



SEND Service Decision-Making Groups (DMGs): Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

The Decision-Making Groups (DMGs) provide a consistent, transparent and multi-agency process for key statutory decisions relating to Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessments and plans. The DMGs ensure that decision-making is lawful, child centred, evidence informed and aligned with the Walsall SEND and AP Decision-Making Framework (2025). These Terms of Reference set out the remit, membership, delegated authority and governance arrangements for all DMGs operating within Walsall.

2. Scope and Key Decision Areas

DMGs consider decisions relating to:

- Whether to undertake an EHC needs assessment
- Whether to issue an Education, Health and Care Plan following assessment
- Naming or changing educational placements
- Decisions arising from annual reviews, including amendments and ceasing an EHCP
- Funding allocations or changes to provision
- Decisions relating to key transition points through the phase transfer process
- Decisions relating to post 16 education and training pathways
- Consideration of high cost or independent placements within delegated authority
- Alternative provision arrangements and Education Other Than at School (EOTAS), where relevant

DMGs operate within established statutory timescales and local delegated authority levels, with escalation routes defined in the Decision-Making Framework.

3. Types of Decision-Making Groups

Walsall operates a number of DMGs to support timely and proportionate decision-making. These include:

- General Decision-Making Group
- Children in Care Decision-Making Group
- Post 16 Decision-Making Group
- Phase Transfer Decision-Making Group
- SENDCo Decision-Making Group
- High Cost and Independent Placement Decision-Making Group

4. Principles

All DMGs operate in line with shared principles:

- Decisions are centred on the needs, aspirations and views of children, young people and their families
- Decisions are informed by accurate and up-to-date multi-agency evidence
- Statutory duties and guidance are adhered to at all stages
- Decisions are consistent, proportionate and quality assured
- Processes are timely and transparent
- Learning from decision-making contributes to continuous improvement across the SEND partnership

5. Membership

Each DMG is chaired by the Head of Service, EHC Team Manager or a nominated deputy. Membership may include:

- Senior Caseworkers and Caseworkers
- Educational Psychologists
- Health professionals such as the Designated Clinical Officer
- Social Care representatives including the Designated Social Care Officer
- Virtual School representation for Children in Care
- Additional professionals relevant to the decision, for example Post 16 leads, Alternative Provision colleagues or school-based representatives

A meeting can proceed when chaired by an appropriate manager and attended by at least two additional senior or specialist members.

6. Meeting Arrangements

General Decision-Making Groups are scheduled weekly to ensure statutory timescales are met. Phase Transfer DMG is scheduled within the defined phase transfer window or at appropriate points in the academic calendar. The SENDCo Decision-Making Group is convened at suitable intervals throughout the year to consider requests for EHC needs assessment and make formal decisions on whether to assess. The frequency of this group is adjusted in response to training needs within the SENDCo network and requests for support from settings. This approach also strengthens shared decision-making with SENDCos and supports consistent understanding of thresholds across the area.

Cases must be submitted using the agreed templates and uploaded to the shared DMG folder by the stated deadline to ensure papers can be reviewed in advance. Late or incomplete submissions may be deferred to the next scheduled meeting.

7. Preparation and Presentation

- Caseworkers prepare and quality assure all documents before submission.
- Caseworkers present a clear summary of the decision required, the supporting evidence and the views of the child or young person and their family.
- Panel members review the evidence and contribute relevant professional insight during the meeting.

8. Decision-Making

Decisions are reached collaboratively wherever possible. Where consensus cannot be reached, the Chair makes the final decision within delegated authority. Cases may be escalated where a higher level of governance is required.

9. Recording and Communication

Decisions are recorded using the DMG case summary template during the meeting. Caseworkers ensure decisions are uploaded to the child or young person's case file within one working day and that the monthly DMG spreadsheet is updated. Families and settings are notified of outcomes within statutory timescales, with amended plans or letters issued where required.

10. Governance and Quality Assurance

DMG activity forms part of the wider SEND and AP Quality Assurance Framework. Decision trends are monitored through the SEND Scorecard and shared with the SEND Leadership Team to support oversight, quality assurance and service improvement. DMG processes, thresholds and decision-making patterns contribute to continuous improvement discussions across the SEND partnership. These Terms of

Reference are reviewed annually, or sooner where required, to ensure continued alignment with statutory duties and the Walsall SEND and AP Decision-Making Framework.
These Terms of Reference are reviewed annually or sooner where required to remain aligned with statutory duties and the Decision-Making Framework.

Date of Approval: 06/09/25

Rachael Beards
Head of SEND & Inclusion