Lancashire SEND Partnership Improvement Board

15 September 2025 – 13.00-16.00
In person Meeting

Meeting Minutes

Board Members Present
Kathryn Boulton, Independent Chair. **Paul Turner**, Director of Education, Skills and Culture, Lancashire County Council. **Dave Carr**, Director of Policy, Commissioning and Children's Health, Lancashire County Council. **Cllr. Matthew Salter,** Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, Lancashire County Council. **Cerys Townend,** Head of SEND and Inclusion, Lancashire County Council. **Peter Chapman,** Interim Associate Director for SEND & Complexities, NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board. **Michelle Pye / Miranda Hyman,** Co-Chairs, Lancashire Parent Carer Forum. **Oliver Moores,** SEND Young Advisor. **Philippa Perks,** Early Years Private, Voluntary and Independent Sector representative. **Natalie Sinclair,** Early Years Federation group representative. **Jenny Birkin,** Primary Heads in Lancashire representative. **Christopher Beard,** Lancashire Secondary Schools Headteacher Representative. **Helen Dunbavin,** Lancashire Special Schools Headteacher Representative. **Diane Booth**, Blackpool Teaching Hospitals Trust representative. **Andrea Hardyman,** Lancashire Teaching Hospitals Trust representative. **Victoria Hampson,** East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust representative. **Louise Haymer,** Department for Education (DfE) SEND Case Lead. **Cath Hitchen,** Department for Education (DfE) Appointed SEND Advisor. **Lindsey Marlton,** National Health Service England (NHSE) Advisor.
In attendance
Jennifer Ashton, Manager of the SEND Partnership, Lancashire County Council. **Helen Keaveny,** Trust Lead for SEND, Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust. **Julie Dockerty,** Interim Head of Service for Adults, Lancashire County Council. **Stephen Morton**, Consultant in Public Health, Lancashire County Council. **Helen Campbell**, East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust representative.
Apologies
Jacqui Old, Executive Director of Education and Children's Services, Lancashire County Council. **Cllr. Simon Evans,** Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Lancashire County Council. **Cllr. Samara Barnes,** Shadow Cabinet Lead for Education & Skills, Lancashire County Council. **Vanessa Wilson**, Director of Children, Young People and Maternity, NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board. **Mairead Gill-Mullarkey,** Director of Adults Community social Care, Lancashire County Council.

Sakthi Karunanithi, Director of Public Health and Wellbeing, Lancashire County Council.
Louise Anderson, Director of Children's Services, Lancashire County Council.
Clare Smith, Youth Policy Strategic Lead, Lancashire County Council.
Paul Jebb, Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust representative.
Marie Haworth, Further Education representative.
Fran Clayton, Lancashire Special Schools Head Teachers Association Representative.
Rachel Lomax, University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay Trust representative.
Rebecca O'Shea, Department for Education (DfE) Regional Lead.

Agenda Item	Minutes:
1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies	Kathryn Boulton, Independent Chair welcomed all partners to the SEND Improvement Board. Apologies were noted and the importance of hybrid attendance was acknowledged to maximise attendance. The Chair highlighted the need to improve the timely distribution of papers.
2. Minutes and actions from the previous meeting	Minutes were received by all members to review prior to the meeting. Minutes were reviewed and accepted as accurate. Minutes will be published on the SEND Partnership webpage as soon as possible after the meeting.
3. Action Tracker	Actions have been added to the agenda, are in progress or are completed. Outstanding actions relating to school representation in task and finish groups were discussed. Updates and actions from this meeting will be added following the meeting. **Action 1:** Jenny will continue working with school representatives to fill gaps in group membership and update the action tracker accordingly.
4. Children and Young People's input and update	The Chair welcomed Olly, SEND Young Adviser and Suliman, Lead for POWAR SEND youth forum and Participation and Co-production Worker to the board. POWAR is growing, with 25 young people now attending. The Preston group started five months ago and meets weekly. The young people in Preston felt empowered and heard as they elected to continue meeting weekly. The Burnley group meet fortnightly, and a new group has started in Lancaster. Councillor Salter visited POWAR to hear what young people had to say. Councillor Salter emphasised how important it is for the SEND Partnership to listen to children and young people, and make sure they feel heard. Councillor Salter will feedback to the group, thanking them for their time, and committed to visiting the new group in Lancaster. **Challenge:** POWAR shared at the SEND Service Day what makes a good Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Young people do not feel as though their voices are heard and the process is slow and confusing. There's only one page they contribute to and would like to be more involved in the process.

	Response: Cerys explained that in the new structure, SEND workers will have more time to spend with young people and families. It was positive to hear that POWAR are growing and feedback from children and families will be monitored to ensure progress is made. Suli shared how POWAR and the Participation Team planned to grow further, capturing views from all children and young people. They had engaged with education colleagues and delivered a participation workshop at the Northwest Regional Youth Forum. POWAR also led a SEND Pride event which received great feedback. POWAR has developed workshops and materials for schools and settings, to help grow POWAR and develop a SEND Champions Network. POWAR has also launched e-learning training written by young people on Participation and the Lundy Model; a perfect example of co-production. **Challenge:** Suli asked the board how they could promote POWAR group work and support with the roll out of the workshops and e-learning training. **Response:** Board members thanked Olly and Suli for their hard work. They committed to supporting POWAR with the roll out of workshops and training, facilitating the growth of POWAR to capture the views of more children and young people with SEND. **Challenge:** The partnership were asked how they would measure the impact of the workshops and e-learning training. Actively listening to children and young people links with implementing inclusive practice across the partnership. **Response:** It was acknowledged that although the key performance indicator references the number accessing training, impact measures will need to be captured. The training links to SEND Partnership workforce development and the participation audit which will be updated. **Action 2:** Clare, Suli, Olly and Jenny will develop a plan to include board education representatives, about how to pilot the workshops and roll out the training.

5. Lancashire Parent Carer update	Board members had received a written overview report from Michelle and Miranda, Co-chairs of Lancashire Parent Carer Forum (LPCF) prior to the meeting for consideration. The report consolidates feedback and provides a clear record of all the issues raised by LPCF so far at the SEND Improvement Board. The forum have continued to grow and have attended key strategic meetings, including scrutiny and cabinet. The forum feel they are being listened to as a strategic partner. Recommendations haven't been made on this occasion as many of the questions had been answered. **Challenge:** Partners were invited to review and confirm the actions that have been actioned and those requiring attention. **Response:** Board members recognised that not all recommendations had yet received a response. To address this, they agreed to cross-reference outstanding recommendations with the Priority Action Plan, ensuring that all questions are fully answered and nothing is overlooked. **Challenge:** Parent carers want their feedback to be listened to and acted on. They want to see real changes that make a difference in their lives. **Response:** The Board thanked the forum co-chairs for their hard work; it was good to see the progress they have made and their honest challenge and positive strategic engagement. The Board acknowledged the Forum's valuable contributions and the importance of continued partnership working. It was recognised that the forum is making a difference and there is a focus for the partnership to drive forward the foundations to evidence progress. The need to ensure parent feedback is reflected in action plans was also reiterated. **Action 3:** SEND Operations group to ensure all parent feedback is captured and addressed in relevant workstreams. The Forum will resume regular reporting from October.
6. Highlight Report and Priority Action Plan Tracker	The highlight report and the Priority Action Plan tracker were shared with members prior to the meeting. Paul Turner shared the highlight report, summarising progress, risks, and challenges. Milestones are marked green indicating progress is being made. The SEND Operations group has good engagement from all partners, particularly from schools and settings. **Challenge:** The Board discussed the need to move from task-based actions to measuring impact and outcomes. The tracker will need to evidence the difference made, not just what has been completed. The need for clearer

	reporting on delays, risks, and amber/red milestones was highlighted to facilitate greater scrutiny and assurance measures are being taken. **Response:** Board members agreed to evolve the PAP into a Priority Impact Plan (PIP), focusing on outcomes and difference made. **Action 4:** Jenny to develop a Priority Impact Plan Tracker and future reports to include detailed updates on delayed actions and risks. Paul shared that challenges included financial and time resources to deliver the Priority Action Plan. **Challenge:** The Partnership needs to be inspection ready and deep dives in future meetings could identify where we are. The Partnership needs to identify what learning it can take from other Local Authorities who have been re-inspected and what sufficient progress looks like. **Response:** The Partnership will document and evidence the progress made, inviting a Peer Review to assess whether it is sufficient.
7. Report by exception on performance and data including analysis.	Performance and data presentation was shared with members before the meeting to enable scrutiny and preparation of questions. Dave Carr informed board members that the data dashboard is progressing with raw data flowing but currently data needs manual extraction, which is time consuming. The dashboard is moving into a testing phase before being launched at the November Board. Dave shared the headlines noting less EHC plans were finalised in August due to leave. Consequently delays have increased, following a two month reduction. On average children wait 52 weeks for a finalised plan. More requests to assess were refused in August. Outstanding Annual Reviews are decreasing, currently at 7657. Significantly more school places are planned for September 2025 and September 2026 as detailed in the Capital Plan. Wait times for therapies are falling but remain high. The waiting list for Autism assessment has risen over the year overall, with 195 children waiting over 52 weeks. Although the waiting list has fallen for ADHD assessment, wait times have increased. **Challenge:** The Board discussed the importance of providing clear, timely, and accessible data to all stakeholders, particularly families. This data must be accurate, and the partnership must identify it is reporting the right information and whether it is making an impact. Board members emphasised that data reporting must use language and definitions consistent with national standards to ensure clarity and comparability, especially when reporting on statutory measures such as annual reviews and EHCP timeliness.

	A specific request from families was noted: they want to know how many annual reviews remain outstanding, and how this compares to national. **Response:** It was recognised that headline updates should be shared regularly with parents to keep them informed of progress and challenges. Board members will review data indicators, ensuring clarity and relevance for both internal and external audiences. The decision to assess requires a two-part test to be completed, which are whether the child has or may have special educational needs and does the child need special support that can only be provided through an EHC plan, not through provision that is ordinarily available. Both parts are now being used consistently, and the managed service have commenced work this month to finalise plans, as part of the Recovery Plan. **Action 5:** The performance team to provide monthly headline data for wider sharing which compare with national standards. **Challenge:** There is inequity and inconsistencies across the county, particularly with therapies such as Speech and Language Therapy. The Board noted that easy access clinics in Family Hubs provided a positive and practical offer of support. However, some districts have easy access, whilst others do not, which leads to geographical variation. Quality of advices and assessments also vary. There needs to be an equitable and transparent offer. **Response:** Joint Commissioning will join up with Public Health to explore more equitable and transparent offers of support, particularly for Speech and Language and Occupational Therapy. **Action 6:** Dave will link with Stephen to further develop Joint Commissioning Offer for the Speech and Language offer. **Challenge:** Families often end up in crisis waiting for the right support and need to know what actions are being taken to address this. Support needs to be clear and fair for families. The partnership must know itself well and know where we are, and what the trajectory is to ensure we are inspection ready. The Partnership must also be able to define what the support offer looks like and define what we mean clearly, for families as well as inspectors. **Response:** The Neuro-development Pathway is a 3 year transformation programme, and the Partnership acknowledges the current levels of support are not good enough. The re-design will address these concerns and the ICB has set up a group to review complex cases and identify what support can be offered. Support will be offered at the earliest opportunity and the ICB has secured matched funding for support whilst waiting for an assessment. It was

	acknowledged that we are on a long journey, and we are not evidencing pace as we want. **Action 7:** Peter to bring the recovery plans for support whilst waiting to the next SEND Improvement Board meeting in October 2025.
8. Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) update	The JSNA and link to the live dashboard https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/lancashire-insight/education/send-dashboard/ was shared with members before the meeting for their review. Dave Carr shared an overview of the headlines. These include: • the number of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is going up. • the number of children and young people receiving SEN Support is lower than national average. • there are more children with needs in speech, language, and autism • children with SEND often do not achieve as well at school, are excluded more often, and are more likely to be out of education, work, or training after age 16 compared to the national average. The recommendations show disproportionality and include: • Respond to the increasing demand for support. • Strengthen the help available for children and families. • Make schools and other settings more inclusive. The Joint Strategic Needs Strategy is being refreshed and the wider JSNA shows deprivation and SEND. The level of intelligence provided informs everything we do. **Action 8:** The SEND Partnership will hold a workshop for board members on 19 November focussing on the JSNA, data and how we measure impact.
9. SEND Quality Assurance	EHCP audit and tribunal information had been shared with Board meetings before the meeting for their scrutiny. Hayley Smith shared an overview of EHCP audit results from July and an introduction to the Quality Assurance Framework that is being developed by the Partnership EHCP Improvement group. Although the number of audit is increasing each month, we are not at the target level of 5% yet. Twenty Seven new auditors are being trained this month to use the software tool Invision 360. Assistant Case Managers are also completing audits to enhance their professional development. The number of audits graded good or better (silver/gold) has improved as newer assessments are being audited. This ensures feedback and training through the SEND Academy is more relevant to the current workforce. Invision 360 is used in 65 Local Authorities providing comparators for us to measure ourselves against.

	The quality of sections A (child views), B (SEN Needs) and C (health needs) are areas of strengths in our EHCPs. The social care sections D, H1 and H2, alongside section G (health provision) and section E (outcomes) have been identified as areas for improvement. Invision 360 does not assess the quality the advices, but dip sampling of plans is used to deep dive plans and advices at the Quality Assurance Forum. The Designated Social Care Officer has supported children social care staff to improve the quality of advices. 12% of audits were not returned on time across several areas, including health and social care. A Task and Finish group has drafted the Quality Assurance Framework. The framework sets out our approach to ensure quality and consistency in the development of EHCPs. Partners shared the measures they used, but these were not formal processes or embedded in practice. The framework outlines a multi-layer approach to quality assurance including multi-agency audit, dip sampling, and advice writing training sessions. The audit tool has also been commissioned to audit Annual Reviews and Educational Psychology advices. Funding has been provided through NWADCS for additionality. Training is provided to SEND Case Manager's to scrutinise the whole system and for Section E (outcomes) to be supported. **Challenge:** Plans and advice need to be high quality. All partners have a responsibility to provide good advice, as it is this that makes a good EHCP. All partners must embed quality assurance processes. It would be helpful if a guide could be developed to detail how to write good advice. Board members discussed what measures were in place to improve the plans that were not good or better and how this was being tracked across the districts. Concerns were raised about the number of audits not being returned in time and what the reasons for this were. **Response**: Hayley shared the escalation process for closing the loop. The reasons were identified and shared with advice givers and plan writers, together with support and guidance how they could improve. Recommendations were developed and shared with the SEND Academy. Training was also delivered by the Designated Social Care Officer for care advices and the Designated Clinical Offers to health colleagues. SEND Officers will be linked with schools and settings in the future to help provide additional support to SENDCO's. Audit completion was voluntary and not yet fully embedded in practice. **Challenge:** Board members discussed how long it took on average to write a quality plan, and if plans were rushed quality could be affected. Questions

	included how provision is quality assured and whether children and parent carers were spoken to as part of the quality assurance process. **Response:** On average it takes four hours to write a plan. Quality assurance processes have been built in to the new managed service and the proposed introduction of AI aims to reduce this time. Outcomes are used for tracking progress and whether provision is effective. Children and parent carers are spoken to as part of multi-agency audit processes to identify the differences made to the child's outcomes. A wider improvement workstream is being set up to further develop processes and monitor the experiences that families were having. **Action 9:** Hayley will bring the completed Quality Assurance Framework to the next board meeting on 15 October 2025.
10. Recovery Plan	The Recovery Plan was shared with board members before the meeting for their review. Cerys Townend shared an overview of the recovery plan which details how delays in EHCPs and Annual Reviews will be recovered. The number of EHCPs continue to rise, with increased need for Special School places, and transport. This will increase financial costs and the deficit, increasing reliance on the Independent Sector. Cabinet have approved an additional £5.3m to address the delays with a number of measures being put in place, including additional SEND team and EP recruitment, to complete 3600 plans and school places. Risks include capacity, statutory compliance, financial pressures and system challenges. Councillor Salter thanked the SEND team for all their hard work and commitment. It was acknowledged that there were many factors involved but the White Paper will provide input for sustainability. **Challenge:** The partnership need to ensure they are inclusive, as if EHCPs reach 17000 as predicted this will be significantly above the national average and that we issue to many plans. Lancashire needs to work toward inclusion unless it is proven that our children have more complex needs than national. The SEND Operations Board were challenged to discuss what being inclusive means and how mainstream settings can implement reasonable adjustments. The Partnership must manage the demand and turn the trajectory. **Response:** The Board recognised the scale of the challenge and the commitment of additional resources. Sufficiency and inclusion will be monitored as part of ongoing actions in the priority action plan and SEND strategy.

	Action 10: Recovery Plan progress to be tracked and reported at each board meeting. Jenny will invite SEND Partnership members to the Development Day in January 2026 exploring how we implement inclusive practice as a partnership.
11. SEND Sufficiency and Capital Plan	The SEND Sufficiency and Capital Plan had been shared with members before the meeting. Cerys Townend updated on the SEND sufficiency and capital strategy, to be finalised and submitted to cabinet in October 2025. Engagement Events had been held in June and July to develop the five year plan, including plans to expand provision in mainstream and special schools, and to develop post-16 and post-19 pathways. A fund is available for mainstream settings to develop their environments, and immediate priority is for children with SEMH in Secondary and KS1. SEND Units are being quality assured. **Challenge:** Board members discussed the importance of balancing inclusion with sufficiency and the need for creative solutions to meet rising demand. **Response:** Creative solutions and partnership working are required to ensure we resource mainstream settings and use the High Needs Block funding appropriately. Engagement with schools, colleges, and independent providers will continue.
12. SEND Strategy	Cerys Townend shared the SEND Strategy for final sign-off before Cabinet approval. The strategy reflects partnership ambitions and objectives, with a strong focus on inclusion and co-production. Board members praised the strategy's alignment with young people's and families' voices.
13. Risk register and governance update	The risk register had been received by board members prior to the board meeting. The Board reviewed the risk register, noting that many risks remain red due to ongoing financial and capacity challenges. The need for regular review and realistic mitigation was discussed. Board agreed to maintain a cautious approach to risk ratings until greater confidence is achieved.
14. Forward Plan	The Board reviewed the forward plan, confirming standing items and identifying topics for future meetings, including communications update, support whilst waiting, and QA Framework. The importance of reflecting on board effectiveness and emerging priorities was noted.
15. AOB	No further business was raised. The Chair thanked all attendees for their contributions and hard work. Chair's update will be circulated promptly. Members requested to communicate key messages within their sectors.
16. Close and Date of Next Meeting	The Chair reminded members that the next meeting on 15 October 2025 was hybrid due to limited room space. **15 October 2025 1-4pm hybrid – space for 18 members only.** Please send apologies to sendpartnership@lancashire.gov.uk

Lancashire SEND Partnership

Summary of actions