

## WESTMORLAND & FURNESS SEND PARTNERSHIP

### Minutes of Meeting

#### SEND Partnership Board

**Date: 5th December 2025 Time: 10:00 – 12:00**

**Present:** Isobel Booler (Chair), Catherine Prince, Jason Habbershon, Gemma Parkes, Andi Henderson, Cllr Janet Battye, Ali McCulloch, Milorad Vasic, Jon Taylor, Matt Hardwick, Dan Hinton, Lorna Jones, Sarah Heywood, Lorraine Rudd-Williams, Deborah Parry, Lauren Jackson, Lindsey Ormesher, Elaine Croll, Lisa Balderstone

**Apologies:** Vanessa Wilson, Peter Chapman, Andrew Horrobin, Helen Howlett, Sarah Roscoe, Vicky Hepworth-Putt, David Storm, Amy Holliman, Ann Breeze, Steve Hatton, Dean Graham

	Agenda Item	Notes
1.	Welcome and Apologies	Isobel welcomed colleagues to the meeting. Apologies received were noted and accepted.
2.	Updates and Actions Review of action tracker from October meeting	<p>All actions and updates were reviewed and agreed.</p> <p>Cllr Battye queried asks from ICB linking with CLL and commissioning. IB confirmed that universal was being delivered by Harrogate and District NHS trust, it is only when targeted or specialist SaLT is required this will affect. The ICB are aiming to create an equitable offer across all their LAs, but we want to know more detail about what this will look like, and how will the funding be, or do we want to keep our own commission, delivered by Harrogate.</p> <p>HDFT will be using ELIM (a health visitor only tool), we are working on the development of a systemwide pathway from universal through to specialist, having a clear roles and responsibilities at each level - this will include where HDFT fit in and also where we can integrate assessments and ways of working ie 2-2.5 yo check.</p>

		<p>We are launching WellComm, which can be used for ALL children across schools and settings and will give us a baseline and then also identify those early needs, which may be able to then be addressed through the WellComm tools. Where there are additional needs, this will then progress through the pathway.</p> <p>MV – can we have timescales on some of the actions, to enable us to keep track of actions?  <b>ACTION:</b> CP to ensure these are included in future</p>
3.	SEND Youth Council	<p>Lorna Jones presented her work on developing the new SEND Youth Council, and gave an overview of the engagement and meetings held so far. Children and young people are keen to contribute their views and Lorna explained her plans to develop this further over the next 12 months, including having a smaller sub-council within each of the three district areas.</p> <p>There have been some barriers to engagement, esp those with lower level SEND needs. Some YP have fed back that they have SEND, but they don't want to be involved with a council with a 'label', so we need to ensure all CYP can feel included and have access to some form of young person's voice.</p> <p>We are therefore promoting all our councils: Youth Council (open to all aged 11-18), Our Voice (Care Experienced Council), Limitless Voice (SEND Council), CFW&amp;F Steering group. CYP are welcome to join one (or more) of these groups.</p> <p>YP are also clear that they want us to talk to them in different settings, as well as having the opportunity to be part of the council. Lorna and/or Sarah will therefore visit settings to gain YP voice.</p> <p>Dan Hinton queried how CYP can join? LJ explained that YP from Sandgate are a key part of these groups. LJ confirmed links had been made with all special schools and AP settings.</p> <p>Lauren Jackson offered Lundy Model of participation training model that is offered by the ICB to all their partners. Happy to speak to the partnership in future.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> CP/LJ/SH to make contact with Lauren to ensure this is a future agenda item, and also to link in with health in terms of participation.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> SH/LJ to also link with LSCFT for their Youth Voices participation group</p>

<p>4.</p>	<p>SEND Improvement  (a) SEND Improvement Plan progress sections 1-4  (b) Monitoring of performance/dashboards</p>	<p>Jason Habbershon provided an update on progress of 4 priority areas from SEND Improvement works. Majority of actions on track, with exception of the following:</p> <p>Delays in workstream 1 – PCF/Contact - ongoing issue with disaggregation of SENDAC, this is delaying the work in this area.  Workstream 2 – Development of a shared data dashboard for ND pathways for LSC and NENC ICBs, this is due to capacity constraints.</p> <p>Jason shared updated data dashboards – Requests for assessment now 14% higher than previous year, but 2% higher of ‘no to assess’ than previous years.  MV – Do we know how many of those who were ‘no to assess’ have then gone to mediation/reapplied etc. JH reported that this work has been completed  <b>ACTION:</b> GP/JH to bring this data to the next meeting.</p> <p>To note – we are now a huge outlier in increase of assessments in north west and also outlier in issue following mediation. We need to look at how we can meet need earlier, to reduce requests.</p> <p>2025 data – we are now lower than we were in 2024, but data needs to continue to be monitored and trends reviewed.  Parental assessments continuing to increase, school requests have reduced following introduction of SENDCo meetings and increased support for schools.</p> <p>We need to evaluate all of our different outreach and look at the impact of how this is supporting the data.  Lisa Balderstone feels her data will change, as her cohorts change, and more frequent cohorts come into the PRU with an EHCP already in place.</p> <p>IB asked if ‘no to assess’ and ‘no to issue’ could be on the same graph, so we can compare.  <b>ACTION:</b> JH to alter slide layout.  New documents in place, to request more details from schools, this has had a positive impact, as often when we don’t assess, it’s because we don’t have enough info, this then comes in later.</p>
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IB – we need to challenge ourselves on timescale data, as these have dropped from last year. How can we increase, if this is because of capacity within the team, do we need to benchmark against stat neighbours against team capacity.

**ACTION:** GP to explore reasons for this and the impact of this on schools and families.

**ACTION:** Reasons for delay to be listed as a narrative on Partnership dashboard (JH/GP)

MH raised concern on behalf of CASH – what strategies are in place to support whilst under assessment.

**ACTION:** GP to follow up with MH and chair of W&F CASH to see what is driving these concerns and the options around this.

Annual Review data has plateaued recently, this is lower than historically has been, as focussed pieces of work have previously been undertaken to reduce the backlog.

SEN2 statutory return needs to be completed from January, this will be presented to Partnership Board following the submission of this.

IB flagged that Barrow EHCP data still remains significantly above average at 6.2%

Dan Hinton queried budget announcement, regarding how central government will manage SEND funding, was there any updates to LAs? At present, we are funded centrally through the HNB and Office for Budget Responsibility has identified a funding gap of approx 1.4 billion. Indication is statutory override will end, and potential is that some of this will come back to LAs, this will have significant consequences for us as a partnership and for CYP, as it will on many other local areas. At present, no formal position has been shared with LAs. Government consultation is ongoing.

**ACTION:** Statutory override to be added to next agenda, where we look in more detail at HNB.

Elaine – how are we reporting progress on Improvement plan – IB - this has been shared at this meeting high level. Fortnightly working groups are in place and both ICBs have been invited to send representation to this meeting to ensure everyone has full awareness. This term's update will be shared on LO in New Year.

5.	DSG Management Plan and High Needs Block	<p>Slides shared, but defer to next meeting, when there will be a more comprehensive update available by Claire Diggle.</p> <p>Since the budget, we know that SEND review has been delayed and statutory override will end in 2028, and councils will be left with some aspect of this cumulative deficit against our budget.</p> <p>Q1 data is shared within the slides, Q2 data is not fully published, but is a worsening position, with predictions for year end HNB quite stark. This is due to EHCP top ups and all the need within the system. This is an enormous risk to the partnership.</p> <p>MV – has been trying to compare our deficit to other LAs. This is exacerbated in W&amp;F by very low per pupil funding. Some of our statistical neighbours have more significant deficits than us.</p> <p>DH asked for cautions when comparing to statistical neighbours, as we are in this group because of population and demographics, but are they stat neighbours in terms of similar education systems/RP systems/ISP services. It is important that we use this data as well, when referring to stat neighbours. We always need to keep the impacts of the child at the heart of all this, we have to give less money to a greater number of students.</p>
6.	SEND Sufficiency Progress and Strategy on Implementation and delivery	<p>To defer to next meeting, when there will be a more comprehensive update available, including updated Programme Plan</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> CP to include on next agenda</p>
7.	Local Offer Update	<p>The Local Offer was identified as a priority area following inspection. We have a clear vision for LO and how we want this to be for our families and young people, with comprehensive package of information and support.</p> <p>Current platform licence expires on 31-3-26, working with digital team in terms of navigation, and also how this is accessed from a phone, or tablet. We want LO to be family friendly, not corporate. However, there are some technical implications.</p>

		<p>All content has now been updated and refreshed; this ensures content is ready to move over to new platform.</p> <p>We feel that importance and prominence of LO means it needs to be separate site, and the type of site it should be – sub or micro site.</p> <p>Do we want professionals’ hub to remain on LO. Coproduction can be down with youth council</p> <p>LO – it needs to be a one stop shop and family hubs and LO need to tie in together to ensure it is relevant for families.</p> <p>Lauren J – link in with ICB to link to their websites</p> <p>Cllr B – how can we use comms plan and get messages out to families? Can we use fliers for this?</p> <p>IB – what came out of the inspection, was to show what we have so everyone knows what is available and is a broader communications piece.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> GP to continue to explore technicality.</p>
8.	Parent/Carer Forum/Contact Position statement	<p>CP explained current position and expanded on recent events.</p> <p>IB – huge risk to progress of partnership. SENDAC positive relationship remains with W&amp;F, despite Contact’s intervention.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> CP to build proposals as to how we engage with parents in interim, whilst Contact develop new forum.</p> <p>LO – previously concerned SENDAC was too Cumberland heavy. IB – always our plan to have own branch of SENDAC, doing so in coproduced way. SENDAC had significantly increased W&amp;F membership and had members who were willing to volunteer.</p> <p>To develop a forum takes 2 years, and we now have nothing, but we have now lost access to members within SENDAC. We are nervous about relying on Contact after the way they have handled this.</p> <p>Lauren – good parent champion model within BwD</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> LaJ to link in with this work and how parent champion model could link with family hubs.</p>

9.	Health Updates	<p>LSC ICB – LaJ shared slides (these will be circulated to board members)</p> <p>Operating model is being finalised, until April 2027, SEND to remain within ICBs, but voluntary redundancy scheme has now launched and is open to 15<sup>th</sup> Dec. Will keep us updated.</p> <p>90 day challenge – recent review of waiting times and how tackling waiting times, commitment to reducing that and regular monitoring from NHSE.</p> <p>Meeting medical needs in schools and settings, national guidance has been published. Good examples of good local models and relationships, but some challenges across footprint, relating to funding and workforce.</p> <p>This is some risks in the ICB, and these have been escalated.</p> <p>Providers have been asked to undertake a benchmarking exercise, looking at assessments of needs. Lot of models and ways are working across different providers, with no SLAs or SoPs in place. Providers have been asked to undertake a joint risk assessment with schools, to understand the differing levels of needs and complexity. Completing this in partnership with NENC, and pilot has been undertaken in the north east.</p> <p>Question for the board – are there challenges in W&amp;F with accessing support in schools for children with medical needs?</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> To review this and report back</p> <p>Dashboard – been progressing with Lancashire as part of their priority action plan. Now have KPIs that they are reporting on, in the new year begin conversations with other LAs to begin to roll this out, so health data can be included within wider SEND dashboard.</p> <p>Lots of needs around PDA – developing a position statement around this, creating shared language and promotion of strategies.</p>
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		<p>ND pathway – 5 workstreams, good progress being made. Digital profiling tool and digital app to be piloted in early 2026. Very strong engagement from all levels of pathway redesign</p> <p>Bid from National Lottery to gain additional funding to develop ND support hubs – we will hear feedback/outcome in January</p> <p>SaLT redesign – joint commissioning and place based. W&amp;F still exploring this.</p> <p>IB shared her thanks and understood the difficult times for ICB staff at the present time. 90 days challenge really interesting – all of us would be interested in the impact of the ND work on the waiting times.</p> <p>SaLT – said approach has been agreed; however, as a partnership we have formally written to Peter saying we can't agree until we have more information re: funding and whether Cumberland and North Yorkshire have been consulted.</p> <p>Lauren was thanked for her updates. There was a lot of information, so if we have any questions once we have seen slides, we will come back to you. Thanks especially for all work and progress on ND pathway.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> Medical needs to be in next agenda.</p> <p>No representative present from NENC ICB to provide an update.</p>
10.	SEND Practice Week Report	<p>CP shared slides giving oversight and review of SEND Practice Week, theme for next Practice Week will be 'Preparation for Adulthood'</p> <p>Board members commented on the positive outcomes of the audit work, and the value of the Annual Review quality assurance session.</p> <p>Draft report was accepted, this will now be formalised and a Learning from Practice bulletin will be developed to be shared with schools and on the Local Offer.</p>
11.	Forward Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEND Sufficiency</li> <li>• HNB and Statutory Override</li> <li>• Managing medical needs in schools</li> </ul>