



Lancashire SEND Partnership Improvement Board

12 January 2026 – 14.00-16.00

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 and Inclusion, 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>Louise Anderson, Director of Children's Services, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p>Mairead Gill-Mullarkey, Director of Adults Community Social Care, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p>Peter Chapman, Interim Associate Director for SEND & Complexities, NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board.</p> <p>Miranda Hyman, Co-Chairs, Lancashire Parent Carer Forum</p> <p>Laura Evans, Parent Participation Lead, Lancashire Parent Carer Forum.</p> <p>Clare Smith, Strategic Lead for Participation and Co-production, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p>Oliver Moores, SEND Young Advisor.</p> <p>Philippa Perks, Early Years Private, Voluntary and Independent Sector representative.</p> <p>Christopher Beard, Lancashire Secondary Schools Headteacher Representative.</p> <p>Fran Clayton, Lancashire Special Schools Headteacher Representative.</p> <p>Marie Haworth, Further Education representative.</p> <p>Diane Booth, Blackpool Teaching Hospitals Trust representative.</p> <p>Paul Jebb, Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust representative.</p>
External Attendees
<p>Deanne Brownley, 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>Andrea Riley, Interim Head of SEND, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p>Amber Burton, SEND Consultant, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p>Grace Westwood, SEND Senior Manager, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p>Laura Morris, SENDIAS Manager, Lancashire County Council.</p> <p>Laura Gibney, Designated Clinical Officer, NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board.</p> <p>Bernadette Kunna, Participation and Coproduction Support Worker, Lancashire County Council.</p>

Stephen Morton, Consultant in Public Health, Lancashire County Council.

Apologies

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.

Jacqui Old, Executive Director of Education and Children's Services, Lancashire County Council.

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

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.

Jenny Birkin, Primary Heads in Lancashire representative.

Helen Dunbavin, Special School Headteacher Representative.

Agenda Item	Minutes:
1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies	<p>Kathryn Boulton, Independent Chair welcomed attendees, members introduced themselves and apologies were noted.</p> <p>The Chair acknowledged ICB organisational changes and agreed to hold a standing slot for ICB updates at future meetings to maintain transparency amid change. This anticipates potential impact on commissioning capacity and continuity.</p> <p>Action 1: Jenny Ashton to add ICB updates as a standing agenda item from February 2026.</p>
2. Minutes from the previous meeting	<p>Board members reviewed the previous minutes from 5 December 2025 for accuracy. No accuracy issues or matters arising were raised. The approved minutes will be published on the SEND Improvement Board webpage.</p>
3. Action Log	<p>The action log was reviewed and the Board clarified date semantics. The due date means end of month deadline in line with priority action plan dates. Board reaffirmed expectation that items marked "on track" genuinely meet trajectory. Emphasis placed on operational scrutiny before Board assurance to prevent drift masked as progress.</p> <p>Action 2: Jenny Ashton will update due date column on the action log, to end of month, to support clearer tracking.</p> <p>Action 3: Paul Turner and Vanessa Wilson to ensure SEND Operations Board re-scrutinise all "on track" items due Jan–Feb and report exceptions in February Board pack.</p>
4. Children and Young People's input and update	<p>Clare Smith and Olly Moores shared an update regarding POWAR SEND youth forum.</p> <p>Young Advisers met on 30 December 2025, bringing together young people from all the youth forums together, including POWAR. Young People would</p>

	<p>like to bring adults and young people together later in the year. Sessions at Pear Tree Specialist School and Ridgewood Community High met with 37 students, learning to tailor session design by setting. Morecambe Academy engagement ongoing. POWAR are working in partnership with Education Improvement developing the Resilience Framework and the SEND Sufficiency Lead regarding consultation on the Capital Plan. 72 professionals have completed the Lundy Model e-learning training stating their knowledge and understanding of participation increased. Clare introduced their new Participation and Co-production Support Worker, Bernadette Kunna, to the Board.</p> <p>Challenge: Olly invited members of the Board to meet the children and young people that attend POWAR and to re-establish the POWAR Take Over Day. It was emphasised how important it is that child and youth voice impacts partnership improvements. Parent Carer Forum (PCF) encouraged adding careers reciprocity to connect participation with future employment opportunities and the aspiration to live a purposeful life. Board members were also encouraged to promote the Lundy Model training.</p> <p>Response: Board gave their support to refresh the annual POWAR Take Over Day across the partnership, emphasising how the partnership needs to build an inclusive system, considering feedback from young people. Elected members were being supported to complete the Lundy Model training.</p> <p>Action 4: Clare Smith, together with partners, including Olly and LPCF, to lead the scoping for an annual POWAR Take Over Day and bring this back to Board.</p> <p>Action 5: Clare Smith and Olly Moores asked by Board to produce thematic “you said / we did / impact” reporting to evidence change over time, not just activity.</p>
<p>5. Lancashire Parent Carer Forum update</p>	<p>Miranda Hyman and Laura Evans shared thematic feedback gathered from Family Hubs drop in sessions. Biggest worries included education inclusion, not feeling heard, transitions, employment, relationships, inconsistent support/funding, trust, children out of school. What is needed now included placements, EHCP quality, CAMHS access, masking/burnout recognition, early therapeutic support, and What they’d like to see included inclusive community offer, proactive planning, specialist support, holiday provision, genuine co-production.</p> <p>Challenge: Board requested that detailed feedback be shared at SEND Operations Board, underlining the need for operational cross-checking and quality assurance to evidence improvement, with themes being brought to Improvement Board. Board asked LPCF how many parents had been spoken to, and whether individual needs required addressing. Board also discussed</p>

	<p>case studies to illuminate barriers and good practice, drawn from multiple agencies. Board discussed how PCF themes could be triangulated with complaints, mediation/tribunal data, waiting times to detect trend movement and “green shoots”. Board suggested these themes be aligned with the Quality Assurance Framework.</p> <p>Response: Family Hub sessions are held in partnership with SENDIAS and Family hub Navigators. LPCF asked families what they needed, as they provide the strategic voice of parents. Families attending Family hubs usually have an issue they are seeking support with, which was recognised as potentially skewing feedback. However, families need to feel heard that issues with particular services will be addressed.</p> <p>Board recognised these themes are consistent with inspection findings and the Priority Action Plan (PAP), although it was emphasised how services delivered through the Family hubs had improved since the inspection, including support provided by the Parent Carer Forum, SENDIAS and Navigators.</p> <p>Action 6: Paul Turner / Vanessa Wilson to ensure SEND Operations Board cross check LPCF themes to PAP actions, QA framework, complaints/tribunal trends and report back to Improvement Board.</p> <p>Action 7: All strategic partners to take it in turns to bring a Case Study per meeting, co-ordinated with SEF evidence to provide greater insights and evidence of impact.</p>
<p>6. Highlight Report and Priority Action Plan Tracker</p>	<p>The highlight report, summary presentation, Priority Action and Impact Plan tracker and action log were shared with members prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Vanessa Wilson and Paul Turner shared an update of progress against the priority action plan. Challenges remain with data, tribunals, panels and EHCP timeliness. Priorities centre around the SEND staffing re-structure, capacity and data. Mitigations remain on track for April 2026 with re-organisation and additional staff being recruited. Further funding has been requested at cabinet.</p> <p>Councillor Salter thanked Paul for the work that had been done and was confident increased resources would ease challenges.</p> <p>Challenge: Board welcomed the new slide-based reporting but asked for clear prioritisation, and crisp commentary on scale of issues and whether delays are material, for example, plan sign-off versus workforce restructure capacity. Board asked how annual reviews were being managed though the EHC dashboard, and decision making of panels. Data was also identified as a key risk area, however some KPI's such as mental health reporting is a</p>

	<p>national issue and others are due to Data Protection Impact Assessment being required and EHM system issues.</p> <p>Response: The EHC dashboard for annual reviews was acknowledged as being off track, as the EHCP template needed reviewing first, which will be launched in February 2026 and annual reviews in April 2026. Updated information on the Local Offer has been delayed due to the migration onto a new platform.</p> <p>Action 8: Paul Turner to revise PAP reporting to surface highest-impact risks first, with concise narrative on severity, trend and mitigations.</p>
<p>7. Tribunals and Mediation Thematic Review</p>	<p>Grace Westwood, Laura Gibney and Laura Morris presented updates from the thematic review.</p> <p>Grace shared that there were 4 members of staff in the tribunal team. Live appeals have nearly doubled year-on-year, currently there are 300, up from 150 last year, relating largely to sections B, F, and I content, placement and refusal to assess. Drivers include inclusion tensions, specialist place demand, mainstream capability, and private reports, not always aligning with NHS evidence or child need. It was emphasised that tribunals will continue to rise due to current mainstream setting being named.</p> <p>Challenge: Board asked how decisions were shared with families and whether signposting was given where there was a refusal to assess. It was highlighted that schools don't know the children who are not attending but parents are struggling and need support. This results in families seeking private assessments, to be able to access the appropriate support, as there is often an incomplete picture of the child's needs. Minimum standards should be in place and close working in partnership with the local authority and ICB. Board asked for data regarding refusal to assess and number that result in assessment being completed, and refusal to issue.</p> <p>Response: Families are contacted by letter and by their case worker. The Local Authority have no control over private providers and tribunals say the information needs to be provided against NHS advice, not private assessment which is often a wish list and not based on significant need. However, children are often not known to NHS services, so there is no comparison available.</p> <p>Laura Gibney shared that that she is involved in the national DCO forum's work with tribunal judiciary, aimed at strengthening how NHS evidence is understood and considered.</p>

	<p>Action 9: Grace Westwood and Laura Gibney to work together to create joint guidance and next steps for mediation and tribunals.</p> <p>Laura Morris shared that SENDIAS themes also included EHCP content issues relating to sections B, F, and I, placement disagreements, and refusal to assess decisions. Mediation delays mean some parents cannot access mediation within timescales and proceed straight to tribunal. Families report poor communication from services, especially around consultation with preferred schools and interpretation of professional evidence. Special school places are often agreed but unavailable, resulting in mainstream placements that trigger appeals. Parents frequently need help to understand tribunal paperwork and LA responses. Some LA tribunal responses lack required legal clarity, though SENDIAS reports good collaborative working with the LA tribunal lead to resolve issues. Parents have also shared their fears regarding the White Paper.</p> <p>Challenge: It was highlighted that Schools report they can't meet need without a plan, but some also report they can't meet need with a plan. Schools need more support to be inclusive, but how is this baseline being shifted. Board asked how the Communication Strategy is being implemented to address the feedback and analysis of themes.</p> <p>Response: The partnership agreed to work together to analyse the themes and trends and bring back a formal response to Board in 6 months to share the learning.</p> <p>Action 10: Paul Turner and Vanessa Wilson to ensure SEND Operations Board review trends for tribunals/mediations: quarterly volumes, reasons (BF/I, refusal to assess), outcomes, and mediation effectiveness and bring a 6-month review to show “So what?” responses back to Improvement Board.</p>
<p>8. 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>Grace Westwood presented the data for December 2025, acknowledging EHCP timeliness wasn't at target, due to managed service delays impacting finalisation rates. However, EP timeliness has significantly improved, and recovery trajectory is in place to ensure alignment by April 2026, when the new staffing structure is in place. Annual reviews deficits partly reflect EHM data issues, as 3000 more reviews are completed than displayed. System fixes are ongoing to address this. Phase transfers have significantly improvement.</p> <p>Challenge: Board sought assurance on quality of health advice, not just blank returns “waiting list” coding. If the number of EHCPs continues to rise, it was emphasised the impact this would have next year on the number of annual</p>

	<p>reviews needed. Board suggested longest wait outlier's should be taken out to prevent skewing of timeliness and the cumulative figure would also be useful.</p> <p>Response: Laura, DCO confirmed processes were in place with health providers, to feedback the learning from audits and provide training through the Quality Assurance Framework.</p> <p>Action 11: Grace Westwood to update data reporting to exclude outliers and show cumulative trend and new case timeliness.</p> <p>Action 12: LPCF to be invited to the Performance Analysis Group due to commence to identify impact and so what.</p>
<p>9. Joint Commissioning Review</p>	<p>The new refreshed Joint Commissioning Strategy and presentation had been shared with Board members before the meeting for review.</p> <p>Lisa Taylor requested Board approval for the recommendations and Joint Commissioning Strategy. Peter Chapman shared that the proposal was to keep the existing ICB led Joint Commissioning Board to set principles such as the speech and language offer, and develop LA chaired place based Joint Commissioning Groups to tailor delivery and prevent fragmentation, which will start in February 2026. Quarterly reporting into the SEND improvement Board was proposed and for the Joint Commissioning Group to be recognised as a partnership group of the Board.</p> <p>Challenge: It was emphasised that many partners commission services and that commissioning occurs at different levels. Programmes need aligning to prevent duplication and ensure effective partnership working, particularly with Learning disability and Autism transformation and across all ages to ensure future demands and effective service provision in the future.</p> <p>Response: It was acknowledged that resources needed to be aligned and that a meeting was in the diary for children's and adult's commissioners to come together. The Joint strategic Needs Assessment, SEND Strategy and Preparation for Adulthood transition pathways have all been considered as part of the Joint Commissioning Strategy.</p> <p>Board accepted the Strategy and recommendations. The group will report into SEND Operations Board in relation to priority 1 and then to the SEND improvement Board for assurance.</p>
<p>10. Inspection Readiness</p>	<p>The report had been shared with board members prior to the meeting to enable scrutiny and preparation of questions.</p> <p>Amber Burton shared that an Inspection Readiness Group has been established to align improvement activity across the Priority Action Plan, the</p>

	<p>Improvement Notice, the SEF and Annex A requirements. All actions need to have named accountable officers that progress improvement and provide updates that reflects tangible change rather than just repeated meetings.</p> <p>Challenge: The SEND Inspection readiness Group will be responsible for reviewing progress against the PAP and all the related work. SEND Operations Board will then review the details and provide assurance to the SEND Improvement Board. Gaps remain in early identification, communication and co-production, which will need to be addressed through the readiness work.</p> <p>Response: Amber emphasised the need for regular cross-partner collaboration, refreshed position statements, strengthened data quality work and clear communication arrangements, so that the partnership can respond quickly and confidently when inspectors call.</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 register was reviewed with Board noting risk work is still maturing. Explicit tracking was required and further conversations outside of the Board meeting.</p> <p>Action 13: Tribunal volumes & mainstream inclusion capability including system pressure, and potential impact if not improving, to be added to the risk register with owners, mitigations and KPI's.</p>
<p>12. Forward Plan</p>	<p>The Board reviewed the forward plan, confirming standing items for the next meeting and a thematic review of governance and at Children Not in School (CNIS).</p>
<p>13. AOB</p>	<p>Vanessa Wilson informed the Board she will leave end of March under ICB voluntary redundancy scheme. The ICB future structure is pending publication, although prioritisation work ongoing to maintain strategic commissioning focus. Board to monitor impacts.</p>
<p>16. Close</p>	<p>The next meeting is confirmed for 9 February 2026, 13:00–16:00, in person.</p>