is happening at Board, also noting that a present attendee oversees this presence and brings this to the Board. They continued to speak of the improved work of the transitions team and noted that the team works within that age demographic, suggesting a future update from them would be helpful.</p> <p>The Chair agreed that there may be more work ongoing in the background and that this should be brought to the Board to strengthen the Preparation for Adulthood element.</p> <p>It was agreed that an agenda item on the demographic would be welcomed by the transitions team, with the Chair noting that an update would be beneficial.</p> <p>The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions, noting how positive it is that school representatives were able to attend during half term.</p>

	<p>Action points:</p> <p>1. Action 322 –Transitions team to provide an update on preparation for adulthood at the next board on 24th March.</p>
10	<p>Upcoming meeting dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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