



Lancashire SEND Partnership Improvement Board

3 November 2025 – 13.00-16.00

In person Meeting

Meeting Minutes

Board Members Present
<p>Kathryn Boulton, Independent Chair.</p> <p>Cllr. Matthew Salter, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p>Paul Turner, Director of Education, Skills and Culture, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p>Vanessa Wilson, Director of Children, Young People and Maternity, NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board.</p> <p>Dave Carr, Director of Policy, Commissioning and Children's Health, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p>Cerys Townend, Head of SEND and Inclusion, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p>Peter Chapman, Interim Associate Director for SEND & Complexities, NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board.</p> <p>Michelle Pye / Miranda Hyman, Co-Chairs, Lancashire Parent Carer Forum.</p> <p>Oliver Moores, SEND Young Advisor.</p> <p>Clare Smith, Strategic Lead for Participation and Co-production, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p>Philippa Perks, Early Years Private, Voluntary and Independent Sector representative.</p> <p>Jenny Birkin, Primary Heads in Lancashire representative.</p> <p>Christopher Beard, Lancashire Secondary Schools Headteacher Representative.</p> <p>Marie Haworth, Further Education representative.</p> <p>Diane Booth, Blackpool Teaching Hospitals Trust representative.</p> <p>Louise Haymer, Department for Education (DfE) SEND Case Lead.</p> <p>Cath Hitchen, Department for Education (DfE) Appointed SEND Advisor.</p> <p>Lindsey Marlton, National Health Service England (NHSE) Advisor.</p>
In attendance
<p>Jennifer Ashton, Manager of the SEND Partnership, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p>Aby Hardy, Head of education Improvement, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p>Fiona Harris-Hilton, Senior Manager, Children with Disabilities Team, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p>Neil Willcocks, Senior Manager, Adult Learning Disability and Autism, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p>Helen Keaveny, Trust Lead for SEND, Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust.</p>
Apologies
<p>Cllr. Simon Evans, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p>Cllr. Samara Barnes, Shadow Cabinet Lead for Education & Skills, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p>Jacqui Old, Executive Director of Education and Children's Services, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p>Mairead Gill-Mullarkey, Director of Adults Community Social Care, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p>Sakthi Karunanithi, Director of Public Health and Wellbeing, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p>Louise Anderson, Director of Children's Services, Lancashire County Council.</p>

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

Rachel Lomax, University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay Trust representative.

Louise Swarbrick, Lancashire Teaching Hospitals Trust representative.

Victoria Hampson, East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust representative.

Natalie Sinclair, Early Years Federation group representative.

Helen Dunbavin, Special School Headteacher Representative.

Fran Clayton, Lancashire Special Schools Headteacher Representative.

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

Agenda Item	Minutes:
1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies	<p>Kathryn Boulton, Independent Chair opened the meeting, welcoming attendees both in-person and online, noting the short interval since the previous meeting (three weeks). The chair proposed that key leaders meet outside the main board meeting to review how well the current governance system is functioning, with the aim of improving strategic oversight and multi-agency collaboration. Apologies were noted from several members.</p> <p>Action 1: Key leaders to meet to review Board governance structure, joint commissioning and strategic oversight.</p>
2. Minutes and actions from the previous meeting	<p>The Chair invited members to confirm the accuracy of the previous minutes, which were reviewed in sections. No inaccuracies or matters arising were identified that would not be addressed in the current agenda. The Chair confirmed that approved minutes would be published on the SEND Improvement Board webpage.</p>
3. Action Tracker	<p>Jenny, Manager of the SEND Partnership provided an update on the action tracker, confirming that outstanding actions are regularly reviewed and updated. Members were reminded that completed actions are moved to a separate page for record-keeping. Board members were invited by the Chair to challenge or question progress. It was agreed that the tracker accurately reflected the current status of actions.</p>
4. Children and Young People's input and update	<p>The Chair welcomed Olly, SEND Young Adviser to the Board. Olly reported on recent activities, including young people's involvement in the Head of Inclusion interviews, which was a positive experience and provided valuable skills development. The launch of participation training at the University of Lancashire was highlighted, with Board members invited to attend on 4 November. The participation team is expanding, with recruitment underway for an additional worker to increase reach.</p>
5. Lancashire Parent Carer Forum update	<p>Michelle and Miranda, co-chairs of the Forum provided a verbal update, noting their involvement in recent Head of Service interviews and a recent meeting with Dave Carr, to develop clear ways of working and routes for the forum to escalate any concerns. The forum has recently appointed two new staff members to support the forum.</p>

	<p>Challenge: A key issue raised was the communication of outcomes from SEND panels, with concerns about delays and lack of clarity for parents.</p> <p>Response: The Board discussed the need for clearer processes and agreed that the communication strategy would improve these. Weekly panel meetings discuss the needs of children and young people, and decisions are made following these meetings. Parents are then informed of the decision.</p> <p>Action 2: Cerys will ensure the Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment process will be outlined more transparently on the Local Offer.</p>
6. Highlight Report and Priority Action Plan Tracker	<p>The highlight report, Priority Action and Impact Plan tracker and action log were shared with members prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Vanessa, Director of Maternity, Children and Young People presented the highlight report. It was noted that the last SEND Operations Board had been stood down due to meeting clashes.</p> <p>Progress was reviewed against priority actions, with seventy nine (83%) out of a total of ninety-five milestones in progress or completed. Several milestones were noted as delayed (amber) or off track (red). These include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leadership & Partnership: Four milestones delayed (dashboard development, strategy sign-off, joint commissioning, SEF revision). 2. EHCP Processes: Three milestones remain red with proposed re-profiling. 3. ND pathway: Single provider dataset still pending. 4. Comms & Engagement: Delays in cornerstone model launch and SEND helpline review. 5. Preparation for Adulthood and Transitions: On track. <p>Revised dates for key milestones were proposed and agreed.</p> <p>Challenge: Board members emphasised the need for robust monitoring and recovery planning for milestones that required re-profiling.</p> <p>Response: Assurance was given that work is progressing as quickly as possible. Alternative mitigations were being explored but assurance was given to board members that the original milestone date would remain to ensure transparent monitoring.</p> <p>Action 3: Jenny will add all re-profiled dates to the priority action and impact tracker.</p> <p>Challenge: The Board discussed the importance of using the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) to inform strategic direction and highlighted the</p>

	<p>need for stronger partnership alignment and joint accountability. Board members agreed deep dives were required to review effectiveness and progress, with the opportunity to join up strategic and operational activity.</p> <p>Response: The Joint Commissioning Strategy has been refreshed together with a strategic action plan. Several workstreams have been established for speech and language therapy and occupational therapy, and the Data workshop development day in November will review the JSNA and priorities, performance, outcomes and impact. Governance for joint commissioning is place placed and will feed into this board and the data performance group.</p> <p>Action 4: The data workshop will identify how the partnership can use the JSNA more effectively to inform commissioning and strategic decisions.</p> <p>Challenge: The effectiveness of the SEND helpline was also discussed.</p> <p>Response: The plan is to streamline and improve multiple routes to ensure accessible communication, which is being scoped out with the digital team.</p> <p>Action 5: The digital and communication groups will continue to develop and monitor the SEND helpline as part of the communication strategy.</p>
<p>7. Report by exception on performance and data including analysis.</p>	<p>Performance and data presentation was shared with members before the meeting to enable scrutiny and preparation of questions.</p> <p>Dave, Director of Policy, Commissioning and Children's Health provided an update on the data dashboard, noting that the system is in test phase with integrated data expected to be available by January 2026. Systematic data is not yet available and remains a manual process. Dave assured board members that progress is being made.</p> <p>Cerys, Head of SEND and Inclusion shared a proposed performance report to help the SEND Improvement Board monitor and improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities). The importance of aligning performance reporting with the SEND strategy and priority action plan was emphasised. A reporting structure was also proposed to include statutory performance updates at each Improvement Board, quarterly health and outcomes report, and an annual headline report to include analysis of educational outcomes and JSNA updates.</p> <p>Challenge: The importance of capturing key themes from tribunals was emphasised, because they inform joint commissioning plans and provide insight into systemic issues. The board discussed the value of deep dives into tribunal cases, noting that simple figures can be misleading.</p>

	<p>Response: The board agreed that tribunal data should be included in the dashboard and performance reports, but with careful analysis and context rather than just headline numbers.</p> <p>Challenge: Board members noted that while the dashboard and reports included statutory and performance data, there was little information about how families actually feel about the services they receive. It was suggested that perceptive data, such as family experience and feedback, should be incorporated into the dashboard and reporting framework.</p> <p>Response: Board members recognised the challenge of capturing perceptive data in a systematic way, noting that surveys (such as the SEND survey) could be used, but that other methods like case studies and deep dives might also be necessary. The board acknowledged the need to clarify how perceptive data would be gathered, analysed, and presented, and to ensure that it informs decision-making and service improvement.</p> <p>Challenge: The Board discussed the importance of having the right indicators and analysis in place, and the need for a data performance group to review and interpret the data. Indicators should be compared with statistical neighbours, regional, and national averages. Board members emphasised the importance of achieving the January milestone for the integrated dashboard.</p> <p>Response: The Board agreed on the frequency of reporting and the proposed outcomes framework, recognising the need for the framework to reflect partnership-wide learning, including health and social care aspects. Members recognised that a dedicated data performance group should be established to oversee the analysis and interpretation of dashboard data, ensuring that findings are translated into meaningful actions.</p> <p>Action 6: The data dashboard group will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • invite additional members to continue dashboard development and develop as a data performance group. • ensure the inclusion of key indicators and perceptive data to align with the SEND Strategy, • analyse and interpret the data compared with statistical neighbours and England data. • Consider deep dives into tribunal cases to inform learning and improvement, rather than relying solely on headline figures.
8. SEND Quality Assurance	<p>Comparative data on SEN support and EHCPs had been shared with board members before the meeting for their scrutiny.</p> <p>Cerys presented an overview of the comparative data, identifying that SEN identification and support rates are rising but remain below national and comparator averages. Primary SEN support rate is lower than statistical</p>

neighbours, but higher than the secondary SEN support rate, also below statistical neighbours and England. EHC plan rates are increasing year-on-year, in line with national trends. Lancashire's EHC plan rate is slightly above the national average but just below statistical neighbours. Exclusion rates for pupils with SEN support and EHC plans are higher than national figures, whereas suspensions are lower. Alternative provision placements are increasing, mostly for those with EHC plans or SEN support. Overall attendance is improving and is below national averages for authorised and unauthorised absences across all groups. Attainment is improving but is below comparators.

Challenge: Board members discussed the importance of early identification of SEND needs, in the early years, recognising that early years outcomes have a significant impact on later educational progress. It was noted that there has historically been a lack of deep dives into early years data, with most data analysis starting at primary level. Board members questioned whether there is a multi-agency forum where early health notifications and early years SEND identification are discussed collectively. Board members highlighted that early identification and support in early years settings is crucial for effective SEND provision.

Response: The board acknowledged gaps and the need to use early years data more intelligently to inform capital planning and sufficiency needs assessments. It was acknowledged that special schools in the area do not currently take early years children due to capacity issues, which has created a gap in provision. Enhanced reception classes and improved transitions from nursery to school are being considered to address this gap. The board recognised the need for multi-agency forums and task groups to address gaps in early years.

Action 7: Dave will discuss early identification in the early years at the Best Start in Life group to identify if there is capacity for an early years deep dive.

Challenge: The Board discussed that, while many children are identified as needing SEN support in primary school, there is a noticeable drop in the number of pupils recorded as receiving SEN support when they move to secondary school. Issues with information sharing and support during transitions from primary to secondary and from year 11 to year 12, were raised, with a need for improved processes and multi-agency collaboration to prevent drop-offs in support.

Response: The Board agreed that more work is needed to understand and address the drop-off in SEN support at transition points. There may be less access to support staff in secondary settings compared to primary, which can affect the level of support available. Board members noted that this

	<p>transition issue could contribute to increased exclusions and attendance problems, particularly at Key Stage 3, as pupils who previously received support may struggle without it.</p> <p>Challenge: Board members were asked whether there was a forum for these conversations and analysis to take place.</p> <p>Response: The Board discussed the creation of a new Education Board. The aim of the new Education Board is to focus on strategic planning and decision-making, particularly to address issues such as transitions, exclusions, and outcomes for vulnerable children. The Education Board will break down aggregate data to focus on district-level and place-based issues. There was recognition that effective co-production with schools and other education partners is essential for the success of the strategy.</p> <p>Action 8: The Board agreed to include exclusions as a standing item for thematic review and to monitor progress on a termly basis.</p> <p>Cerys provided an update on the SEND quality assurance framework, including closing the loop processes, when an audit or complaint identifies an area for improvement, senior managers discuss this with team managers and individual plan writers, and feedback is tracked to ensure improvements are made.</p> <p>Challenge: There was an emphasis on ensuring that the quality assurance framework captures learning from complaints and that this is done in partnership, including health and social care aspects, not just education.</p> <p>Response: Following a review, a new approach to complaints handling is being implemented, moving beyond apologies to include concrete actions and learning, with ongoing discussions with the Parent Carer forum to further enhance the process.</p> <p>Action 9: The board agreed that complaints and the learning from them are included in the quality assurance framework and quarterly reports, led by the SEND Auditor.</p>
9. Children missing education deep dive	<p>The presentation had been shared with board members prior to the meeting to enable scrutiny and preparation of questions.</p> <p>Cerys reported there had been a substantial increase in children out of school across all categories, including those being home educated (EHE), missing education (CME), receiving education other than at school (EOTAS), children attending alternative provision (AP) and those permanently excluded (PEX). There has been a 300% rise in EHE, a 103% increase in CME, and a 48.9% increase in children who were permanently excluded. Recommendations</p>

from the thematic review were shared and what the partnership wants to see to meet the needs of these children and families.

Challenge: Many children not in school have additional vulnerabilities, including SEND, and are at greater risk of poor outcomes. Processes need strengthening to ensure appropriate decision making and suitable provision is in place. The Board discussed the challenges of monitoring and supporting these children, especially when data is fragmented across multiple systems and not easily accessible or reportable. It was highlighted that some parents choose EHE due to dissatisfaction with school provision or to avoid issues with school attendance. There were also concerns about schools suggesting home education as an alternative to exclusion, which should not happen.

Response: The Board recognised the need for a comprehensive, multi-agency approach to address the issue. This includes mapping priorities, improving data quality, reviewing capacity and resources, and developing a clear programme plan with milestones for re-engagement and inclusion.

Action 10: The board acknowledged the scale and complexity of the issue, agreeing that children not in education should be added to the risk register, including the associated capital planning implications.

Challenge: The Board discussed the need to support mainstream schools in becoming more inclusive, recognising that the growth in demand for SEND services and the number of children falling out of school is unsustainable without a stronger local inclusion offer. The Board emphasised the importance of a “whole school approach” to supporting schools’ and settings’ capacities to deliver high-quality provision and inclusive practice. Concerns were raised that the traded model of support may inadvertently impact on demand for statutory assessments and EHCPs, as schools may be less able to purchase additional support for children with emerging needs. An options appraisal was suggested to explore whether and how the traded offer could be restructured to better support inclusion and early intervention.

Response: There was agreement that strengthening the local inclusion offer is essential for early identification, effective intervention, and preventing escalation to more specialist or out-of-school provision. The “whole school approach” to inclusive practice and the support available to schools will be mapped and reviewed, with the aim of bridging the gap between what mainstream schools are expected to provide and the additional support some pupils require.

Action 11: A programme delivery plan led by Paul and Vanessa to ensure a stronger, more accessible local inclusion offer as a priority, with a focus on supporting mainstream schools to be more inclusive.

<p>10. Review of Terms of reference and membership</p>	<p>The updated Terms of Reference had been shared with members before the meeting.</p> <p>The Chair proposed an outside of board review but for board members to agree to the amendments in principle.</p> <p>Challenge: It was suggested that board membership should be broadened to include Designated Clinical Officer. Other suggestions included streamlining membership.</p> <p>Response: Board members agreed other partners could join in attendance, rather than become full members. Membership would be agreed following the review.</p> <p>Refer to Action 1.</p>
<p>11. Risk register and governance update</p>	<p>The risk register had been received by board members prior to the board meeting. The Board agreed children out of school to be added as a risk, with associated capital planning consideration. Social care capacity for advice was also identified as a risk with mitigation actions to be developed.</p>
<p>14. Forward Plan</p>	<p>The Board reviewed the forward plan, confirming standing items for the next meeting and a deep dive on preparation for adulthood.</p> <p>Further areas to be added include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint Commissioning arrangements for January 2026. • Review of children not in school in February 2026. • Public Enquiry and rapid review regarding ND Pathway, EHCP and social care to report to SEND Operations before feeding into SEND Improvement Board. <p>The next meeting is confirmed for 5 December 2025, 13:00–16:00, in person.</p>
<p>15. AOB</p>	<p>No further business was raised.</p>
<p>16. Close</p>	<p>Thanks were given to Cerys Townend and Louise Haymer who are leaving Lancashire. Recruitment for new Head of SEND and Inclusion and SEND Case Lead were ongoing, with outcomes to be reported at the next meeting.</p>