



Lancashire SEND Partnership Improvement Board

6 July 2026 – 13.00-15.00

Hybrid Meeting

Meeting Minutes

Board Members Present
Kathryn Boulton, Independent Chair. Cllr. Matthew Salter, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, Lancashire County Council. Peter Chapman, Interim Associate Director for SEND & Complexities, NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board. Paul Turner, Director of Education and Inclusion, Lancashire County Council. Dave Carr, Director of Policy, Commissioning and Children's Health, Lancashire County Council. Paula Green, Head of SEND and Inclusion, Lancashire County Council. Miranda Hyman, Co-Chair, Lancashire Parent Carer Forum. Michelle Pye, Co-Chair, Lancashire Parent Carer Forum. Diane Booth, Blackpool Teaching Hospitals Trust representative. Victoria Hampson, East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust representative. Philippa Perks, Early Years Private, Voluntary and Independent Sector representative.
External Attendees
Deanne Brownley, Department for Education (DfE) SEND Case Lead. Cath Hitchen, Department for Education (DfE) Appointed SEND Advisor.
In attendance
Jennifer Ashton, Manager of the SEND Partnership, Lancashire County Council. Helen Keaveny, Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust representative. Laura Gibney, DCO, NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board. Nick Chisnell, Head of Service, Learning Disability and Autism, Lancashire County Council.
Apologies
Lindsey Marlton, National Health Service England (NHSE) Advisor. Jacqui Old, Executive Director of Education and Children's Services, Lancashire County Council. Jane Scattergood, Interim Chief Nursing Officer, NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board. Louise Anderson, Director of Children's Services, Lancashire County Council. Sakthi Karunanithi, Director of Public Health and Wellbeing, Lancashire County Council. Mairead Gill-Mullarkey, Director of Adults Community Social Care, Lancashire County Council. Clare Smith, Strategic Lead for Participation and Co-production, Lancashire County Council. Oliver Moores, SEND Young Advisor. Stephen Morton, Consultant in Public Health, Lancashire County Council. Rachel Lomax, University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay Trust representative. Paul Jebb, Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust representative. Louise Swarbrick, Lancashire Teaching Hospitals Trust representative.

Natalie Sinclair, Early Years Federation group representative.

Jenny Birkin, Primary Heads in Lancashire representative.

Christopher Beard, Lancashire Secondary Schools Headteacher Representative.

Helen Dunbavin, Special School Headteacher Representative.

Fran Clayton, Lancashire Special Schools Headteacher Representative.

Marie Haworth, Further Education representative.

Agenda Item	Minutes:
1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies	Kathryn Boulton, Independent Chair welcomed members to the meeting and thanked partners for their continued commitment to the SEND improvement programme. Particular recognition was given to those involved in the recent POWAR Takeover Day activities, with members reflecting on the positive engagement from children and young people and the value of hearing directly from lived experience. It was acknowledged that the event had generated meaningful feedback which will help shape future improvement activity. Action 1: Members agreed that the outcomes from the Take Over day would be communicated back to participants to demonstrate how their views have informed decision-making by October Half Term. Apologies were formally noted from those unable to attend.
2. Minutes from the previous meeting	The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed and agreed as an accurate record. No additional matters arising were identified that were not already covered elsewhere within the agenda.
3. Action Log	Actions from the previous meeting had been transferred to the action log and were being monitored through the SEND Operations Board. All actions were noted to be on track, and none were escalated. The Board was assured that governance arrangements remain effective and that actions continue to be tracked through established reporting mechanisms.
4. SEND Reform Plan	Paula Green, Head of SEND and Inclusion provided the Board with an update on Lancashire's SEND Reform Plan, which had been submitted to the Department for Education in June alongside the required annexes, and had progressed through the initial assessment process into regional moderation. The Board noted that the final plan reflected the work already underway across the partnership, particularly around inclusion, sufficiency and system reform. Significant recognition was given to the teams involved in producing the final submission. Challenge: The Board discussed the need to maintain clear alignment between reform activity and the existing Priority Action Plan to ensure delivery remains coordinated and focused on improving outcomes. Workforce readiness was identified as a significant area of concern, with challenges relating to recruitment and retention across educational psychology, therapy services and specialist SEND provision discussed, alongside the impact of increasing demand

	across the system. Members recognised that workforce capacity presents a risk both to day-to-day delivery and implementation of new reform initiatives. Response: The Board acknowledged the significant progress made in developing the reform plan and supported the proactive approach to implementation planning. It was noted that implementation activity has already commenced despite formal feedback not being expected until September. Work has started on the Experts at Hand model, including bringing partners together to agree governance and terms of reference. Members also heard that monitoring arrangements for reform delivery are expected to commence from the submission date, meaning progress will need to be evidenced throughout 2026. Members agreed that workforce challenges require continued oversight and mitigation. Action 2: Paula Green and Peter Chapman to develop a reform plan monitoring framework aligned to existing PAP reporting arrangements following receipt of DfE feedback in September, together with outcomes from the upcoming Experts at Hand activity and mitigation plans developed to monitor workforce risk.
5. Priority 1 – Leadership, Performance and Governance	Members noted that overall performance against Priority Action Plan milestones continues to improve, with approximately 88% of milestones now reported as complete or on track. The Board noted that all Priority 1 milestones were reported as completed and that governance arrangements were now embedded across the partnership, with improved reporting structures, stronger oversight through the SEND Operations Board, and enhanced use of performance information to support decision-making. An update was provided on the System C health check, which involved a series of workshops reviewing use of the EHCP module and associated data processes. The resulting report is expected shortly and will help identify opportunities to strengthen data quality, recording practices and reporting arrangements. Challenge: The Board discussed the importance of strengthening data benchmarking to provide greater context to Lancashire’s performance and support future inspection readiness. Members recognised that while demonstrating local improvement and distance travelled is critical, comparative analysis with statistical neighbours and national data can help evidence whether improvement activity is having the desired impact. Discussion focused on strengthening the narrative within Board reports, particularly around off-track milestones, so that members can clearly see what action is being taken, what barriers exist and what support is required from the Improvement Board. Response: It was agreed that further work through the Performance Analysis Group would help develop a stronger evidence base, identify anomalies and

trends, and support more targeted improvement activity. Members welcomed the growing maturity of reporting arrangements and the development of dashboard products that provide greater visibility of progress and risks.

Members reviewed progress within joint commissioning arrangements and discussed how Experts at Hand could become a practical demonstration of genuine joint commissioning across education, health and care.

Challenge: There was discussion about creating shared specifications, common KPIs and integrated commissioning arrangements rather than separate organisational approaches. Digital development and commissioning capacity remain key risks requiring continued management and monitoring.

Response: Members noted ongoing work to strengthen partnership working between Lancashire County Council and the ICB and acknowledged that national changes and organisational restructuring could influence future arrangements.

An update was provided on short breaks following parent carer feedback. Registration arrangements have been revised so families no longer need to wait for registration windows to open. Communications continue through the Local Offer, and discussions are ongoing regarding future contractual arrangements.

The Board considered EHCP performance data and reflected on the significant distance travelled over the last twelve months. Improvements included increased workforce capacity, reduced waiting lists, higher timeliness rates, reduced average waiting times and increased volumes of completed assessments and plans.

Challenge: Members welcomed the progress but challenged whether the narrative adequately articulated the scale of improvement and emerging impact for children and families. Evidence needs to clearly demonstrate effective action and distance travelled.

Response: Members recognised that whilst performance remains below national expectations in some areas, significant progress has been made and should be articulated clearly through future reporting.

Challenge: The Board discussed the significant deterioration in health advice timeliness and recognised this as a continuing risk.

Response: Members discussed ongoing engagement with health colleagues and work underway to improve the timeliness and quality of advice received.

	Action 3: Paula Green to share a distance travelled narrative demonstrating progress and impact, including targeted work with health partners to improve advice timeliness and findings from data and benchmarking triangulation following meeting with Cath Hithen.
6. Priority 2 – EHCP Improvement Plan	Paula Green, Head of SEND and Inclusion provided an update on off track milestones, including the EHC Dashboard for annual reviews and actions taken to progress this. Members reviewed the EHCP Quality Improvement Plan and were advised that additional audit capacity had been approved. The Board agreed that quality, rather than timeliness alone, will be critical to demonstrating impact for children and families. Members welcomed plans to expand audit capacity through additional staffing and discussed the importance of ensuring that audit findings directly inform workforce development, practice improvement and measurable changes in quality. Challenge: Specific discussion took place regarding families whose requests for assessment or plans are declined. Members agreed that families require clear communication, supportive conversations and practical next steps rather than simply receiving a written decision. Members were encouraged by the reduction in delays and the expansion of audit activity but agreed that improving quality, family experience and statutory timeliness remains a key priority. Response: The Board heard that work is underway through the transformation programme to redesign the end-to-end assessment process and strengthen these pathways. The Parent Carer Forum was specifically identified as a key partner in reviewing and shaping this process to ensure that communications and support arrangements meet families' needs and provide confidence that appropriate help will be available if an EHCP is not issued. Challenge: There was a significant discussion about whether some children are progressing through the EHCP process when their needs could potentially be met through effective Ordinarily Available Provision within schools. Response: Members highlighted the importance of strengthening support available to schools through free access to professional development, SENDCO networks, moderation activity and guidance to implement Ordinarily Available Provision to improve inclusion and reduce unnecessary escalation. Action 4: The EHCP group to continue the implementation of the EHCP Quality Improvement Plan and increase the use of audit findings to inform training and workforce development.
7. Priority 3 – ND Pathway update	Peter Chapman provided a detailed update on the Neurodevelopmental (ND) Pathway. Members noted delays to implementation of a digital front door,

	integrated referral pathways and Right to Choose accreditation arrangements. It was shared that the Right to Choose Specifications had now been signed off. Blackpool Teaching Hospital (BTH) is accepting referrals from North Lancashire, in addition to Central and West Lancashire, and has been commissioned to undertake triage and autism assessments for children and young people across this wider geographical area. Challenge: Discussion focussed on the actions being taken to address lengthy waiting lists, including transfer of long-waiting cases and expansion of assessment capacity. Members stressed the importance of clear communication with families affected by pathway changes. Response: It was confirmed that children transferred from the Lancashire and South Cumbria Foundation Trust (LSCFT) waiting list will receive a clinical triage assessment, with the expectation that all transferred cases will have received an initial triage outcome by the end of the year. The intention is that this will help reduce waiting lists and ensure families receive earlier advice and direction regarding next steps. Challenge: Discussion centred on the launch of the Neu Way Support Hubs, designed to provide support for families regardless of diagnosis and to offer earlier intervention and lived experience support. Response: The Board welcomed the launch of the new Lancashire-wide Neu Way Support Hub, providing a single access route for families seeking advice and support regardless of diagnosis status. Members recognised this as a significant improvement in support available while children and young people wait for assessment. Action 5: Peter Chapman will bring an update on ND Pathway waiting time performance, development of pathway integration and triage arrangements, impact of Neu Way Support Hubs and workforce capacity risks to the next board meeting on 17 September 2026.
8. Area for Improvement 1 – Communication (including LPCF / POWAR)	It was confirmed that the new look Local Offer had been launched on 6 July, and the communication group will complete an audit of the Local Offer at their next meeting. The Board reflected on the success of both the Parent Carer Forum Conference and POWAR Take Over Day. Members agreed that relationships with families continued to improve and that opportunities for direct dialogue were helping build trust and confidence.

	Challenge: Concern was raised that social care had not attended the Parent Carer Forum conference, despite being invited. Response: Members agreed to escalate concerns regarding social care attendance at partnership engagement events. Action 6: LPCF, supported by the Communications Group to develop a storyboard and evidence pack demonstrating changes in family engagement and confidence over time.
9. Area for Improvement 2 – Preparation for Adulthood (PfA)	Paula Green provided an update on PfA. Members welcomed strengthened leadership arrangements, development of post-16 commissioning work and progress on young adult service redesign. Challenge: Discussion identified ongoing concerns around transition pathways and consistency of support across services. The need for stronger strategic oversight, clearer communication and greater awareness of the support already available on the Local Offer was highlighted. Transition safeguarding was identified as an important area requiring continued oversight. Response: It was agreed that the PfA Strategic Group would continue monitoring transition reform activity closely, maintaining a focus on transition safeguarding and improve visibility and communication of current Preparation for Adulthood resources and support.
11. Risk register	The risk register had been received by board members prior to the board meeting. The Board reviewed the risk register and agreed that digital delivery risks associated with System C developments, EHCP portal functionality and reporting solutions should be reviewed to ensure they are fully captured. Action 7: Paula Green and Jennifer Ashton to review digital risks and update the risk register through SEND Operations Board before returning to Improvement Board.
12. Forward Plan	Members agreed future agenda items including SEND Reform monitoring, data analysis work, PfA transition pathways and continued oversight of EHCP quality and performance.
13. AOB	None
16. Close	The Chair thanked members for their contributions and confirmed the next meeting date for 17 September 2026, 13:00–16:00 TBC.