



## Lancashire SEND Partnership Improvement Board

5 December 2025 – 10.00-13.00

In person Meeting

### Meeting Minutes

| Board Members Present   |
|---|
| <p><b>Kathryn Boulton</b>, Independent Chair.</p> <p><b>Cllr. Matthew Salter</b>, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, 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>Michelle Pye / Miranda Hyman</b>, Co-Chairs, Lancashire Parent Carer Forum.</p> <p><b>Clare Smith</b>, Strategic Lead for Participation and Co-production, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p><b>Philippa Perks</b>, Early Years Private, Voluntary and Independent Sector representative.</p> <p><b>Jenny Birkin</b>, Primary Heads in Lancashire representative.</p> <p><b>Christopher Beard</b>, Lancashire Secondary Schools Headteacher Representative.</p> <p><b>Fran Clayton</b>, Lancashire Special 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> <p><b>Deanne Brownley</b>, Department for Education (DfE) SEND Case Lead.</p> <p><b>Cath Hitchen</b>, Department for Education (DfE) Appointed SEND Advisor.</p> |
| In attendance   |
| <p><b>Jennifer Ashton</b>, Manager of the SEND Partnership, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p><b>Amber Burton</b>, SEND Consultant, Lancashire County Council.</p>  |
| Apologies   |
| <p><b>Cllr. Simon Evans</b>, Deputy Leader &amp; Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p><b>Cllr. Samara Barnes</b>, Shadow Cabinet Lead for Education &amp; Skills, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p><b>Jacqui Old</b>, Executive Director of Education and Children's Services, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p><b>Sakthi Karunanithi</b>, Director of Public Health and Wellbeing, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p><b>Louise Anderson</b>, Director of Children's Services, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p><b>Oliver Moores</b>, SEND Young Advisor.</p> <p><b>Rachel Lomax</b>, University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay Trust representative.</p> <p><b>Louise Swarbrick</b>, Lancashire Teaching Hospitals Trust representative.</p>   |

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

**Natalie Sinclair**, Early Years Federation group representative.

**Helen Dunbavin**, Special School Headteacher Representative.

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

| Agenda Item                                      | Minutes:  |
|--|---|
| 1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies          | Kathryn Boulton, Independent Chair welcomed attendees and noted the busy schedules of executive leads, emphasising that absence from meetings does not reflect a lack of commitment. The Chair acknowledged the commitment of all members and the importance of explicit recognition of executive oversight. Special mention was made of Cerys Townend, attending their final board meeting. Apologies were received from several members and noted. Attendees introduced themselves for the benefit of new members.  |
| 2. Minutes and actions from the previous meeting | The Chair invited members to confirm the accuracy of the previous minutes, which were reviewed in sections. No amendments or matters arising were raised. The Chair confirmed that approved minutes would be published on the SEND Improvement Board webpage.   |
| 3. Action Tracker                                | The action tracker was reviewed, with all actions noted as underway and ongoing. No challenges or further questions were raised regarding the actions.  |
| 4. Children and Young People's input and update  | <p>Clare Smith, provided an update on behalf on Olly, SEND Young Adviser and POWAR SEND Youth Forum. Sessions are being delivered in educational settings, starting at Pear Tree School, to inform the SEND survey and gather feedback from students and parent carers. A consultation has been held with 70 young people for the SEND Capital Plan and what makes an inclusive mainstream environment and ideal school for children with social, emotional and mental health needs. POWAR are developing their ideas for projects they lead themselves. Projects will focus on the four cornerstones model of co-production, helping teachers in mainstream education develop understanding of different behaviours and how to better support children and young people. A new Participation Support Worker has been appointed and will start in post in the New Year. Lundy Model Participation Training, co-written by young people with SEND, was launched on 4 November, and is now available on multiple platforms.</p> <p><b>Challenge:</b> Board members stressed the importance of strategic approaches to capturing children and young people's (CYP) voices and integrating their feedback into improvement planning. The partnership needs to evidence what life looks like now for children and young people, what actions have we taken and what difference they have made, and feed this into the Self-Evaluation Form (SEF). Partners were challenged to benchmark their current position and embed the participation recommendations from the consultation feedback in practice. Board members discussed how schools implement and value child voice but feedback from CYP does not always reflect this.</p> |

|   |   |
|---|---|
|   | <p><b>Response:</b> The Participation Strategy is being refreshed and broadened next year, and a template has been developed to capture impact which was shared and discussed at the data workshop in November. The SEND Operations Board will develop a multi-agency strategic framework for participation, with a targeted timeframe for delivery and communicate key outputs via the SEND newsletter.</p> <p><b>Action 1:</b> Dave and Clare to bring the refreshed Participation Strategy and participation framework to the SEND Operations Board for development, and to the Improvement Board in the Autumn.</p> <p><b>Action 2:</b> Partners to benchmark and embed outputs from young people's work within their sectors and report impact of this at the Development Day in January and also to the SEND Operations Board.</p> <p>The board commended POWAR for the consultation report and recommendations, and asked Clare to feed this back to POWAR.</p>  |
| 5. Lancashire Parent Carer Forum update | <p>Michelle and Miranda, co-chairs of the Forum provided a verbal update. Michelle shared that the forum now had two employees Laura and Krissy, to develop a formal structure of training and provide support to the volunteers. Focus groups were being held for Education Other Than at School (EOTAS), tribunals, Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) and sibling support with POWAR. SEND Roadshows were proving successful with 100 families attending the most recent one in Burnley, and 40 new members joining the forum.</p> <p><b>Challenge:</b> Recent feedback has been captured around the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in plans with the forum asking what the next steps would be.</p> <p><b>Response:</b> Feedback regarding the use of AI will be shared with the digital / EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plans) Improvement group, led by SEND Senior Manager Andrea Riley for consideration and response.</p> <p><b>Action 3:</b> Andrea Riley to ensure feedback from parent carers is considered at the EHCP group meeting in the New Year.</p> <p><b>Challenge:</b> Board members asked where the feedback from parent carers is being shared and how it shapes conversations and awareness of the issues. Families can become isolated and need to know how their lived experience influences change.</p> <p><b>Response:</b> Round Table members offer valuable insights which is shared via the forum. There is a national consultation and as many people from Lancashire need to contribute to this to ensure their voices are heard.</p> |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p><b>Action 4:</b> Dave to link with LPCF as Lancashire County Council have volunteers that could collaborate with the forum to provide additional support and enhance sustainability.</p> <p>Board welcomed the progress and highlighted the importance of supporting volunteers and capturing sibling experiences.</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>Paul Turner, Director of Education, Culture and Skills shared an update of progress against the priority action plan. The SEND Operations Board is well attended but is not yet driving strategic change, as the focus of it has been what it feels like on the ground, rather than shaping solutions and progressing red milestones that are off track. Paul suggested shifting the focus of the SEND Operations Board from reviewing the progress tracker to bringing recommendations in a presentation to progress stuck items, identifying why they're blocked and how they impact on children and families.</p> <p><b>Challenge:</b> Board members discussed reviewing the working groups and incorporating key priority action plan milestones into a broader SEND Improvement Plan, aligned to the new SEND Strategy 2025-8, as there needs to be partnership conversations how the wider system affects impact.</p> <p><b>Response:</b> It was acknowledged that the SEND Improvement Board is to focus on the progress against the priority action plan and the inspection re-visit, whilst Development Days focus on the wider system and strategy. The governance of this does align with priority one in the priority action plan.</p> <p><b>Action 5:</b> Paul and Vanessa, together with Jenny will produce a document evidencing progress against the priority action plan to be shared at the next Improvement Board.</p> <p><b>Challenge:</b> It was emphasised the partnership must focus on having the right conversations and how this is communicated with partners. One of the greatest challenges is achieving consistency across the county for families and having accurate data to reflect this. Although the SEND Operations Board provides governance and oversight, the priority action plan is made up of lots of individual actions with a lack of ownership.</p> <p><b>Response:</b> It was acknowledged that there was a lack of decision making, influence and strategic oversight at the SEND Operations Board. Board members agreed that the SEND Operations Board should drive progress and have oversight of all milestones before the Improvement Board. A governance review to strengthen ownership and leadership of milestones</p> |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>may help drive progress, evidence impact, and provide key updates. Aligning the risk register to performance narratives, specifying the implications and urgency, may also help to drive progress.</p> <p><b>Action 6:</b> Strategic leaders will complete a governance review focussing on risks and implications of these in the New Year.</p>   |
| <p><b>7. Report by exception on performance and data including analysis.</b></p> | <p>Performance and data presentation was shared with members before the meeting to enable scrutiny and preparation of questions.</p> <p>Dave Carr, Director of Policy, Commissioning and Children's Health shared an update about the progress of the partnership data dashboard, and the different phases, assuring the board that it remains on track for January 2026. Overdue assessments are improving, but EHCP timeliness currently remains below average. The number of overdue Annual Reviews are reducing but remain high. The data workshop explored the SEN needs assessment, particularly how we use data, joint commissioning priorities, co-production, and how we measure outcomes and impact consistently. The workshop agreed to broaden participation and perceive data but didn't get to finalise how we capture this and the ownership of metrics.</p> <p><b>Challenge:</b> Board members challenged what the blockers were to timeliness. It was emphasised the importance of identifying the data source and dates to improve accuracy and clarity.</p> <p><b>Response:</b> All delayed plans have been allocated for Educational Psychology assessment, and the target remains 100% compliance by start of next financial year, contingent on actions holding. However, there are challenges finalising and issuing plans by the managed service due to challenges in the system. A clean-up of annual review data is required, as annual review overdue figures are misleading. Many review meetings and changes have occurred, but the system marks them as overdue, until the final letter is issued.</p> <p><b>Challenge:</b> Board members questioned the timeliness of new plans, and actions being taken to prevent further delays building up.</p> <p><b>Response:</b> The SEND service is currently being re-organised, and a case is being made to cabinet for additional resource to complete new assessments. The team are reviewing the plans with the longest wait, but system issues are impacting this. It was acknowledged that although lots of hard work taking place we are not where we want to be regarding timeliness and capacity.</p> <p><b>Action 7:</b> Dave, together with the data performance group will drive quality and headline reporting from the New Year, particularly capturing lived experience and evidencing impact.</p> |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>8. SEND Quality Assurance</b></p>              | <p>The finalised version of the EHCP Quality Assurance Framework had been shared with Board members for review before the board meeting.</p> <p>Hayley Smith, SEND Auditor presented the finalised version of the EHCP Quality Assurance Framework (QAF). The Framework has been fully co-produced by all stakeholders, with Children and Young People sharing what a good EHCP looks like. The framework is multi-layered and links to workforce development. The Quality Assurance forum is multi-agency and measures impact aligned to the SEND Strategy, including complaints and feedback from families.</p> <p><b>Challenge:</b> Board members accepted the Quality Assurance Framework as a clear co-produced tool for auditing EHCPs, but it was emphasised that there is a need for a whole system Quality Assurance Framework. It was emphasised that the partnership needs to benchmark where it is now, in relation to service and district level differences and link to a training offer.</p> <p><b>Response:</b> Board members acknowledged that multi-agency audits currently deep dive into locality differences for each of the services. The new Quality Assurance Framework for Education and Children's Services could be explored as a wider system audit tool.</p> <p><b>Action 8:</b> The new Head of Service is due to start in post early next year and will review a wider inclusion / partnership framework.</p> <p>Board members commended Hayley on the framework and acknowledged she had recently won a Staff Excellence Award.</p> |
| <p><b>9. Preparation for Adulthood deep dive</b></p> | <p>The presentation had been shared with board members prior to the meeting to enable scrutiny and preparation of questions.</p> <p>Amber Burton, SEND Consultant presented an overview of the thematic audit into Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) and the development of the strategic group. Amber has taken up the position of chair and reviewed the purpose and direction of the group. The thematic audit completed aligns to the OFSTED thematic review and the recommendations made. The Improvement Plan for PfA, aligned to the recommendations, priority plan actions and SEND Strategy 2025-8, has been developed from the audit and identifies the partnership's current position. There are many strengths identified, with all providers thanked for their contributions. Preparation for Adulthood includes transitions from the earliest years, through to adulthood, for education, health and care, as there are often misunderstandings what PfA means. The strategic group identifies progress made and raises any risks to the SEND Operations Board. Action ownership, timescales for actions and data need to be agreed, to ensure accountability.</p>  |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p><b>Challenge:</b> Board members discussed how the partnership will see what is working well and what needs improving. It was emphasised how important PfA is, and how schools are engaged in the process. Destination data was recognised as vital at evidencing the difference made to young people. Families need to be able to map their child's journey across the system.</p> <p><b>Response:</b> A matrix detailing this, together with the Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) will test how well actions are progressing and making impact. All children require support to develop independence, particularly those who are most vulnerable. Board acknowledged that education providers play a pivotal role in preparing children for adulthood and need greater recognition. The Local Offer brings together the journey of a child from the earliest of years, and what support is available.</p> <p><b>Challenge:</b> Schools raised concerns how difficult it is to support children's needs adequately, in part due to financial challenges and the number of traded services. A detailed focus on preparing children and young people for adulthood is definitely needed, specifically what skills they need to achieve this. Board members discussed the role housing providers play, across the 12 districts and the importance of what independent living means and looks like.</p> <p><b>Response:</b> It was acknowledged that there is much work still to do, particularly with housing providers, employment services and supported internships, linking to Gatsby Benchmarking across the system. It was recognised that it was a good time to forward plan and future proof plans, in light of Local Government Reorganisation and the Wellbeing White Paper.</p> <p><b>Action 10:</b> Dave will link with Amber regarding independent living and what this means in relation to housing choices.</p> <p><b>Action 11:</b> Cath will link with Amber regarding clearly defining terms in relation to other Local Authorities such as Gateshead and Birmingham.</p> |
| <b>10.</b> Risk register and governance update | The risk register had been received by board members prior to the board meeting. The register was reviewed and further updates requested regarding mitigations in place for Children not in school and Children Social Care advices.  |
| <b>11.</b> Forward Plan                        | <p>The Board reviewed the forward plan, confirming standing items for the next meeting and a deep dive on governance and joint commissioning. Board agreed that thematic deep dives and ongoing monitoring are appropriate.</p> <p>The next meeting is confirmed for 12 January 2026, 13:00–16:00, in person.</p>   |
| <b>12.</b> AOB                                 | No additional items raised under AOB.   |
| <b>16.</b> Close                               | Board members expressed gratitude to Cerys Townend for all her hard work and best wishes for her future endeavours.   |