



Lancashire SEND Partnership

Annual Report 2024

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Preface

Since this report was drafted in December 2024, the Local Area SEND Inspection has taken place. The outcome of the inspection was that "there are widespread and/or systemic failings leading to significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which the local area partnership must address urgently". The local area partnership is required to prepare and publish a Priority Action Plan (PAP) by the 25 March 2025 to address the concerns identified. We recognise the need to reset and refresh the way we work with each other and are committed to ensuring SEND is a key priority in Lancashire. The partnership is collectively ambitious for children and young people with SEND and their families. We are committed to continuous improvement to deliver the best outcomes for children and young people with SEND, and we strive to establish a new culture of transparency, building trust.

Introduction

Lancashire is the fourth largest local authority in the country. It has a population of approximately 1.2 million people, residing across a diverse mix of 12 districts, grouped into three geographical localities. There are 378,191 children and young people (CYP) aged 0-25 living in Lancashire, of whom 32,065 children and young people have been identified as having special education needs and disabilities (SEND). 12,406 CYP currently have an education, health, and care plan (EHCP), up 150% since 2015. 39% CYP with an EHCP attend mainstream school, with 41% pupils in state-funded schools being eligible for free school meals (FSM). Lancashire is committed to building a safe, happy, healthy, and successful future for all children, and particularly those with a disability and learning need.

This report sets out how services are delivered to children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). In addition, the report details how children and their families are influencing and shaping how agencies and services work together so that the Lancashire Area Partnership can continually improve the experiences and outcomes of children with SEND.

Role of the SEND Partnership Board

The SEND Partnership Board was formed in 2018, following the last SEND Inspection in 2017, and appointed a jointly funded permanent Manager of the SEND Partnership and Local Offer Development Officer, to support the transition through significant change in structures, understand the implications of new national policy and in recognition of the continuous improvement required locally.

The SEND Partnership Board is accountable for the delivery of the SEND Continuous Improvement Plan to the Lancashire Health and Wellbeing Board, the Integrated Care Board quality committee, and Lancashire County Council (LCC) Cabinet scrutiny meetings. The Continuous Improvement Plan includes actions to address key priorities agreed by the SEND Partnership Board and was reviewed in 2024. Key priorities have also been identified through annual surveys, and regular feedback from families and our partners.

Board members represent their sector, sharing their perspective, whilst engaging and keeping others informed. Progress on the actions in the plan have been monitored regularly and key elements reported to the SEND Partnership Board at each meeting.

Overall performance of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) services have been reported via the Lancashire SEND data dashboard alongside the key performance indicators relating to statutory measures.

Chair of the SEND Partnership Board

Professor Sarah O'Brien, Chief Nursing Officer, Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board has chaired the board in 2024, together with Jacqui Old, Executive Director of Education and Children's Services, Lancashire County Council as Vice Chair.

Role of the SEND Partnership

Following the last SEND Inspection, the SEND Partnership in Lancashire has been implementing a major improvement programme across the county, which has been reviewed regularly. The SEND partnership, led by the Manager of the SEND Partnership, and supported by the Local Offer Development Officer, together with partnership members, ensure consistent communication and coherent planning, continued monitoring of progress and support for children, young people, their families.

Our Partnership brings together representatives from families, including the Lancashire Parent Carer Forum (LPCF) and young people's participation group (POWAR) with those organisations responsible for SEND services, including the county council, education, health, and social care providers. Through our work together we are committed to improving the support and provision for children and young people with SEND, and their families.

The SEND Plan 2021-2025

The priorities identified in the SEND Plan 2021-2025 are underpinned by the principle that services for children and their families are a priority, and the Lancashire SEND Partnership is committed to ensuring that service delivery provides the best possible outcomes and continued improvement. The Lancashire SEND Partnership has aimed to achieve specific benefits for children and young people with SEND through working on the five priorities, described below. In delivering these priorities, we have endeavored to identify, assess, meet needs, and improve outcomes through all that we do.

- **Improving the child or young person's journey** - Families understand what is happening, when it is happening, and what that means for them. Staff support families on the journey and know where they fit in alongside other services and other sectors.
- **Preparation for the adulthood that the child or young person and their family wants for them** – children and young people access opportunities right for them and their needs.
- **Accessible services delivering what is needed, when it is needed** – services are available and deliver what children and young people with SEND need.
- **Listening and talking to each other** – it is important that we all have greater understanding of what is happening, what needs to happen, and what changes need to be made for the child or young person, for families, and for staff. We all need to talk to and listen to each other.
- **Taking ownership of any mistakes and putting them right at pace** – families need to be able to trust the staff they encounter on the SEND journey and know that any mistakes will be resolved at pace. Staff need to know they are supported.

Priority Delivery Groups have been established to lead on action in the priority areas to continue to build upon the work taking place. The SEND Partnership Board has utilised existing structures and established task and finish groups as needed to deliver the improvement, with the involvement of all partners. Highlight reports are presented by each priority lead at the SEND Partnership Board meetings, to report on progress against agreed actions in delivering the priorities.

The five SEND plan priority areas

1. Improving Outcomes Priority Group led by Head of Inclusion, Lancashire County Council.

Partners from across the partnership attended half termly meetings in 2024, which explored data trends, analysing and identifying key themes. Attainment data for early years showed improvements in phonics and numeracy, but they remain below national levels. The data shows the greatest need is in the early years, as these children have been more impacted by the pandemic. Attainment data was also shared for children in key stages 2 and 4, who had SEN support or an EHCP. The data showed improvements in some districts, in comparison with attainment for England, but hadn't yet returned to levels of attainment seen pre-covid. Progress 8 scores were inconsistent with attainment and also in relation to absence rates, which were below those for England in 2023. Data has been shared with schools via primary headteachers in Lancashire (PHiL) and Lancashire association of secondary school headteachers (LASSH) meetings, with reference groups developing collective decision making about how to narrow attainment gap. Children with SEND, who are open to children's social care didn't achieve a good level of development in the early years or expected levels of learning in key stage 2 generally. 15% children open to children's social care for more than 12 months with an EHCP achieved expected levels, and 34.8% (compared to 26% nationally) with SEN Support. Children with SEN Support are making progress due to quality first teaching.

Decreasing attendance rates were seen in children with Autism, associated anxiety and mental health concerns, particularly those with a PDA profile. Parental expectations had changed towards schools regarding children not able to attend, not understanding why online learning couldn't continue to be provided. The lack of ADHD medication was also impacting on children's attendance, and college attendance rates continued to be negatively impacted since Covid-19. Schools have attendance support workers and consultants who can advise and support schools. Live attendance data is being captured by the local authority via the Wonde system, and support is being offered to the families whose children have emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA). An attendance lead and Alternative Provision lead were appointed to help support CYP attend school. Further support from children and family wellbeing service and support from Children's Champions to capture the child's voice was also available.

Suspensions and exclusions had continued to rise during 2023/4, and where permanent exclusions had fallen, suspensions had increased. Some areas with high rates of suspensions and exclusions still achieved good attainment rates. Focus groups were established to share good practice, particularly from those who accessed support from Inclusion hubs and the Inclusion and Engagement Teams to reduce suspensions and exclusions. Education

Improvement school visits have continued to include a focus on SEND, building on the work of the primary headteacher's reference group, the headteachers briefings and the Inclusion Summits. In 2024, children with SEND continued to be at an increased risk of being excluded, not attending school, and achieving lower attainment than children without SEN needs. The voice of children permanently excluded has been captured by the Children's Champions, and there are further plans to capture the voice of children and young people who are seldom heard, including those missing education, electively home educated, and those post 16 and not in education, employment, or training. Working groups and Inclusion Hubs have been further embedded to manage exclusions and a new 'PEN 1' form developed, to ensure children have received the right support, at the right time prior to being permanently excluded. The Alternative Provision strategy 2023-26 is being embedded and aims to improve outcomes for children who are unable to attend mainstream school or are at risk of exclusion.

Public Health data identified that despite lockdowns due to Covid-19 being lifted in 2021, the negative impacts were increasing year or year, particularly regarding social communication and mental health. The Integrated Care Board (ICB) approved the roll out of the Speech and Language Balanced System model of support, across the three geographical regions in 2024, with multi-agency drop in sessions in Hyndburn, Rossendale, Preston, and Lancaster. Wellcomm speech and language toolkits were rolled out across the county to all nurseries, with a consultant appointed to roll out training. The new Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in schools project commissioned by the ICB covered communication and interaction also. The ICB have reviewed the health specifications for speech and language, Specialist school nursing framework, continence framework and transitions into health care, with community of practice established to share good practice.

A systematic approach to feedback has been further established. In 2024, a Correspondence Officer was appointed, together with a Tribunals Manager and team, with training developed regarding appeals and mediation, with weekly case surgeries held to support increasing demand. A new extended appeals pathway was also developed and implemented in 2024, to improve communication and processes. Increasing demand has meant that timeliness has slipped with 18% EHCP's finalised within timescales in 2024. The SEND helpline was established in October 2023, with more staff being recruited to manage enquiries and improve the timeliness of EHCP new assessments and annual reviews.

The feedback from the SEND Survey 2023 was published on the Local Offer, and identified the following key themes, communication, accessing support, support in school, health services, the local authority and EHC plans, transitions and post-16 support and access to social activities. 200 responses were received from parent carers in 2024, down from 678 responses in 2023, with 59% of parent carers sharing that they were involved in assessments of their child's needs. 36% Parent carers felt listened to by services, 20% of parent carers felt their child received enough help and support from services, 56.5% said their child enjoyed time

with friends, 54% that their child felt safe and happy within the community and 76.5% shared their child had fun and enjoyed time away from education or work.

The Lancashire SEND Partnership Workforce Development Strategy 2024 was published in 2024. We developed a programme of monthly briefings, quarterly network meetings and SEND Workshops delivered by the Early Help Learning and development Officer. We developed the programme based on feedback from parent carers and practitioners collected via SEND Partnership Engagement Events and Working Together Events in 2023, which told us there were gaps in training and knowledge. We initially developed the SEN support guide for professionals which brought together information in an accessible format for professionals to identify quickly what support was available for CYP with SEND and how to access this based on education, health, and care needs at universal (Level 1), targeted / universal plus (Level 2), specialist / intensive support (Level 3) and acute / specialist support (Level 4). This was in response to parent carers telling us via the Local Offer that they wanted professionals to know how to meet the needs of their children with specific conditions and how these conditions impacted their children. The training programme was developed in partnership and a webpage published in 2024, which includes a SEND training guide for professionals bringing together resources in one place, together with recordings of the Network meetings and briefings and Education workforce development (SEND) resources.

The SEND training guide has attracted 1941 views between February and October 2024, the SEN Support guide 6172 and the education workforce development 6282. Feedback has been positive, for example 'the guest speakers are great and being able to access the recording when not able to attend is really helpful'. The programme briefings and network meetings were based on the journey of a child from early identification, SEND is everyone's business, SEN support, Early Help, Family Hubs, Local Offer, Break Times, CYP Participation and Lundy Model, Introduction to Autism, overview of support for adults with LD and Autism, including Introduction to Annual Health Checks, Careers Hub, Supported Internships, annual review new forms and process, Police Cyber Security and protecting vulnerable people, overview of the SEND Workshop we developed with CFW, introduction to mental health support and EHCP audit. We are planning to evaluate the programme and develop the new SEND Partnership Workforce Development Programme for 2025.

The specialist teaching service and Lancashire professional development service (LPDS) deliver bespoke training and a wide variety of courses, to help increase schools confidence at meeting the needs of children with SEND. Support has been provided to schools via the special educational needs and disabilities co-ordinator (SENDCO) and behaviour network meetings, inclusion hub meetings, and via the inclusion and engagement team for children receiving SEN support, in addition to children with an EHCP. The Virtual Schools trauma informed training programme has been accessed by 200 schools and further education colleges, and an attachment and trauma tool kit has been further rolled out. Training on emotionally based

school avoidance (EBSA) has been made available to schools via an on-demand webinar. Training is also provided on the ATTEND framework to all schools and national health service (NHS) colleagues. Termly coaching sessions are also available, and a parental guidance handbook has been developed.

2. Communications Priority Group led by Chair of the Lancashire Parent Carer Forum.

Monthly priority group meetings have been held with representatives from all stakeholders, throughout 2024, with the aim of improving participation, engagement, collaboration, co-production, and communication across the SEND Partnership. The communications group has sought to ensure that:

- the voice of children and young people (CYP) is at the heart of all we do,
- the voice of parent carers is valued and included in our work,
- access to services is made more transparent and communicated,
- information is shared and freely available on the Local Offer (website, Facebook Page, SEND Newsletter)
- regular SEND events and workshops are held to share information and seek feedback

The Improvement Delivery Plan for communications was reviewed and priorities agreed for action in 2024/5. Key Performance Indicators were also discussed, and workshops proposed to review the progress made against the SEND Plan 2021-2025. A Workshop was held in May 2024, and Development Days were co-designed, co-produced and co-delivered in September and November 2024. These focussed on developing co-production, with Genuine Partnerships facilitating the Development Day in September and providing training on the Four Cornerstones approach to co-production. From the Development Day it was agreed that a Working Group be formed to consider how the Four Cornerstones Model should be adapted to Lancashire. A report will be provided to the Partnership Board in March. Coproduction remains key, although it takes time, developing a shared understanding enables better outcomes.

All partners have been included in our improvement and development work with SEND success / improvement activity regularly shared throughout the Local Offer and other appropriate channels. Communication escalation and feedback processes have been discussed at the meetings and how information was shared, as documented in the Working Together Strategy that was co-produced in 2023. Concerns from each of the priority groups were escalated to the SEND Operations Group for oversight, before a full update of progress against the SEND Plan was shared at the SEND executive and Board meetings. Proposals also being offered by the Chair to simplify exception reporting within reports to the SEND Partnership Board. Feedback mechanisms needed strengthening when decisions were made, and clear policies and procedures shared across the partnership. Concerns were raised that

despite information being shared via the webpages, emails, bulletins, and newsletters, these often were not read or shared more widely within service teams. Despite the best endeavours of the Communications Group there remains a residual and powerful perception of poor and uncoordinated communication by Parent carers, CYP and practitioners and likewise from schools. It was felt further work was required to provide the SEND Partnership Board with a more definitive Communications framework to ensure stakeholder mapping, communication channels were refreshed and partners drawn into a more joined up approach.

Working Together Events, hosted by Lancashire Parent Carer Forum (LPCF) have been co-designed, co-produced and co-delivered in March, May, and October 2024, virtually in the morning, afternoon, and evening to facilitate as many parent carers as possible and practitioners being able to attend, to share their views, meet the team, and listen to updates from across the partnership. These events were promoted via the Lancashire Parent Carer Forum Facebook Page, the Local Offer webpage, Facebook Page, SEND Newsletter and Education Bulletins to schools. The intention through the events being to provide Parent Carers with more concise feedback on the progress of our Plans, to capture their views and then to use this in turn to tune our activity and then to provide further feedback in a you said, we did. The Communications Group recognise that developing improved feedback mechanisms with Parent Carers will need to carry forwards within the new SEND Strategy.

The event in March heard from SENDIAS who asked for parent carer feedback to help strengthen the support they provide to families. This has led to a review of the staffing capacity for this service. The Designated Social Care Officer engaged with Parent carers around Social Care assessments for children with SEND and how these are undertaken. This was informed by research from Cerebra that where these are completed by social workers, who are not SEND specialists they are completed with a safeguarding rather than a needs based approach. The Designated Social Care Officer co-produced a Top Tips for social worker guide with parent carers, capturing their lived experiences and recommendations to how they approach their work especially with parent carers who have neuro diverse children and may have significant needs in their own right. The outcome will be for a coproduced training programme which will roll out in 2025 and will provide clarity on the legislative framework and include parent carer lived experiences too.

The event in May asked for feedback regarding the current SEND Plan 2021-2025 and as to whether the priorities remained relevant to the SEND Partnership. The prevailing views that were raised were that the original SEND plan had been suitably aspirational, however people felt that this had not been delivered against. This led to further events in October to co-produce the priorities for the new SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2025 onwards. These sessions were positive in that they brought together increased attendance of practitioners who felt they had not been party to coproduction together with a larger group of Parent carers. These meetings were positive in providing an enhanced dialogue between Parent

Carers and front line practitioners, who were able to explore the current pressures experienced by both groups respectively.

25 partnership events have been attended by the SEND Partnerships in 2023/4, across all 12 districts, including Family Hub launch events, Jake Berry MP SEND Fair, Paradise Gems launch event, School Careers Fairs, Behaviour, Early Help and Safeguarding Conferences, with more than 800 parent carers, children, young people, and practitioners attending.

The Lancashire Parent Carer Forum (LPCF) aspiration is to allow all parents to contribute at a level of participation they feel comfortable with and enable their individual and collective voices to be heard and shape service developments. LPCF and the SEND Partnership have sought to develop their working relationships and ensure that the Parents Voice is being heard within the Partnership Board and by providing active leadership of the Communications Priority Group. The Communications Group ensured that the jointly agreed Protocol / Memorandum of Understanding was published on the Local Offer website. A Forward Plan process and guidance on coproduction has also been produced. A review of coproduction activity completed between January 2024 and May 2024 leading to a simplification of the request form process.

Round Table meetings have been held with representatives of parent carer support groups and facilitated by Genuine Partnerships who are also associate members of Contact. The Communications group have discussed how to design the Four cornerstones model to fit Lancashire. The communications group discussed the quality indicators for Welcome and Care as part of the Four Cornerstones Model agreeing the importance of ensuring all voices are heard and valued as equal partners. The need for role modelling respectful communication and benefit of developing ground rules for meetings to provide for active listening was agreed as important for all parties going forwards too.

Workshops have been held with LPCF and parent carers to co-produce the new SEND Survey 2025, reflecting on the existing SEND Survey that was launched in 2023 and changing the language and questions to focus more on specific questions regarding support received from health, education, and care services. It was agreed that the revised survey would be launched at the start of the new year and at intervals through the year to capture changes in perception. The SEND Executive Group also endorsing that LPCF and services undertake to review survey feedback together with the intention to agree recommendations required for changes to services.

Concerns were raised regarding the communication with parent carers about delays in EHCP's and annual reviews being completed. A statement was prepared and shared with SENDIAS and SEND Helpline staff, to ensure consistent feedback was being shared with parent carers and practitioners. A recovery plan has since been put in place to recruit more staff to improve timeliness. The need to provide information sharing on service

improvements and developments as they are happening being confirmed as an area of improvement in our communications.

Children and young people (CYP) have had a clear, active role in influencing service delivery utilising the Participation Strategy. The Strategic Participation Board is responsible for embedding the Children and Young People's Participation Strategy, which was published in 2023, followed by self-assessments being completed by all education and children's services. This assessment informed service specific Participation, Engagement and Co-production (PEC) working group action plans so that individual services could prioritise, plan, and monitor their development around how they were improving in these areas. The SEND Partnership have continued their participation, engagement, and co-production (PEC) group, with staff attending training on participation, through the Participation network meetings, and Mind of My Own training for Children's Champions to capture children's and young people's voices. Annual Reports by the Board demonstrate the impact of developing practice in these areas and evidence how individual services are progressing their PEC action plans. In 2024, the Board have also started creating quarterly snapshot examples of practice, which give further detail of developing practice, and evidence how children and young people are valued, visible and included in our communities and how their voice, views and experiences are shaping how we work with them now and in the future. The Strategic Participation Board has a young person's representative who plays an active role in challenging us and contributing to our work. This young person is a trained Young Adviser who is part of a wider group of young people who support our work as an authority and develop their own skills in the process. Some examples of this include interviewing for some of our most senior roles, briefing and delivering training to officers and staff, quality assuring plans within Children's Social Care, regularly attending our Children, Families and Skills Scrutiny Committee and most recently, being part of decision-making panels with adults on commissioned services.

POWAR youth participation group held a consultation evening in June 2024 to share feedback regarding priorities that were important to CYP over the next 5 years. It was also an opportunity to promote and grow POWAR. POWAR members had previously shared concerns regarding transport to activities and the need for increased leisure opportunities, which has consequently resulted in the commissioning of Max Cards, which provide access to reduced or free entry to many UK attractions. Many children are experiencing anxiety and are struggling to leave their bedrooms, so it was also requested that online POWAR sessions and online Break Time sessions were explored, resulting in Spectrum Gaming being commissioned as a Break Time provider. Support to grow POWAR remains a high priority and a new youth worker has been appointed to help support with this. The SEND Partnership Board has a POWAR young person representative who actively participates and provides Board members with challenge.

The communications priority group has been working to ensure the Local Offer is subject to continuous review, to ensure it is meeting the need of parents, children and young people, and the wider SEND community. The Local Offer Development Group has worked with the Family Hub network for them to share leaflets and signpost families to support. The Local Offer also includes other appropriate channels such as face to face events and has included events with minority groups to increase diversity, such as Maktoom and Paradise Gems. The communication delivery plan needs to include the granularity to enable us to drill down into the actions and measures. The measures need to include how many people are accessing the website, Facebook Page, Directory, and newsletter. Measures can also be obtained via surveys, although the numbers accessing the various channels may be increasing, they need to be meaningful, and we need to know what we are trying to achieve. The group discussed how impact is measured and the evaluation of this. SEND Partnership Board minutes are uploaded to the website, and a board brief shared with partners, providing a summary of the presentations shared at board to disseminate more widely; however, concerns were raised that this doesn't appear to happen.

3. Improving the SEND Journey led by the Associate Director for SEND, Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB)

Several groups feed into the improving the SEND journey priority, so there is no priority delivery group. The groups include the multi-agency audit group, the children and young people autism projects steering group, the early identification of need working group, best start in life board, the early health notification, and public health 0-19 groups. The ICB associate director for SEND, and LCC head of inclusion have also collaborated to meet requirements for the new SEND Inspection Framework.

Multi-agency audit and evaluation meetings have been held half-termly, strengthening our quality assurance activity and providing a more in-depth analysis of the impact that our SEND arrangements have on the experiences and outcomes of children and young people (CYP). This has enabled us to focus on individual CYP and families and identify how we have worked across the partnership to support them. This process has been embedded across the SEND Partnership, with findings collated and shared to support ongoing service development and change. EHCP audits are held monthly and focus on the content and quality of individual EHCP's. Auditors receive training in relation to the Quality Standards and how to make judgements. EHCP audits seek to evidence compliance with statutory legislation and the Code of Practice, a coordinated and effective multi-agency footprint and improved outcomes for the child or young person. Learning from EHCP audit is disseminated to inform improvement, celebrate good practice, and contribute to the continuous professional development of the

workforce. The quality of EHC plans graded as good or outstanding has improved to 71% in 2024, up from 67% in 2023.

The 0-19 nursing service is commissioned by LCC Public Health and delivered by HCRG. A new service specification has been developed, for implementation in 2025, and includes support for transition for young people up to the age of 25 with SEND. The early health notification pathway from universal services, such as health visiting and school nursing through to targeted services, including paediatricians and early help practitioners, has been embedded in the 0-19 service to improve processes, support and what a good referral looks like. Ages and stages questionnaires are undertaken, with families signposted to support as appropriate, such as Parenting Team support. This early identification of need has been supported by representatives from the 0-19 service, public health, inclusion, school improvement, and early help and an action plan implemented. A comprehensive systems approach to early years providers has supported increased inclusion, with the inclusion fund shortening the process when a child is already known to the specialist teaching service. Support has been provided to partners to implement the graduated approach and utilise the ordinarily available toolkit and quick reference guide. SENDCO Networks have been supported and the training programme for education providers extended considerably.

The Best Start in Life (BSiL) Board chaired by the Director of Public Health, meets 6 weekly and reports to the children, young people and families partnership and other strategic boards. Best Start in Life has redefined services by integrating health visiting, early years, maternity, and family hubs within a unified framework, aimed at improving school readiness, and reducing inequalities, leverages collaborative governance and insights to enhance service delivery. The Operational Subgroup chaired by our Head of Early Help, focusses on various thematic areas and enablers, such as data and intelligence, Parenting, Workforce, Speech and Language, 1001 critical days vision; with a unifying purpose and aim of improving school readiness, ensuring that support for children with SEND is included in all these areas. Lancashire's innovative approach to holistic speech and language easy access has been showcased by the Local Government Association.

The supporting medical needs of pupils in special schools guidance was updated early in 2023 following consultation with parents and provides clarification around the roles and responsibilities of the different professions within settings. The guidance outlines what special school nurses offer, including appropriate and up to date training for teaching assistants and other special school staff. It details how schools should be recording storage and administration of medication, providing a clear outline of parental and school responsibilities, including responsibilities of staff on school trips and residential.

In 2024, a paper regarding the Neurodevelopmental Pathway was presented to the ICB Children's Board to implement pre and post diagnostic support and digitalisation of the

referral form, however a full business case was requested to consider the implementation of this. In the meantime, the interim case agreed to extend work and implement waiting list initiatives. A Stakeholder group was established, and workshop events held with all partners, including parent carers to inform the full business case for 2025/6. Key performance indicators to measure impact were developed and links made with parent carers, to gather family voice. Adelphi surveys were completed with stakeholders to identify standards and the CYP ND Commissioning Framework developed. The Programme Board was established in October 2024, to further develop the next steps. Task and finish groups were established to drive forward the work, particularly joining up working, regarding early help and the support available whilst waiting for an assessment. Family Hubs provide inclusive activities and services, in addition to SEND specific activities, such as Colourful Footsteps and Chat, Play, Read for younger children. Family Support is offered across the whole of the county as an outreach service to families who need intensive support. The SEND CFW support team, created in 2023 continue to support children and young people open to the children with disabilities team who no longer meet the threshold for a social worker. The service was extended to include support for children post 16, the management of break times and completion of care advices.

The autism in schools project promoted positive autism support and practice in schools, to improve inclusive, multi-agency approaches and support for families and improving the quality of life for children, young people following autism diagnosis. This has been superseded by the Partnership for Inclusivity of Neurodiversity in Schools project, with 24 schools in Lancashire recruited in 2024 to participate. Self-assessment forms were completed by schools with six areas of focus identified, with parent carer surveys identifying themes. LPCF have been commissioned by the ICB to co-produce the project and visit schools to deliver parent carer sessions. Services will be commissioned, such as speech and language therapy to meet the gaps identified. The top three priority areas identified include teaching and learning, leadership and culture, and the environment, followed by communication, readiness to learn and mental health. A further gap analysis will be completed to identify further support needs for schools.

The annual review working group reviewed and updated processes, following an audit with children, young people and parent carers who wanted forms to be more accessible and meaningful regarding measuring progress made against identified targets. The working group updated the forms for CYP, including an easy read version with widgit symbols, parent carers including new guidance notes, and professionals forms for health, and care. The new forms and process was initially trialled with 58 schools, before being published on the Local Offer at the beginning of 2024 for all schools to utilise.

4. Preparation for Adulthood led by Neil Willcocks, Service Manager for Learning Disabilities Autism and Mental Health, Lancashire County Council.

Monthly meetings have been held with partners, with membership being reviewed to ensure the correct partners are represented. Preparation for Adulthood outcomes include education and employment, independent living, friends, relationships and community, and health.

The SEND Partnership promotes and supports Supported Internships for our learners aged 16-25 who have an EHCP. The bi-monthly SEND Employment Forum was established in September 2023 and a SEND Employment Officer appointed in January 2024, to drive action forward. The national development team for inclusion (NDTi) work in partnership with DFN project search and the British association of supported employment (BASE), providing support and challenge to Lancashire's employment forum. In 2022/3, 24 of 53 interns achieved sustainable employment, 8 moved into education, with 3 into apprenticeships, 7 into volunteering and the remainder being unknown as to their final destination. In 2023/4, 69 interns joined the programme, with 20 currently in employment and the remainder volunteering, attending education or seeking employment. 10 supported internship programmes are currently running across Lancashire, up from 6 in 2022/3. Burnley College, in partnership with Calico Housing Group, and similarly Runshaw College, in partnership with Progress Housing Group, both received awards for 100% completion and 80% completion respectively for the 2022-23 cohort. Lancashire County Council operates a Supported Employment Service which provides support and assistance for young people aged 17-25, with disabilities to secure and maintain paid employment, the Supported Employment Service received 216 referrals with 69 engaging in the service and 28 securing employment. 147 referrals closed as the young people were no longer seeking employment. Destinations for 16- and 17-year-olds with an EHCP is favourable compared to the national average. October 2024 data identifies that the combined rates of NEET (Not in education, employment, or training) and not known CYP in Lancashire is 10.7%. Additionally, the not known percentage of this cohort is 13.5%. Currently there are 703 young people with EHCP's age 16-17 who are NEET. 96 of these have plans that are proposed to be ceased. 196 young people in Y12-Y13 with an EHCP are having their plans and participation reviewed currently, 59 in Y14 are being reviewed to cease having finished the statutory age for participation with a further 447 in Y15+ starting the cease process.

The transitions policy detailing the transition process to adult services was finalised by cabinet in 2023 and is currently being reviewed to better define a wellbeing and early help offer to young people. This aims to ensure that information, advice, and short-term enabling support are offered prior to decisions being made to commission long term support packages. There is a dedicated transitions team located in adult social care, who offer advice, signposting, assessment, and support for young people likely to have Care Act needs at age 18. The Team

accepts initial referrals from year 9 (age 13-14) in accordance with NICE Guidance (2016) that transition planning should begin at this age. Currently the team are supporting 363 CYP age 16-17. Colleagues in adult social care work closely with CWD social workers to ensure a smooth transition into adult services for CYP with the most severe and profound needs, who meet Adult Social Care thresholds. This enables CYP and families to receive consistent support as they transition to provision under the Care Act. LCC short breaks Service currently supports 105 people aged 18-25 to enjoy short breaks while their family carers receive respite. The service provides opportunities for young people to spend time away from family, developing their independent living skills and spending time with other young people. Since April 2023, 5 young people have been supported to remain with foster carers when reaching adulthood via the Council's Shared Lives Service. Shared Lives provides an opportunity for young people to receive 24-hour support within a familiar domestic setting, while they develop their independence further.

The ICB has developed a three-tier approach to transition into adult healthcare services specifying Universal, Targeted and Specialist tiers, with health providers benchmarking themselves against NICE guidance. The Transition Team has collaborated with the Continuing healthcare lead and ICB colleagues to support 18 young people in 2024, to access Continuing healthcare or IPA (joint health and social care) funding as they reach adulthood. This has ensured that where young adults with complex needs require specialist support, appropriate funding is secured for this and has also resulted in annual savings to Adults and Childrens Social Care budgets of £2.3m on a recurring basis. The Transition Team participate in meetings to review young people aged 14-25 who are on the Dynamic Support Database (DSD), and at risk of admission to hospital due to their mental health needs. Currently 26 CYP have active involvement with the Transition Team and 1 was supported through Transition but is now case managed by the NHS due to CHC eligibility. The Transition Team Manager will establish via the DSD meeting and discussion with colleagues who are currently involved whether a referral to the Team should be made.

The pathway guide has been published on the local offer, which has been developed with colleagues across health, education, and social care, and contains all mandatory information ensuring compliance with the code of practice. The Council provides funding to Spring in to Action, a Community Interest Company which supports the participation and inclusion of disabled people including social groups, money management and sex and relationships education and arts projects such as the recent Love Maybe production. Meet'n'Match is a service, offered by Spring in to Action, providing a dating agency and social groups in Lancashire including specific LGBT nights for people with a disability.

5. Accessible Services led by the Director of Policy, Commissioning and Children's Health, Lancashire County Council.

In January 2024, the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for SEND was updated, which identified several recommendations, including how the local area should:

- Respond to increased demand for specialist services, including alternative provision,
- Continue to develop the Balanced System approach to speech, language, and communication needs.
- Strengthen support to meet social, emotional, and mental health needs,
- Develop a greater understanding of the reasons for increasing ASD,
- Strengthen support to meet the needs of increasing proportion of children with ASD,
- Strengthen support in the Early Years,
- Strengthen its inclusive offer focussing on inclusive schools,
- Develop a better understanding and benefits of early identification and support.

The Lancashire Joint Commissioning arrangements for 2024-6 were also developed, together with an action plan to support implementation, which set out the process for joint commissioning, for CYP with an EHCP and also those with SEN support needs. The arrangements detail three levels of commissioning, individual, operational, and strategic, together with outcome measures which will monitor performance. Progress against the action plan is reported to the SEND Partnership Board on a quarterly basis, and includes strengthening our partnership approach to:

- participation and co-production,
- our use of multi-agency data,
- the SEND Local Offer,
- further development of the Family Hubs network,
- the Break Time offer and leisure opportunities,
- the implementation of the graduated approach to speech and language,
- the emotional wellbeing and mental health offer,
- the short breaks offer for CYP with complex needs,
- the new in-house children's homes,
- joint packages of care,
- alternative provision, vocational options, and employment opportunities,
- strengthening the ND Pathway,
- reviewing health input into youth offending,
- strengthening multi-agency contextual safeguarding teams,
- preparation for adulthood,
- responding and managing tribunals,
- reviewing sensory needs,
- responding to recommendations in the joint targeted area inspection (JTAI)

Following the Covid 19 pandemic meetings were held with schools and colleges and key issues were identified in relation to mental health and wellbeing of young people as well as self-harm and suicide ideation. Nationally, 54% of 11–16-year-olds with probable mental health problems said lockdown had made their lives worse. A pan-Lancashire deep dive thematic review of the Child Death Overview panel (CDOP) cases (n=38) from the last 10 years was completed, with 21 child deaths confirmed as suicide. A report detailing key findings, and recommendations was produced, with an action plan developed for suicide prevention and self-harm in Lancashire. 31.1% of 11 to 16 year-olds with a possible or probable mental health disorder had self-harmed, compared to 5.3% in those who do not have a disorder. 21.1% of the CYP had a diagnosis or suspicion of one or more neurodevelopmental conditions, with the most common (15.8%) being autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Children and Young People's Mental Health services present a significant challenge to service users, commissioners, and service providers alike. Working with multiagency stakeholders across the North West, Health Innovation North West Coast (formerly the Innovation Agency) has facilitated a redesign that encompasses all aspects of the children and young people's mental health journey, from preventative community services to inpatient beds and everything in between. A future service model was developed through a series of design thinking workshops. The process began with the identification of barriers in the current state leading to the creation of a set of minimum specifications for inclusion in the improved future model, including technology and new roles or workflows. Five key areas of change were identified, including a greater focus on prevention and education, a single point of access digital platform, a multi-agency approach with graduated levels of need, based on the THRIVE model, a self-management platform and a reimagined crisis offer. This has ensured better joining up of mental health support across the county, including additional mental health support teams, which currently cover 50% of schools (above the national target), support via 'My happy mind' an NHS backed programme and digital app, supporting early years, primary schools and families to develop positive mental health strategies, a review of the 0-5 approach to prevention, Charlie Waller Trust information and the use of Children's Wellbeing Practitioners, Mental Health Practitioners and Trainee Associate Psychological Practitioners in Primary Care.

Procurement of voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS) emotional support services have been completed in 2024, with Barnardo's commissioned to deliver THRIVE therapeutic support, Spring North to deliver peer support and parenting support, ADHD North West to deliver support to families who's CYP have ADHD or are waiting for an assessment and the digital platform Kooth, which has provided self-help and online access to counselling, extended to colleges this year, with 90% sharing it was a useful source of support. Over 30,000 children accessed support from NHS funded services in 12 months, which is above the national access target. NHS Risk Support Liaison Workers are working with Children's Social

Care to improve support for children with complex needs. However, variable wait times persist across the county for CAMHS with 99% children and young people seen within four weeks in East Lancashire, compared to 48% across the Lancashire and South Cumbria foundation trust (LSCFT) footprint in 2024.

306 more special school places have been created since 2021, with a further 170 spaces created for September 2024, to manage increasing demand. Round 2 of the post 16 and Alternative Provision procurement went live in September 2024, as part of the North West Regional Flexible Purchasing system to fill gaps in provision. A quality assurance framework was developed with systems and processes, to ensure robust and routine quality assurance of all Alternative Provision services commissioned by the partnership.

The Lancashire short breaks statement was updated for 2024/5 and provides information on the range of services and support available for children and young people with additional needs and /or disabilities. Short Breaks activities take place outside of school hours during daytime, evenings, weekends, and school holidays. Targeted short breaks are specific activities for children and young people with SEND who cannot access universal services without additional support. Lancashire has commissioned a range of targeted services and call this service 'Break Time'. 1825 children registered for the third year of redesigned short breaks for access starting in April 2024. Registration for the fourth year opened in October 2024 for provision to start in the new financial year, with over 1500 children already registered. Feedback from families is that there aren't enough break time providers, in all areas of Lancashire and the provision isn't meeting the needs of the children. Some families are registering for Break Time hours but not accessing the support, with a research piece identifying insights into specific areas for improvement. However, the feedback received from families in the summer survey, whose children have attended has been very positive, with 85% strongly agreeing that the break time provider met their child's SEND requirements. 76% strongly agreed that their child enjoyed the activity, and 85% strongly agreed that the break provided benefitted the whole family. More providers are being contacted and more holiday activities and food (HAF) providers have been identified.

Family Hubs launched in September 2023, across the 12 districts in Lancashire. Family Hubs work with a large network of local partners including NHS, district councils, schools, libraries, the police and voluntary, community and faith-based organisations. Together, we work closely with children, young people, and families to provide the information, advice and support they need in one place. Family hubs work with several core delivery partners to ensure high quality services are delivered including midwife and health visitor appointments, groups for expectant mums and dads, mental health counselling for families, baby feeding advice and SEND support groups and advice. The Family Hub network is currently made up of 29 Family Hubs and 37 Family Centres. Family Hubs will offer the same services in every district, while Family Centres will offer some more specialist services, including mental health

partners. In April 2024 Family Hubs were embedded within Early Help Services as Business as Usual.

Spotlight Projects 2024-5

Young People including POWAR met with Senior Leaders to discuss Inclusion in Lancashire

Young people from Lancashire Youth Council, POWAR - our SEND forum for children and young people - and students from Hope High School in West Lancashire met with Senior Leaders within Lancashire County Council in November 2023 to talk about how our county could become a more inclusive place to grow up, learn and live.

Young people led a discussion about what Inclusion means to our different leaders and shared experiences and challenges faced by different children and young people with SEND that covered topics such as education, health, transport, housing, accessibility and work and training.

Students from Hope High School presented their speech on the availability of Special School places. This was after being finalists in the Great Lancashire Debate earlier in November 2023 where judges were so impressed with their argument, we asked them to come back and present to a wider audience!

It was a positive and challenging morning, bringing to the attention of some of our most senior decision makers what life is like for our children and young people in Lancashire and prompting them to think about how we continue to develop our understanding of Inclusion and best meet the needs of our communities.

Widgit Software Supporting Communication

Following the evaluation of the Annual Review process, children and young people told us they wanted more accessible ways to communicate and understand information. Across the whole of Children's and Education Services we researched and purchased licences for Widgit, desktop processing software that allows us to create symbolised resources. In 2023, 150 staff across different teams in our early help, children's and adult's social care, inclusion, policy, and education services became licence holders and accessed training to understand the software. In 2024, following an evaluation of the software, licences were renewed for 187 staff across the council.

Success for Supported Internships in Lancashire

Three transition-to-work programmes in the County have been recognised for the team's notable achievements in a variety of areas. The Legacy Project is a supported internship programme for young adults living and learning in Skelmersdale and the surrounding areas. In November the team, alongside Delphside Primary School, were invited to the Pearson National Teaching Awards in London in November 2023, where they won the Silver 'Impact Through Partnership' award. The ceremony was hosted by Gaby Roslin, where educators from across the UK joined for this prestigious event. The Legacy Project has an achieved rate of helping 75% of SEN adults gain employment, and works in conjunction with local businesses, specialist schools and those with additional needs in the area. The project is funded by Well Skelmersdale and the CCG, and more information can be found on their website. Well done to all involved on such a brilliant achievement and highlighting the important work happening in West Lancashire!

DFN Project SEARCH is a national one-year study to work programme, which helps young people with EHC (Education, Health, and Care) Plans to access the workplace through developing transferable, marketable job skills. The programme consists of a host organization, education provider, and an adult supported employment provider. DFN Project SEARCH hosted their annual conference in November at the Winter Gardens in Blackpool. The team at Calico, Burnley, won two awards: the Data for Impact award and an award for achieving 80% of interns in paid employment. On receiving the Data for Impact award, Sarah Moorhouse from Burnley College said 'Winning the Data Impact Award shows that we use data to deliver an exceptional programme, which is evidenced by our continuously high achieving outcomes. We gather data to help us engage with local employers and identify opportunities for the young people we serve.'

For the second year running, the team at Lancashire County Council won the award for 100% Employment Outcomes at the DFN Project SEARCH conference. The team comprises of Lancashire County Council, Preston College and Hft. Laura Robinson, Supported Internship Facilitator at Preston College, commented 'winning a 100% outcomes award stands as a powerful testament to the success of our programme. This recognition not only contributes to the long-term sustainability of the supported internship, but also involves showcasing success stories and uploading our commitment to ensuring ongoing success and having a positive impact on our interns and their successful transition into employment and adulthood. This aligns seamlessly with Lancashire County Council's high aspirations for the people who live and work in the region.'

Graduate Jason Cherry, who completed a supported internship at Calico, Burnley, in summer 2023, won Young Advocate of the Year! Jason was offered a role at Advocacy Focus UK, where he has made an impact on the organization through the work he is doing. On winning the award and paid employment, Jason said 'I had come to the end of my education, and I wanted to not only seek employment, but worthwhile employment. All the skills I learned while on the DFN Project SEARCH supported internship have allowed me to fulfil my dream! I feel very included and part of the team whilst in work and socializing outside of work. I am really happy

at Advocacy Focus, and I am enjoying my adventure'. He continues his work as a member of the Youth Advisory Board at DFN Project SEARCH, where graduates collaborate on engaging employers across the UK to develop inclusive employment practices. A huge congratulations to Jason, and to all award winners who are paving the way for young people to find meaningful paid employment.

At the end of the academic year 2023/4, many celebrations took place, and interns donned their best attire, celebrating among their peers with families, friends and others involved in their journey. Eight programmes dotted around Lancashire, had over 50 interns working hard in their respective placements, really developing their skills development, confidence, and abilities. One of Lancashire's interns, Nick, was praised at the Lancashire Police's Commendation Ceremony. Sian Foster, Head of Operations, said about the event: It was an honour and an absolute privilege to be able to share in the success of the Lancashire Constabulary DFN Project SEARCH programme based at Police Head Quarters in Preston. The team there have been working on creating a hugely impactful safeguarding training package for DFN Project SEARCH Interns across the UK with the aim of keeping young people safe online. The star of the show was one of their Interns Nick, who shone at Lancashire Police's Commendation ceremony, which focused on celebrating the exemplary work and successes of those in the field of targeting crime within vulnerable groups. To stand next to a young man who has proven his skills through his outstanding work, outlines what can be achieved through Supported Internships with true partnership work. The programme set within Lancashire Police was the first DFN Project SEARCH programme within a police setting and is leading the way around inclusion in Lancashire with its partners at Lancashire County Council, Preston College and HfT.

Interns in 2024/5 will be gaining skills development in a variety of businesses, and we are excited to see them progress throughout the year. Thank you to everyone who are supporting young people get work ready, from the onsite teams to the organisations hosting them. The local offer page for supported internships has been updated to reflect the choice of programmes across Lancashire. We are pleased to have introduced two more courses to the offer; Nelson & Colne College are offering a supported internship in collaboration with ASDA in Colne, and Preston college has partnered with Places for People. This brings us to a total of 10 registered programmes in our county. Blackburn College has also partnered with ASDA in Blackburn, and the offer is available to Lancashire residents.

Lancashire Short Breaks Service: Break Time

Break Time provides fun group activities to children and young people aged 4-18, living in Lancashire, who have a special educational need and/ or disability (SEND). Activities take place after school, at weekends and during school holidays and give parents and carers a short break from their caring role.

In 2024, we welcomed new Break Time providers: *Lowther Pavilion in Lytham St Annes* who deliver creative theatre based workshops, *Learn Active* who deliver Break Time groups in Hyndburn, Preston, Chorley, West Lancs, and Ribble Valley, which focus on confidence, self-esteem, and independence skills and *Spectrum Gaming*, an online provider for eligible Break Time members. This is an additional offer for young autistic young people aged 10-17 with a valid Break Time membership. We are always looking to increase the range of activities available to Break Time members and their families.

Following the summer holidays, we asked families to share their experience of using Break Time summer holiday clubs. 94% shared that their child enjoyed the break time activity, 100% agreed that the provider met their child's needs, 83% that they got the opportunity to have a break themselves, and 87% that when their child attended an activity that it benefited the whole family. Suggestions to improve the service included: increasing the hours allocated, provide more local and varied activities, improve accessibility and support for children with higher needs and extend the operating hours to better accommodate working parents.

SEND Partnership Workforce Development

Through parent carer and practitioner feedback via the SEND support survey, working together virtual events and in person SEND Partnership information and engagement events 2022-2023, gaps in training and knowledge were identified. Feedback from practitioners told us that they needed to know what support was available to families in an accessible format.

The SEND Partnership agreed that a new information guide on the Local Offer was needed for practitioners to improve gaps in their knowledge and understanding. A task and finish group was established and the SEN support guide for professionals was co-produced to help all practitioners identify how conditions affect children and how to access support with or without a diagnosis.

The SEND Partnership workforce development working group was established in 2023 to review and update the Lancashire SEND Partnership Workforce Strategy 2024. The SEND Partnership training programme was developed, including a SEND training guide for professionals, videos and presentations from Network meetings and briefings to complement Education workforce development (SEND) resources. We are looking to build on this programme in 2025.

Thank You

Many thanks to the parent carers, children, young people, councillors, partners, and all colleagues who have supported the SEND Partnership.