

WESTMORLAND & FURNESS SEND PARTNERSHIP

Minutes of Meeting

SEND Partnership Board

Date: 19th March 2026 Time: 10:00 – 12:00

Present: Amanda Corcoran (Chair), Janet Arris, Isobel Booter, Peter Chapman, Cllr Janet Battye, Steve Hatton, Lorraine Rudd-Williams, Jason, Habbershon, Gemma Parkes, Catherine Prince, Matt Hardwick, Sarah Powell, Elaine Croll, Lauren Jackson, Amy Holliman (joined 10:45) Lisa Balderston (joined 11:20), Lorna Jones (joined for Item 5), Janet Wray, Rachael Petersson

Apologies: Ann Breeze, Helen Keaveny, Lindsey Ormesher, Richard Scott, Mil Vasic, Sarah Roscoe, Vanessa Wilson, Teresa Regan, Laura Burling, Jen Whittam, Jon Taylor, Helen Howlett, Andrew Horrabin

	Agenda Item	Notes
1.	Welcome and Apologies	Amanda welcomed all colleagues to the meeting and apologies were noted and accepted.
2.	Updates and Actions Review of action tracker from February meeting	<p>Supported Internship Case studies - three to be shared following the meeting, providers have been asked for further case studies and these will be shared when we receive them. Videoing of case studies still outstanding.</p> <p>ACTION: Josie and Vicky (comms) to follow this up and report back at future meeting.</p> <p>Gemma reported that we don't yet have data from this year, but last year 84% of SI cohort progressed to employment, with one progressing onto higher education – a first! This is really strong data, with nearly 6% of the cohort on a SI – one of the highest rates nationally.</p>

		<p>Young Inspector Case Studies – These were circulated prior to the meeting, with board members commenting how professional they were, they clearly highlighted children and young people’s voices and clearly link to Child Friendly W&F initiative.</p> <p>SLIP (School-Led Improvement Partnership) Work – Bedford have been appointed as our SLIP partner, with two outstanding areas of focus being EHCP Quality Assurance and the redesign of the Specialist Advisory Teaching Service. This will further support us with the SEND Reforms and ‘Experts at hand’.</p> <p>All other outstanding actions on today’s agenda. Gemma and Amanda will arrange a separate meeting to discuss outstanding work relating to the dashboard.</p>
3.	<p>Health Updates: LSC ICB NENC ICB</p>	<p>Peter Chapman provided an update regarding the status of the ADHD and Autism diagnostic pathways delivered by Lancashire & South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust (LSCFT). In late January, LSCFT took the decision to pause their current ADHD and Autism pathways, which directly impacts the ADHD offer for South Lakes and Barrow areas of W&F. Following discussions between the ICB and LSCFT, the decision was reversed, and the pathways were reinstated until 31 March while longer-term planning is completed. The pause reflected concerns regarding: demand significantly exceeding system capacity, exceptionally long waiting times, the existing pathway being unsuitable for the current level of need.</p> <p>The longer-term plan remains the development of a single integrated ADHD/Autism pathway across Lancashire and South Cumbria, delivered by a single provider. This forms part of wider neurodevelopmental (ND) system transformation work; however, this will take time due to required co-production, design and commissioning processes.</p> <p>Short-Term Arrangements (from April)</p> <p>Discussions are ongoing between the ICB and LSCFT regarding the preferred option for the service to remain within LSCFT while transformation work continues, agreement is close, but not yet formally signed off. A significant backlog</p>

exists on the waiting list. To address this, the ICB is exploring commissioning additional assessment capacity from either another NHS provider or a private provider. This would apply to families already waiting and would not alter the service's "front door".

Families currently on the LSCFT pathway will be contacted directly by LSCFT, as they hold the patient list. Once the final decision is made, the ICB will issue system wide communications. School reps asked how they should inform families, Peter confirmed they should await formal communication from ICB. Concerns were raised regarding equality across all 5 LAs that the ICB covers, Peter confirmed they were taking a whole population approach, not a geographic one.

The autism navigator model is working well, and the ADHD one is still in development. Plan for hubs to begin being delivered from April, delivered by Spring North. **ACTION**: Full update to be provided at next mtg.

ICB Reforms – ICB required to make 47% reduction in running costs. Significant redundancies taking place, particularly in commissioning, as well as head of service. The interim period whilst the new structure will cause capacity challenges. Elaine Croll (named DCO for W&F) is also leaving at the end of March. Immediate operational risks were acknowledged, and interim arrangements are being prioritised.

Concerns were shared as we previously had 12 months without a DCO.

NENC Update – Janet Arris

Also undergoing a running costs reduction (33% due to previous reforms). The consultation is now complete and a final operating model agreed. Over 100 colleagues leaving through Voluntary Redundancy, but SEND model largely unchanged with Sam Barron remaining as Strategic Head of SEND and the current DCO model continuing.

ACTION: Janet and Peter to collaborate to ensure cross ICB arrangements for consistency.

Janet Wray (NHS England) is also restructuring with SEND's future placement yet unknown. The acknowledgement of system pressures is clear and Janet provided assurance that issues raised locally are escalated to national levels. NHS England has a continued commitment to SEND Improvement.

4.	EHCP Compliance Recovery Plan	<p>EHCP compliance had previously averaged 72% in 2025, well above national levels. A significant drop occurred at the end of 2025, falling to 19.2% in January due to: increased requests, reduced EP capacity due to illness/staff leaving and delays in finalising plans due to extended school consultations.</p> <p>Since then, rapid recovery actions were implemented, including: detailed data analysis, dedicated case co-ordinators for backlog and new requests, triage (up to daily) to speed up ‘decision to assess’ stage, weekly EP deployment meetings, creation of dashboard and review at key decision points within the 20 week process.</p> <p>Compliance is now above 50%, which is above recovery forecasts, and non compliant cases are now reduced to 12. Extension funding for EP locums has been secured and longer term service redesign is being carried out.</p> <p>Increasing SEND/EHCP capacity is adding further financial pressures to the council.</p> <p>School members gave positive feedback on the situation, reporting that communication has improved significantly and this communication further builds trust with schools.</p> <p>ACTION: AC/GP/IB meet to discuss interim solutions despite current financial constraints</p> <p>ACTION: Provide team restructure updates at the next meeting (GP)</p>
5.	Parent Carer Forum Engagement & Development	<p>Laura Burling (Contact Associate) had sent apologies, but had provided the board with a written progress report. Engagement work has taken place, but this is slow and has had impact on only a small number of parent carers/families. This work has also been a challenge with the large rural area that is W&F with not all families using social media. This means we still have no strategic parent carer forum, and is a risk particularly with the new SEND Reforms and the requirement to engage with the parent carer body.</p> <p>The parent participation grant still sits with Contact and the board has written to the DfE to express concerns about the situation and how it was handled by Contact. The DfE have agreed to meet with board members to discuss this.</p> <p>ACTION: CP to circulate letter sent to DfE along with response and confirm meeting date.</p> <p>Positive engagement work is ongoing with our families and CYP, particularly through the work of our SENDIASS Team and the SEND Engagement Officer.</p>

		ACTION: This item to remain as a regular agenda item to ensure continued oversight from Board.
6.	SEND White Paper: Initial Response and Board actions (including consultation)	<p>Gemma and Isobel shared an update to board members regarding SEND Reforms and requirements on LAs to produce a SEND Reform plan.</p> <p>Our highly inclusive, well achieving system means that it will be more challenging to make significant gains, compared to other LAs with less inclusive systems.</p> <p>We have been assigned a SEND Adviser (Teresa Regan) and Financial Adviser (Barry Scarr) to offer us support and challenge within this process.</p> <p>ACTION: To develop a multi-agency working group to produce a shared plan and maturity matrix</p> <p>ACTION: Use the next board meeting (19th May) as a full board review of the (near) final plan.</p>
7.	Forward Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ND reforms update and progress • ADHD waiting list and plans to address this • SEND Reform Plan & Maturity Matrix