



Lancashire SEND Partnership Improvement Board

15 October 2025 – 13.00-16.00

In person Meeting

Meeting Minutes

Board Members Present
Kathryn Boulton, Independent Chair. Jacqui Old, Executive Director of Education and Children's Services, Lancashire County Council. Paul Turner, Director of Education, Skills and Culture, Lancashire County Council. Vanessa Wilson, Director of Children, Young People and Maternity, NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board. 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. Cllr. Samara Barnes, Shadow Cabinet Lead for Education & 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. Clare Smith, Strategic Lead for Participation and Co-production, Lancashire County Council. Philippa Perks, Early Years Private, Voluntary and Independent Sector representative. Christopher Beard, Lancashire Secondary Schools Headteacher Representative. Fran Clayton, Lancashire Special Schools Headteacher Representative. Diane Booth, Blackpool Teaching Hospitals Trust representative. Louise Haymer, Department for Education (DfE) SEND Case Lead. Cath Hitchen, Department for Education (DfE) Appointed SEND Advisor.
In attendance
Mark Wynn, Chief Executive, Lancashire County Council. Jennifer Ashton, Manager of the SEND Partnership, Lancashire County Council. Stephen Morton, Consultant in Public Health, Lancashire County Council. Brendan Lee, Head of Service for Family Safeguarding, Lancashire County Council. Fiona Harris-Hilton, Senior Manager, Children with Disabilities Team, Lancashire County Council. Helen Keaveny, Trust Lead for SEND, Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust. Helen Campbell, East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust representative. Martin Hartley-Smith, Chief Executive, Spring North Consortium. Lauren Jackson, Head of Children's Services (SEND and Complexities), NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board. Giles Storch, Primary Heads in Lancashire representative.

Apologies

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

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.

Paul Jebb, Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust representative.

Rachel Lomax, University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay Trust representative.

Andrea Hardyman, Lancashire Teaching Hospitals Trust representative.

Victoria Hampson, East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust representative.

Natalie Sinclair, Early Years Federation group representative.

Jenny Birkin, Primary Heads in Lancashire representative.

Helen Dunbavin, Special School Headteacher Representative.

Marie Haworth, Further Education representative.

Rebecca O'Shea, Department for Education (DfE) Regional Lead.

Lindsey Marlton, National Health Service England (NHSE) Advisor.

Agenda Item	Minutes:
1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies	Kathryn Boulton, Independent Chair opened the meeting, welcoming attendees both in-person and online. Apologies were noted from several members.
2. Minutes and actions from the previous meeting	The minutes of the previous meeting (15 September) were reviewed for accuracy and approved without amendment. Matters arising were confirmed as either included in the current agenda or action log. The Chair confirmed that approved minutes would be published on the SEND Partnership webpage.
3. Action Tracker	All outstanding actions were reported as in progress, with updates provided or scheduled for inclusion in the agenda. New actions arising from this meeting will be added accordingly.
4. Children and Young People's input and update	The Chair welcomed Olly, SEND Young Adviser and Clare, Strategic Lead for Participation and Co-production to the Board. Clare provided an update, including positive news about a POWAR member who has successfully maintained school attendance with support and reasonable adjustments, which was positive news. The Board heard about the ongoing work to extend the reach of POWAR (the young people's forum), including pilot workshops at Preston College and efforts to gather young people's voices across education settings. Challenge: Feedback was sought from education representatives to facilitate further engagement. Response: Several education representatives agreed to support the workshops and assemblies.

	Action 1: Clare will link with board education representatives to agree a plan to capture voice and extend the reach of POWAR. A consultation survey involving 70 young people on the SEND Capital Plan was highlighted, with parent carer input also being gathered. An open morning for POWAR in Preston during half-term was announced to increase accessibility. POWAR are also supporting with Head of Service Interviews on 23 October. Challenge: Olly raised concerns regarding the SEND survey, specifically that parent responses were sometimes being submitted in place of children's views, potentially skewing results. It was acknowledged that some children need support to complete the survey, but it was emphasised the need for direct feedback from children wherever possible. Board members were challenged as to how the partnership use child and youth voice to shape services and capture impact. Response: The Board discussed the importance of capturing authentic young people's voices and considered actions to ensure surveys are completed in school settings without parental influence. The surveys are being promoted and analysed termly, with feedback shared with board members as part of the communication update agenda item. Action 2: POWAR are revising the SEND survey questions to increase accessibility for children and to reinforce the process for collecting children and young people's views independently. Challenge: The Participation e-learning co-designed and co-produced by young people will launch on 4 November at the University of Lancashire, with all board members encouraged to attend. Board members asked if the training would be rolled out beyond Lancashire, and how it would be promoted. Response: Senior leaders agreed to support participation training co-produced by young people and committed to attending the launch. POWAR updates were being shared in the Inclusion Sway, shared with schools and settings, and board members are invited to share this across their networks. Action 3: Jenny will re-circulate the invitation to the launch on 4 November at the University of Lancashire to board members. Board members can circulate the invitation across their networks.
5. Lancashire Parent Carer Forum update	Michelle and Miranda, co-chairs of the Forum reported a busy period, focusing on both operational sustainability and gathering parent carer voices. Recruitment for admin support was underway to address heavy workloads.

	The Forum is developing mechanisms to capture a broader range of parent experiences, including positive feedback, exploring different ways to do this. The Forum trialled a podcast, which is being edited, and increased the frequency of webinars in response to parent demand. Further ideas for webinars and focus groups include specialist sessions on sleep support, in response to feedback gathered as part of the PiNS project. Challenge: Although the Forum has seen improvements, many families have not yet felt the progress. The Forum are growing and building the trust of families. Board members were challenged to provide as much notice as possible to engage the support of the Forum, as sustainability for the future is a priority and depends on the support of others. Response: The Board recognised the importance of ongoing dialogue and partnership working, with health and social care colleagues offering their support for future podcasts and communications. The Board commended the forum's growing strategic involvement in areas including the SEND Academy, Specialist Teaching and Educational Psychology consultations, Capital Plan engagement events, and in the PiNS project. Action 4: The Board committed to supporting the forum, with Dave being chosen to support the future sustainability of the forum.
6. Highlight Report and Priority Action Plan Tracker	The highlight report, Priority Action / Impact Plan tracker and action log were shared with members prior to the meeting. Vanessa presented the highlight report, noting significant progress had been made with 85 out of 95 milestones completed or in progress. The Board discussed the RAG (Red-Amber-Green) rating system, clarifying that “green” indicates actions are on track. Key achievements include the establishment of robust governance, reduction in EHCP delays, launch of digital tools, and strengthened engagement with children, young people, and families. Delays, marked amber, included the Capital Plan and SEND strategy, which were both awaiting governance sign-off. Data dashboard delays were also noted as amber. For sustainable improvement in Education Health and Care Plan and annual review timeliness, delays, marked red, were attributed to Human Resources processes and structural changes. It was noted that although the recovery plan was in place to clear the delays in timeliness, the move to a more sustainable SEND Statutory team was delayed until April 2026. Challenge: The importance of board oversight and scrutiny of delays was emphasised, with the SEND Operations Board directed to discuss and agree the re-profiled deadlines.

	Response: The Board agreed that any changes to milestone dates must be clearly documented on the Priority Action / Impact Plan tracker, with rationale and new timelines. Action 5: Jenny would ensure all re-profiled deadlines are clearly agreed by SEND Operations members and marked on the tracker. Challenge: Board members asked for clarity regarding the EHC dashboard and if it was for all partners, or just parent carers. Concerns were raised regarding the digital platform being accessible and that any new forms need reviewing and updating before going digital. Response: Schools and settings have a professional portal which will be re-launched to share information. The EHC dashboard is to improve parent carer communication and includes plans for the updated request form for EHC Needs Assessment to be added and launched in November. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed, and alternative paper forms are available. A Let's Talk EHC dashboard for practitioners webinar is planned for 21 October, to upskill practitioners to support families being able to access the digital EHC dashboard.
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. Cerys led a discussion on performance data. The Board noted a reduction in the EHCP delays and average waiting times, with a significant push in October to address the longest waits. Educational Psychology allocations would see the delays further reduced and delays in Annual Reviews also continued to reduce. The SEND team are now completing more plans than requests are being received, which will further improve timeliness. The use of a two-part test for assessments was discussed, with a new banded document providing clarity for schools. Challenge: Concerns were raised regarding the data dashboard and what skills were needed to analyse what the data is telling us. The partnership must ensure data is robust, meaningful, and supports effective challenge and assurance. It also needs to provide comparative data with national and regional benchmarks. Comparison is a key component to having insight but relies on accurate and good quality data. The Forum asked if specific data for children with Down Syndrome was collected. Response: The board discussed the development of the data dashboard, which is currently reliant on manual data extraction and spreadsheet manipulation due to system limitations. Recruitment of a SEND-experienced data analyst is underway. There are three stages to the data dashboard development, one collates information from the management system EHM,

	two collates academic data such as attendance and attainment and three includes health partner data. The SEND data is linked to broad area of need, not specific diagnosis, although health will capture this information and the services required to meet needs on each child's record. Action 6: The data dashboard is being tested and will be shared with the board as soon as possible. Challenge: Concerns were raised about the accuracy and utility of average waiting time data, with suggestions to report outliers separately and provide assurance that those waiting longest are receiving appropriate support. It was suggested that the data group refine dashboard requirements and ensure the board receives meaningful analysis and assurance. Challenge was made as to whether the data should be presented in a different way, according to what was required. Response: The partnership will develop reporting to separate outliers and provide clearer assurance on the longest waits. There is plan for an external peer review to validate progress and data interpretation. Action 7: The data workshop in November to be used to provide clarity and assurance to the Board as to how we effectively measure performance and impact. Challenge: The Board needs assurance regarding the sustainability of improvement and how confident we are that the partnership can change the system. Response: SEND is a top priority for the council, and the model for future sustainability has been completed. There are three phases to improvement, firstly analysis of where we are, secondly stabilisation, including the recovery plan, and thirdly sustainability, financially and through early identification and intervention in the early years and throughout a child's education. Action 8: The SEND Partnership will develop an Improvement Plan to include financial sustainability.
8. SEND Quality Assurance	EHCP audit and the draft Quality Assurance Framework had been shared with board members before the meeting for their scrutiny. Hayley presented the QA update, highlighting an increase in EHCP audits (1.88% of plans audited to date, compared to 0.63% last year). The return rate for audits remains high at 89%. The Board noted gradual improvement in plan quality, with 34% of plans rated good or better (up 9% from Q1), though still below the 40% benchmark. The improvements evidence the impact the SEND Academy is having and the training provided by the Designated Social

	Care Officer and Designated Clinical Offer to social care and health advice givers. However, Section G (health) and E&F (provision) were identified as areas needing improvement. Mechanisms to address significant gaps (“closing the loop”) are in place, including a QA forum which will focus on Section G. Challenge: Board members discussed how learning could be implemented from gold standard plans and how the partnership compares the quality of plans in other areas such as Blackpool, who rely on the same advice givers. It was recognised that although Invision 360 enables comparison with other areas, it doesn't analyse the quality of advices. Inconsistency was noted between new and reviewed plans and the importance of measuring the quality of both to ensure a balanced view. Response: It was agreed that the EHCP group will analyse the trends and detail, ensuring the right people attend the meeting. Dip sampling will be used to analyse the quality of advices together with other methods detailed in the QA Framework. New and reviewed plans will continue to be analysed separately but the quality of a plan is dependent on the quality of advices. It was acknowledged that plan writers were not to alter wording in advices, as they were not the expert in that area. Challenge: The QA Framework is in development but requires further input from statutory advice givers before it can be finalised. The Board were asked whether other QA activities (e.g., thematic dip sampling) could be included towards the 5% audit target. Response: The Board committed to Hayley that statutory advice givers would provide the required input for the QA Framework and agreed the EHCP group should discuss whether all activity could contribute to the overall key performance indicator for number of plans audited. Action 9: EHCP group members to consider including all QA activities towards the audit target.
9. Communications update	The Communication and Engagement Strategy and associated Delivery Plan was shared with board members before the meeting for their review, together with the draft Protocol and SEND Survey feedback from parent carers and children and young people. Cerys presented the Communication and Engagement Strategy for Board approval. The strategy, co-produced with all partners, including parent carers and children and young people, aims to improve communication at all levels, including with seldom-heard groups.

	The Board approved the Communication and Engagement Strategy. The Parent Carer SEND survey was fully co-produced with parent carers, who contributed to the questions and the Children and Young People's SEND Survey was being reviewed this year by POWAR. Challenge: The Board discussed survey methodology, noting the need for shorter, more accessible surveys and alternative feedback mechanisms, including quick questions after an annual review, post cards, and focus groups, together with social media or text messaging for single question polls. Board members highlighted the importance of demonstrating to families that their feedback leads to real change. Some parents feel they have answered similar questions before without seeing any impact, which can lead to disengagement. Longer surveys tend to attract responses only from those who are very happy or very unhappy. There was a discussion about the value of collecting data over time to identify trends. Currently, there are only three data points from the SEND survey, 2023, 2024 and 2025, but as more are collected, the Board expects to gain better insights into changes and improvements. Response: It was acknowledged that operational communication remains challenging due to system delays and complaints. The strategy provides a framework for improvement, particularly the Four Cornerstones approach to co-production, together with the SEND service moving to a relational model. The Board agreed that it is essential to “close the loop” by showing how survey feedback informs improvements and by communicating these changes back to families and young people. The Forum suggested maybe they should send the survey out to families to gather feedback. There was a commitment to ongoing review and adaptation of the survey approach to ensure it remains meaningful and effective. Action 10: The communications and operations groups were tasked with considering these suggestions and reporting back on progress.
10. Support Whilst Waiting update	The Support Whilst Waiting presentation had been shared with members before the meeting. Lauren updated the Board on the development of the needs-led support model and local support hubs for neurodivergent children and families. The model emphasises access to support based on need, not diagnosis, and includes universal, targeted, and specialist offers. Families can access intensive support at any stage if a family's situation escalates. Martin, shared information about Spring North which is a consortium of forty members. Spring North is leading the development of a new support model for children, young people, and families who are waiting for neuro-

	developmental (ND) pathway assessments or support. Five local support hubs are being established across Lancashire and South Cumbria. Each hub will bring together ND specialists, community partners, and grassroots organisations to provide a consistent offer across the region. The goal is to avoid a “postcode lottery” and ensure a consistent offer across all areas and there is ongoing engagement with parent carers and stakeholders to shape the offer. Providers were selected through an open expression of interest process, with a focus on local expertise, established infrastructure, and the ability to form strong partnerships. They include: - Triple A (North and South Cumbria) - Communicate SLT (Fylde and Wyre) - Key (Central Lancashire) - Child Action North West (East Lancashire and Blackburn) - Lancashire Mind (West Lancashire and Blackpool) There is also an adult provider and a sensory offer being piloted with a workshop in November to ensure learning from best practice. The model is being developed in partnership with local authorities, health, and voluntary sector partners. There will be a dedicated referral system for both parents and professionals, allowing self-referral into the support system. Spring North is developing an electronic online directory so families and practitioners can see what support is available in their area. This will help identify gaps in provision and ensure families are aware of all available resources. Challenge: The Board discussed the importance of workforce inclusivity and consistent training across the system to enhance inclusive practice. The board asked when this support be available to families. Response: There is a dedicated workstream focused on workforce development, aiming to make schools and services more inclusive and neurodiversity aware. Training packages are being developed, with funding bids (including a National Lottery application) to support workforce inclusivity and upskilling. The outcome of major funding bids is expected in January, with a phased go-live for the hubs from April (subject to provider recruitment and readiness).
11. 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 BI capacity and other key risks are captured. Members were invited to raise any additional risks identified during the meeting.
14. Forward Plan	The Board reviewed the forward plan, confirming standing items for the next meeting and a deep dive on exclusions, attendance, and inclusive practice. A

	six-monthly review of terms of reference and membership is also scheduled. The next meeting is confirmed for 3 November 2025, 13:00–16:00, in person.
15. AOB	No further business was raised. The Chair summarised the meeting, noting visible progress and commitment, but acknowledged the ongoing challenge of ensuring improvements are felt by families. Traction must be maintained regarding data and joint commissioning. The meeting was closed with thanks to all participants.
16. Close and Date of Next Meeting	3 November 2025 1-4pm.