



## Lancashire SEND Partnership Improvement Board

**3 June 2025 – 10.00-13.00**

**In person Meeting**

### Meeting Minutes

Board Members Present
<p><b>Kathryn Boulton</b>, Independent Chair.</p> <p><b>C. Cllr. Matthew Salter</b>, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p><b>Jacqui Old</b>, Executive Director of Education and Children's Services, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p><b>Paul Turner</b>, Director of Education, Skills and Culture, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p><b>Vanessa Wilson</b>, Director of Children, Young People and Maternity, NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board.</p> <p><b>Dave Carr</b>, Director of Policy, Commissioning and Children's Health, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p><b>Mairead Gill-Mullarkey</b>, Director of Adults Community social Care, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p><b>Cerys Townend</b>, Head of SEND and Inclusion, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p><b>Peter Chapman</b>, Interim Associate Director for SEND &amp; Complexities, NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board.</p> <p><b>Clare Smith</b>, Youth Policy Strategic Lead, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p><b>Michelle Pye / Miranda Hyman</b>, Co-Chairs, Lancashire Parent Carer Forum.</p> <p><b>Oliver Moores</b>, SEND Young Advisor.</p> <p><b>Natalie Sinclair</b>, Early Years Federation group representative.</p> <p><b>Jenny Birkin</b>, Primary Heads in Lancashire representative.</p> <p><b>Oliver Handley</b>, Lancashire Secondary Schools Headteacher Representative.</p> <p><b>Marie Haworth</b>, Further Education representative.</p> <p><b>Diane Booth</b>, Blackpool Teaching Hospitals Trust representative.</p> <p><b>Paul Jebb</b>, Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust representative.</p>
External Attendees
<p><b>Rebecca O'Shea</b>, Department for Education (DfE) Regional Lead.</p> <p><b>Cath Hitchen</b>, Department for Education (DfE) Appointed SEND Advisor.</p> <p><b>Lindsey Marlton</b>, National Health Service England (NHSE) Advisor.</p>
In attendance
<p><b>Jennifer Ashton</b>, Manager of the SEND Partnership, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p><b>Stephen Morton</b>, Public Health and Wellbeing deputy representative, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p><b>Fiona Harris-Hilton</b>, Children's Services deputy representative, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p><b>Charlotte Hammond</b>, Head of Service for adult Learning Disability and Autism, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p><b>Claire Noden</b>, University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay Trust deputy representative.</p> <p><b>Hilary Sharples</b>, Early Years Private, Voluntary and Independent Sector deputy representative.</p> <p><b>Hayley Smith</b>, SEND Auditor, Lancashire County Council.</p>

### Apologies

**C. Cllr. Simon Evans**, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Lancashire County Council.

**Sarah O'Brien**, Chief Nursing Officer, NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board.

**Sakthi Karunanithi**, Director of Public Health and Wellbeing, Lancashire County Council.

**Louise Anderson**, Director of Children's Services, Lancashire County Council.

**Philippa Perks**, Early Years Private, Voluntary and Independent Sector representative.

**Louise Haymer**, Department for Education (DfE) SEND Case Lead.

**Andrea Hardyman**, Lancashire Teaching Hospitals Trust representative.

**Ian Carden**, Lancashire Special Schools Head Teachers Association Representative.

**Victoria Hampson**, East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust representative.

**Rachel Lomax**, University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay Trust representative.

Agenda Item	Minutes:
<b>1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies</b>	The Independent Chair for the board Kathryn Boulton welcomed everyone to the second meeting of the new SEND Improvement Board. New members included County Councillor Matthew Salter.
<b>2. Standing Items</b>	
<b>2.1</b> Minutes and actions from the previous meeting	Minutes were received by all members to review prior to the meeting. Minutes were accepted as accurate, other than a name amendment and will be published on the SEND Partnership webpage after the meeting.
<b>2.2</b> Action Tracker	Actions have been added to the agenda, are in progress or are completed.  Updates and actions from this meeting will be added following the meeting.
<b>2.3</b> Children and Young People's input and update	<p>Oliver Moores shared that some children and young people have voiced concerns that they are disillusioned with school, as they don't always receive the support they need, even with an education, health, care plan (EHCP). Some children shared that they do not have their needs identified early enough or have sufficient support transitioning through key stages, specifically to college.</p> <p>POWAR face to face groups continue to grow but most of the young people don't want to talk about their experiences about school at the meetings, as it is traumatic for them. The online group meet weekly but is not as popular, as young people sometimes struggle to access online meetings. There needs to be a greater understanding of what POWAR is, and how young people can socially engage whilst being purposeful too.</p> <p><b>Challenge:</b> The partnership needs to find ways to identify opportunities for children and young people to have their voice heard and map out with education providers, health colleagues and children with disabilities social care team what this looks like. Peter Chapman shared that the ICB recently held Feedback Fortnight, where concerns with SEND were shared by families.</p>

	<p><b>Response:</b> Clare Smith, Youth Policy and Participation Strategic Lead is meeting with education providers this week to discuss how the partnership can respond to the feedback, ensuring children's views can be better captured in school. There is a plan to grow POWAR membership at the group meetings across all three localities in Lancashire, and also to link with existing networks and settings.</p> <p><b>Action 1:</b> Clare Smith will ensure that health, including Public Health and social care colleagues will be included in discussions as to how children's voices can be captured across the partnership.</p> <p><b>Action 2:</b> Peter Chapman will present the Feedback Fortnight report at the ICB Children's Board, SEND Operations Board and at the SEND Improvement Board.</p> <p><b>Action 3:</b> Jenny Ashton will add the Feedback Fortnight report to the forward plan.</p> <p><b>Challenge:</b> Children and young people need to be given the opportunity to have their views heard without the need for a parent or teacher to be there and the SEND Survey for children and young people needs to be accessible for all, with the key messages from this informing services. Child voice also needs to be incorporated into workforce development and inclusive practice.</p> <p><b>Response:</b> The SEND survey will be co-produced with children and young people exploring how this can be made accessible for them to complete without needing the support of a parent or teacher. The SEND Academy will provide training to staff about how to capture child voice as part of the EHCP and annual review process, and wider workforce development and inclusive practice will be picked up through the Neurodevelopment Pathway and Quality and Practice workstreams. The SEND Partnership Development Day on 20 June will also look at what makes children and young people feel included, which was the theme of the recent design competition. Co-production is crucial to children and young people feeling heard. Board members emphasised that most children do have their needs met in school.</p> <p><b>Action 4:</b> Clare Smith will develop a proposal for how the children and young person's SEND Survey will be co-produced.</p>
2.4 Lancashire Parent Carer update	<p>Board members had received a written report from Michelle Pye and Miranda Hyman, Co-chairs of Lancashire Parent Carer Forum (LPCF) prior to the meeting for consideration.</p> <p>Michelle and Miranda provided an additional verbal update of engagement activity. Since taking over as co-chairs parental engagement in the forum has significantly increased, online and in person. The forum shared the chair's update on their Facebook page which resulted in 1622 views and 54 interactions. A</p>

further post about EHCP process and communication received 1613 views and 46 interactions. At the parent carer forum recent event 34 parent carers attended, with 15 offering to volunteer with the forum.

**Challenge:** Feedback from parent carers emphasised delays and the lack of communication from services. The parent carer forum want to be able to share with parent carers how sorry the partnership is and let them know what is going on. Schools also want to be able to update families as they are often the first point of contact.

**Response:** It was acknowledged by the board that lack of communication is unacceptable and not good enough. However, the partnership is committed to improving experiences of children, young people and their families, by increasing transparency and communication. Although an apology would help to make a difference, they recognise that even with increased funding and staffing, the changes would take time for families to feel the benefit.

**Action 5:** Cerys Townend will discuss pro-active improvements to communication with LPCF at their meeting on Thursday. Senior leads will draft a response for parent carer forum to publish, as families need to see progress and re-build trust.

**Challenge:** Michelle shared parent carer suggestions for improvement to be made by the SEND Partnership including:

- Improve caseworker continuity and ensure timely handovers.
- Enforce response time standards for emails and calls.
- Create a centralised contact system with accountability for follow-ups.
- Train staff to understand the urgency of EHCP timelines, especially in transition years.
- Use the SEND Helpline more effectively - ensure it leads to action, not just polite conversation.
- Track and publish complaint outcomes to build trust and transparency.
- Allow parents access to school consultation responses without requiring subject access requests.
- Enable any available caseworker to step in during critical periods (e.g. transitions, staff leave).

Schools would also welcome these actions as they are often the first point of contact with families and need to also share these messages.

**Response:** It was acknowledged by the board that many of these actions will be addressed by the actions in the priority action plan, but all the points will be carefully considered, and feedback shared with the forum using a You Said...We Did format so that families can see the traction and progress made.

	<p><b>Action 6:</b> The suggestions made by parent carers will be cross referred in the Priority Action Plan at the SEND Operations Board meeting, co-chaired by Paul Turner and Vanessa Wilson.</p> <p><b>Challenge:</b> County Councillor Salter thanked Michelle and Miranda for sharing the feedback and would welcome the opportunity of engaging with the parent carer forum. Although there is recognition from the partnership that they must do better, this message, together with an apology must be shared with families.</p> <p><b>Response:</b> Communication will improve with families through increased staffing and contact points with families, in addition to the hub that is being developed and the new council administration to drive it.</p> <p><b>Action 7:</b> The communication group and the development day will develop the Communication Strategy and plan, with a report presented at board detailing how this will be implemented.</p>
<b>3. Progress against the Priority Action Plan</b>	
<p><b>3.1 Highlight Report and Priority Action Plan Tracker</b></p>	<p>The highlight report and the Priority Action Plan tracker was shared with members prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Vanessa Wilson and Paul Turner presented the highlight report. SEND Operations Board members review the progress made against each of the priority actions in detail, which is summarised in the report. Board members discussed and agreed the format of the highlight report, which is to log evidence of progress as well as risks and mitigations. The purpose of the report is to provide assurance to Board members and highlight risks and actions taken or needed to get the actions back on track. Areas of concern will require a deep dive to provide more detail, and a report brought back to the Improvement Board for further scrutiny.</p> <p><b>Challenge:</b> Kathryn Boulton emphasised the importance of evidencing impact and evidence to demonstrate this, in the report. Board members are expected to cross refer the report with the tracker to enable greater scrutiny. Rebecca O'Shea explained that the tracker can appear like a tick list, whereas the report needs to explain the narrative and context. It is important that the board are kept informed of where progress is up to. Families and board members need to be able to see what difference has been made as they are not feeling any progress or improvement yet. Analysis of the 'so what' is therefore crucial, as impact can be delayed.</p> <p><b>Response:</b> Board members acknowledged that they could help to progress stuck actions, with additional meetings and conversations taking place outside of this board meeting. Communication to families is important through the local offer, and through the Chair's Update, formal minutes of the meeting, and scrutiny council meetings, all of which are published and publicly available. Extra</p>

	<p>resources are needed to measure the impact felt by children. Young people and their families.</p> <p><b>Action 8:</b> Paul Turner and Vanessa Wilson will develop the outcomes framework, so progress can be measured.</p> <p>Amber actions include the recruitment of permanent staff being paused, due to internal re-organisation, which has been delayed until October, although many new staff have already been recruited to the SEND team, SENDIAS, Educational Psychology service and the specialist teaching service. The multi-agency audit schedule has been drafted by requires wider partner engagement to proceed.</p> <p>A key risk that has been added includes the closing of a list for ND assessment, with mitigations in place. Other areas for consideration include the development of the workstreams to minimise duplication, and the setting up of partnership task and finish groups.</p>
<p><b>3.2</b> Update on performance and data (Priority Action 1)</p>	<p>Presentations from the county council and ICB were shared with members before the meeting to enable scrutiny and preparation of questions.</p> <p>Dave Carr and Peter Chapman presented an overview of the performance data, explaining that it has been difficult pulling together more reliable data in a systematic way, but a joint dashboard is being developed to do this and will be presented at the board in September 2025.</p> <p>Dave explained that the number of open EHCPs continue to rise and are currently at 12987. Spending on educational psychology assessments has significantly increased in 2025, to help improve the backlog. The main categories of need are autism, speech, language and communication and social, emotional and mental health, which is rising and challenging the system.</p> <p>The number of children waiting for an assessment remains very high, which continues to impact negatively on timeliness of EHCPs and annual reviews. Children transitioning from one key stage to another, known as key phase transfers, have been prioritised this year, with more special school and SEND Unit places being commissioned to better meet the needs. This results in rising High Need Budget costs though, particularly as spending on Independent Non-Maintained Special Schools (INMSS) continues to increase.</p> <p>More children continue to be permanently excluded which is a concern, although positively academic attainment for all pupils, including those with an EHCP has improved overall.</p> <p><b>Challenge:</b> Expectations regarding the language used to describe the backlog needs managing better, as it a backlog of EHC Needs Assessment (EHCNA) requests, not an EHCP backlog. The data also needs the % of school age children</p>

with an EHCP to compare with national data, Key Stage 5 data (colleges), the number of early health notifications and also evidence the rolling number at 20 weeks, not just the monthly data. More questions need asking regarding what the data is telling us, for example why we are experiencing increasing SEMH as a category of need and how this compares to statistical neighbours with an update brought to the next board. This analysis and narrative is crucial.

**Response:** Many children are excluded from school with unmet learning needs, so no matter how many places are created in alternative provision and special schools, the spaces will be filled, and the needs continue to rise. Schools have a responsibility, and although they are doing their best, don't feel they have enough resources, despite being able to apply for backdated funding whilst they wait for the finalised EHCP. Capital planning engagement events are being held later in June 2025.

**Action 9:** Dave Carr to amend the data set and add analysis to the data for next month's SEND Improvement Board.

**Action 10:** A deep dive was requested to analyse capital spending and the strategy to address this. Jenny Ashton will add this to the forward plan and any board members not invited to the capital planning events invited to email [sendpartnership@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:sendpartnership@lancashire.gov.uk)

**Challenge:** Board members were asked what they can do to support the children and families who are waiting for assessment, and how the partnership can measure the impact of this. The partnership need to work collectively and talk to schools to identify the issues, with schools working with health colleagues to address the concerns. Concerns were raised with schools not being able to commission educational psychologists for assessment, unless it was part of the statutory process for an EHCNA.

**Response:** Communication with schools takes place through headteacher forums and cluster meetings. Permanent exclusions are often the result of persistent disruptive behaviour or a single incident, and although more pupil referral unit places are being commissioned and filled, children's attendance and outcomes are poorer. Spending increasing amounts on educational psychology assessments affects other local authorities as there remains a national shortage, and although local authorities would rather build new maintained schools to reduce dependency on INMSS, this is not always possible.

**Action 11:** The priority action plan workstreams will address the challenges of support whilst waiting, including how attendance and exclusions link to inclusive practice, ensuring partners work together to identify solutions.



	<p>Peter Chapman shared that the health data is being integrated into the dashboard, and includes the age and prevalence of need, the number of referrals to health services, the number of contacts, and the number of health advices completed. However, Peter acknowledged that many of these returns are blank, so training is addressing the quality of health advices. There is significant variation in wait times across the providers, with increasing wait times for autism and ADHD assessments, together with an increasing number of children out of education, who are added to the dynamic support database.</p> <p><b>Challenge:</b> What actions are being taken to address the rising wait times for assessment of ASD / ADHD?</p> <p><b>Response:</b> The Neurodevelopmental Pathway workstreams will identify what needs to be done differently including the re-design of referral process and commissioning of support whilst waiting. Mitigations are in place as outlined in the highlight report.</p> <p><b>Action 12:</b> Peter Chapman and the performance group will perform a deep dive into the interdependencies of ASD / ADHD / SLCN/ SEMH, the reasons why wait times are rising, why increasing numbers of children who are not in education are being added to the Dynamic Support Database, with a report brought to the SEND Operations and SEND Improvement Board. Jenny Ashton will add this to the forward plan.</p> <p>It was acknowledged that the partnership need to think differently, so that the needs of children and their families can be better met. Board members recognised that co-production is the key to thinking differently and affecting change.</p>
<p><b>3.3 Quality Assurance update regarding EHCPs and experience (Priority Action 2)</b></p>	<p>Board members had the SEND audit report and supporting documents shared with them prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Hayley Smith attended the meeting to provide an overview of the report, including progress and risks. An audit tool, Invision 360 has been commissioned to provide analysis of what makes an EHCP good. More auditors need recruiting so that the monthly target of auditing 5% of EHCPs can be met. The criteria tool details the formula for the grade, with weightings on sections, and actions for areas of improvement in each case.</p> <p>Multi-agency audits are not yet embedded due to lack of capacity from partners. This is highlighted as an amber action in the priority action plan, so a task and finish group will focus on progressing this action and bring the processes together in the Quality Assurance Framework. Board members were requested to read through the draft terms of reference and to volunteer as a member, particularly from schools and settings.</p>



	<p>A multi-agency deep dive is also being completed to improve quality of advices and develop training, as Invision 360 doesn't measure the quality of advices. Learning from audits are fed back to individual auditors, by the SEND auditor, designated social care officer with social care officers and designated clinical officers with health providers. Training is also being provided for auditors, to reduce the risk of errors, particularly when advices are deemed inadequate, when it is due to no needs being identified, so not applicable.</p> <p>The learning loop is also closed through training in the SEND Academy and through practice development meetings, to improve the quality of EHCPs. Quality assurance of EHCPs is crucial to improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND.</p> <p><b>Action 13:</b> Auditors are requested from all health, education and social care partners, and board members are invited to contact Hayley at <a href="mailto:ehcpaudit@lancashire.gov.uk">ehcpaudit@lancashire.gov.uk</a> to offer their support.</p>
<b>4. Meeting Governance</b>	
<b>4.1</b> Risk register and governance update	<p>The risk register had been received by board members prior to the board meeting.</p> <p>The key risk ND Pathway provider closes waiting list for assessment has been added to the risk register, together with mitigations and board members suggested children not in education be added to the risk register.</p> <p>Dave Carr shared that the Joint Strategic Need Assessment (JSNA) will be completed by the end of the month so could be added to the forward plan.</p>
<b>1.2</b> Terms of reference, membership and principles	<p>Amended draft Terms of Reference, membership and principles were received by members to review before the meeting.</p> <p>Board members agreed to sign off the terms of reference, membership and principles, which will be published on the local offer.</p>
<b>5. AOB</b>	None
<b>6. Date of Next Meeting</b>	<p><b>7 July 2025 10-1pm in person - Floor 2, County Hall,</b></p> <p>Please send apologies to <a href="mailto:sendpartnership@lancashire.gov.uk">sendpartnership@lancashire.gov.uk</a></p>
<p><b>Summary of actions</b></p> <p><b>Action 1:</b> Clare Smith will ensure that health, including Public Health and social care colleagues will be included in discussions as to how children's voices can be captured across the partnership.</p> <p><b>Action 2:</b> Peter Chapman will present the Feedback Fortnight report at the ICB Children's Board, SEND Operations Board and at the SEND Improvement Board.</p> <p><b>Action 3:</b> Jenny Ashton will add the Feedback Fortnight report to the forward plan.</p>	

**Action 4:** Clare Smith will develop a proposal for how the children and young person's SEND Survey will be co-produced.

**Action 5:** Cerys Townend will discuss pro-active improvements to communication with LPCF at their meeting on Thursday. Senior leads will draft a response for parent carer forum to publish, as families need to see progress and re-build trust.

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**Action 11:** The priority action plan workstreams will address the challenges of support whilst waiting, including how attendance and exclusions link to inclusive practice, ensuring partners work together to identify solutions.

**Action 12:** Peter Chapman and the performance group will complete a deep dive into the interdependencies of ASD / ADHD / SLCN/ SEMH and the reasons why there are increasing numbers of children added to the Dynamic Data Database, who are not in education with a report brought to the SEND Operations and SEND Improvement Board. Jenny Ashton will add this to the forward plan.

**Action 13:** Auditors are requested from all health, education and social care partners, and board members are invited to contact Hayley at [ehcpaudit@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:ehcpaudit@lancashire.gov.uk) to offer their support.