

Integrated Care Board

Date of meeting	24 July 2025
Title of paper	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Update
Presented by	Professor Craig Harris Chief Commissioning Officer
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Agenda item	22
Confidential	No

Executive summary

This report provides the board with an update on progress in relation to delivering the improvements required in the recent SEND inspection in Lancashire.

The Priority Action Plan (PAP) has now been signed off and published and an independently chaired Improvement Board established.

Additional resource has been secured for this year to deliver the significant transformation of the Neurodivergent pathway and multi-stakeholder work is underway in delivering this. However, long-term resourcing will need to be considered as part of the ICB's commissioning intentions for 2026/27.

Recommendations

- i. Note the update in progress to deliver improvements following the Lancashire SEND inspection.
- ii. Note the risks identified and mitigations.

Which Strategic Objective/s does the report relate to:		Tick
SO1	Improve quality, including safety, clinical outcomes, and patient experience	✓
SO2	To equalise opportunities and clinical outcomes across the area	✓
SO3	Make working in Lancashire and South Cumbria an attractive and desirable option for existing and potential employees	
SO4	Meet financial targets and deliver improved productivity	
SO5	Meet national and locally determined performance standards and targets	✓
SO6	To develop and implement ambitious, deliverable strategies	✓

Implications

	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Associated risks	✓			See details within report
Are associated risks detailed on the ICB Risk Register?	✓			

Financial Implications	✓			Failure to deliver transformation of the Neurodivergent pathway could see significant increase in Right to Choose Activity
Where paper has been discussed (list other committees/forums that have discussed this paper)				
Meeting	Date		Outcomes	
N/A				
Conflicts of interest associated with this report				
N/A				
Impact assessments				
	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Quality impact assessment completed	✓			
Equality impact assessment completed	✓			
Data privacy impact assessment completed	✓			
Report authorised by: Kathryn Lord, Interim Chief Nursing Officer				

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Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Update

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice (2015) contains the legal requirements and statutory guidance that the ICB and wider health services have a duty to follow for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities. SEND is an area that continues to experience exponential growth. This is a significant challenge, with the lengthy waiting times to access some key health services.
- 1.2. There is a risk on the ICB corporate risk register in respect of delivering SEND statutory requirements. The Lancashire and South Cumbria SEND Oversight Group provides assurance from across the system and regular reporting is in place with the NHSE Regional Team.
- 1.3. The purpose of this report is to provide the Board with an update on the progress in response to the recent outcome of the Westmorland and Furness Local Area SEND inspection and the Lancashire Local Area SEND inspection outcome. This report also provides the current position with regards to Integrated Care Board (ICB) delivery of statutory arrangements. The work is underway with ICB digital team and Hitachi to explore Artificial Intelligence based technology which may create some efficiencies in how the team operates and improves the ICB's internal capacity.

2. Inspection update.

- 2.1 There have been two recent SEND inspections across the ICB footprint; the Lancashire and Westmorland and Furness SEND Partnerships and one is currently underway for Cumberland.
- 2.2 Inspectors determined that in Lancashire there are widespread and/or systemic failings and a Priority Action Plan (PAP) was therefore required alongside an Improvement Board to address these. Inspectors judged that in Westmorland and Furness there were inconsistent experiences and/or outcomes to be responded to within an improvement plan but identified the Neurodivergent (ND) Pathway and the health contribution to Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) process as critical areas for focus.

NeuroDivergent (ND) Pathway Update

- 2.3 The ICB has identified year one funding requirements for the ND pathway transformation across all of Lancashire and South Cumbria. This resource is secured from within existing budgets and work is now underway to redirect that into the ND pathway agenda.

- 2.4 The ICB operates a system wide Neurodivergent Pathway Programme Board to ensure delivery of the transformation and provide scrutiny and oversight of the required improvements. Year one funding will be utilised to support system maintenance, development of a needs-led support offer and management of unmet needs.
- 2.5 Funding to support maintenance of the system has been directed to Blackpool Teaching Hospital to reinstate their high-quality model including robust triage and to Lancashire Teaching Hospital to continue their pathway manager post as well as extend their Speech and Language Therapy contract. Funding has been identified to develop a system-wide approach to reduce waiting lists but this is likely to be reduced to enable support of an alternative pathway following the closure of the LSCFT autism pathway in Central and West Lancashire.
- 2.6 The ICB has identified funding to support roll-out of the Children and Young People's Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Support Service across the whole ICB footprint. Spring North are already commissioned in the East Lancashire and Blackburn with Darwen footprints and have been approached to facilitate roll-out and sourcing of additional funding to maximise potential of the model. Provider marketplace events have already been held and providers have submitted a range of bids to deliver this service which are being considered as part of usual procurement processes.
- 2.7 A tiered approach to sensory support will be developed based on the previous pilot in South Cumbria and current North East North Cumbria model whereby a sensory specialist Occupational Therapy (OT) lead is in place to offer specialist advice and support to practitioners, provide education and training to OTs as part of a targeted offer, and provide specialist management of complex cases as part of MDT meetings. A task & finish group has been stood up to develop this model of support across the footprint.
- 2.8 Five work streams have been established with membership from all partners across the footprint and key objectives outlined. These are Needs-led support; Transformation of the delivery model and waiting list initiative; Upskilling, training and education; Communication and engagement; Digital. Initial meetings will be held in June and July with a view to these continuing on a monthly basis. Each workstream will report into the ND Programme Board and Local Authority Partnership Boards.

EHCP Update

- 2.9 Due to limited capacity, the ICB SEND team remains in Business Continuity and work is underway with ICB digital team and Hitachi to explore AI based technology which may create some efficiencies in how the team operates and improve our internal capacity.
- 2.10 The ICB has a range of functions it must deliver including co-ordination of the health element to EHCP's. The demand of EHCP's has grown significantly over the last 5 years and this has created significant challenges in meeting timescales. Additional resource was identified as being required within the ICB in order to

improve our internal capacity to meet the growth in demand and improve the EHCP process. Due to wider organisational change this resource has not been utilised. The SEND team is currently in business continuity and has adopted a risk prioritisation model to ensure that resources are focused on areas of highest risk and urgency. To support a more robust longer-term pathway work is underway with ICB digital team and Hitachi to explore AI based technology which may create some efficiencies in how the team operates.

- 2.11 The ICB is currently developing a service specification for our lead NHS providers to improve quality and assurance of EHCP and wider SEND responsibility and to ensure there is appropriate governance around this agenda.

3. Emerging Risks

- 3.1 The ICB received formal notification from Lancashire and South Cumbria Foundation Trust on 30th April 2025 of their intention to close the children and young people's autism pathway in the Central and West Lancashire areas to new referrals from 1st June 2025. This pathway has now closed and this has created a short term gap in service offer. The ICB is engaged in discussions with existing locally commissioned providers to source an alternative referral route as an interim arrangement, pending system redesign and the commissioning of a sustainable service. The ICB is also working with the voluntary sector in order to commission some additional support offer for children and families in this footprint.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The ICB along with Lancashire County Council has undertaken the appropriate actions in response to the SEND inspection findings. The ICB has identified the resources required and these are being used as part of a wider transformation of the ND pathway.
- 4.2 There remain capacity issues within the ICB which will impact on our ability to deliver on some of our wider SEND responsibilities. Resource that had been secured has not been able to be utilised due to wider organisational change.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 Note the update in progress to deliver improvements following recent SEND inspections.
- 5.2 Note the risks identified and mitigations.
- 5.3 Note the areas for priority action and improvement required as a result of the area SEND inspections and the in-year commitment of resource in order to deliver the required improvements

Peter Chapman, Lauren Jackson, Gemma Hartley

10 July 2025