

SEND and Alternative Provision Board Newsletter: December 2025

The SEND and Alternative Provision Board is a meeting to implement and oversee the SEND and Alternative Provision strategies for Salford. This is a shared partnership approach with representatives from health, education, children's and adults social care, voluntary sector, parents and carers, elected members, and the wider council. We aim to support and improve services so that all children with SEND can reach their full potential in Salford, it is currently chaired by Melissa Caslake Executive Director Children's Services and Cathy Starbuck, Director of Education and Inclusion.

A number of subgroups report into the board. The subgroups are Local Offer, Transitions, Neurodevelopmental Approach, Graduated Approach, EHCPs, Alternative Provision, Preparation for Adult Life, SEND Performance and Engagement and Participation. Each subgroup reports on progress being made to the SEND board on a rolling programme.

Below is a brief summary of the areas that were covered at our latest SEND and Alternative Provision Board which took place on the 2nd December. We hope you find this update useful. Please send any feedback or if you have any ideas to nicola.robbs@salford.gov.uk



Agenda	Key Points
Voice of the Child	<p>The board viewed a video which featured a determined 16-year-old who has left school and is now pursuing a construction course. Using <i>Talking Mats</i>, the young person shared his experiences of the support he received and the communication skills that helped him along the way.</p> <p>He explained that understanding others was sometimes challenging, particularly in certain subjects at school. In primary school, support was inconsistent, and in secondary school, things became even harder, he was suspended for minor issues like not wearing a tie. Eventually, he was excluded and moved to Ed Start, where smaller classes suited him better. From there, he progressed to JEP Youth Engagement and later the Clifton Centre, completing his first construction course at JEP.</p> <p>A turning point for the young person was building a strong relationship with speech therapy. Receiving therapy at home worked well, and he was introduced to a Career Connect Worker who provided additional support. The young person's advice to others is inspiring: <i>"Things can be hard, but you have to push through. You need the courage to try new things."</i></p> <p>At 16, the young person has achieved his CSCS (Construction Skills Certification Scheme) card and is aiming for an apprenticeship. His commendable choices reflect both his resilience and the positive impact of the support provided.</p> <p>The Clifton Centre continues to demonstrate commitment by dedicating one day per week to the SALT Taskforce, supporting young people with</p>

	communication needs. This proactive approach highlights strong engagement and contribution.
Deep Dive – Speech, Language and Communication: Balance System approach	<p>The board heard about the Balanced System and how that approach to speech and language communication works in Salford.</p> <p>Background:</p> <p>Since April 2019, Salford City Council and the Salford Integrated Care Board (ICB- formally Salford Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) have been jointly commissioning support for children and young people with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN).</p> <p>Provision is delivered under the THRIVE model and the service specification is based on The Balanced System® (Gascoigne, 2011). This is an outcomes-based approach to delivering integrated services for children and young people.</p> <p>The five strands of The Balanced System represent key areas that need to work together to support children and young people with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Support – Ensuring parents and carers have the knowledge, confidence, and resources to help their child's communication development at home. • Environment – Creating communication-friendly spaces in early years settings, schools, and communities that promote language development. • Workforce – Building a skilled and confident workforce across education, health, and care sectors to identify and support SLCN effectively. • Identification – Early and accurate recognition of speech, language, and communication needs through screening and assessment. • Intervention – Providing timely, evidence-based support at universal, targeted, and specialist levels to meet individual needs and improve outcomes. <p>It's an approach that moves away from traditional clinical models and moves a lot of the therapeutic interventions into schools and settings.</p> <p>The balanced system has five core delivery principles:</p> <p>Focus on functional outcomes and measures of impact – measuring impact not inputs</p> <p>Access - Simple and easy access to the right information, assessment and support for children, young people and their families</p> <p>Placed based support - Support is delivered in the most functionally appropriate and relevant place for the child or young person, their development, learning and leisure</p> <p>Build the targeted offer as part of the continuum of support - Development of strong universal and targeted provision is key to</p>

	<p>facilitating access to specialist support as and when needed for a finite time</p> <p>Information - High quality, accessible and consistent information and advice are available in a range of media and culturally appropriate forms to enable parents and carers and professionals to be well informed.</p> <p>If you would like more information about the Balanced System, please contact fiona.taylor@nca.nhs.uk</p>
Neuro Dev update	<p>This item focuses on the growing pressures and strategic responses around neurodevelopmental (ND) needs.</p> <p>Development of the support offer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In October 2025 the Neurodiversity Network sessions began. These are monthly sessions with a range of services present to provide support for parents/carers. • The first two months has seen over 60 families dropping in for advice and support for their child. There has been overwhelmingly positive feedback received. • The next Neurodiversity Network session will take place on 15th January 1-3pm at Little Hulton Family Hub. <p>Current Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2025 an average of 150 referrals were received every month requesting a neurodevelopmental assessment. • The increase in demand for neurodevelopmental assessments is evident across all Greater Manchester localities resulting in long waiting times for an assessment. <p>Next Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater Manchester Integrated Care Board released some communications with updates linked to the proposals going forward to address this challenge. • The key changes include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ An updated criteria will be used when considering whether an NHS neurodevelopmental assessment is required. ○ A prioritisation approach will be used to consider those most in need of an assessment. • Salford Locality is currently working to consider how best to implement the changes ensuring we continue to provide support required to children, young people and their families. • Clarification is being sought on some key points from Greater Manchester ICB and as soon as the points have been addressed some further communications will be sent.
Recent SEND inspections	<p><i>ADCS SEND Inspection Outcomes</i></p> <p>Link to the recent SEND inspections for information.</p>