

## Nottinghamshire SEND Partnership Improvement Board: November 2024 partner update.

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Partnership Improvement Board has been established to oversee SEND improvement activity across the whole system in Nottinghamshire, with a focus on the priorities and areas for improvements identified in the [Ofsted and CQC inspection report](#). The Board meets every six weeks and is chaired independently by Dame Christine Lenehan, Strategic Advisor for SEND for the Department for Education.

The aim of the Nottinghamshire SEND Improvement Board is to robustly track, monitor and oversee the Nottinghamshire SEND Improvement Programme so that the aims are achieved at pace and provide challenge and support to increase the likelihood of the aims being achieved.

The purpose of these partner briefings is to update you on progress of the SEND Improvement Programme so you can share the work that is taking place via your networks. You can see previous [briefings](#) from Improvement Board meetings from June 2023 onwards.

The most recent Board meeting took place on 11 November which focused on the SEND data dashboard, the communications and engagement plan and the annual engagement meeting with Ofsted and the CQC. The Board meeting began with a tour of Foxwood Academy in Bramcote.

### Partnership progress and assurance

The Board looked at progress on the Priority Action Plan.

Summary of progress for Area for Priority Action 1.

#### **Outcome 1**

- We have refreshed the Stage 1 decision making criteria for new requests for EHC assessments, which is being shared with settings. Testing is now underway and informs wider system review of our graduated response and statutory SEND processes.

#### **Outcome 2**

- Feedback from parents/carers on the annual review process is now available for quarter 2. This is now an established process and will continue to provide metrics.

- The working group has progressed plans to maintain momentum for activities in delay, proposing that elements of outcome 1 and 2 activity is refreshed as part of Local Area Partnership Delivery and Service Improvement Plans.

### Outcome 3

- We have developed new data sets and better centralised reporting mechanisms to allow us to monitor outcomes for children with SEND, who do not have an EHC Plan. This is shared across the Local Area Partnership as part of monthly and quarterly data packs. We also have a new SEND Funding Tracker which will enable us to provide fairer funding to groups of schools who include high numbers of children with SEND from outside of their catchment areas.
- We have developed a new SEND Journey Map which illustrates the complex local processes available to support children and young people with SEND and their families, aged 0-25. This is soon to be published on Notts Help Yourself, alongside the Local Offer.
- We have produced a workforce development training programme for SENDCOs (2024/25), who are also supporting to deliver awareness sessions on the graduated approach to social care colleagues.

The Board were updated on the work done in response to the Ofsted/CQC inspection to date:

- We are getting better at meeting the increased demand for assessments **through the addition of 6 EHC Coordinators** within the ICDS Assessment team and **3 additional Senior Practitioners recruited on a short-term basis**. This additional capacity has helped us to improve our communication and level of service for families.
- Longer-term permission has been granted for **expansion of our Educational Psychology Service establishment** with a commitment to recruit 9 additional FTE EPs and 3 additional Trainee EPs by 2027. All staff have now been appointed.
- **SEND Educational Pathway Officers** are well established (see Outcome 3) and are holding structured conversations to better support decision making at stage 1 of the EHC needs assessment process. Families are further supported as these officers offer a 'next steps' meeting following a 'no to assess' decision to **signpost to appropriate support and ensure needs are met**.
- Commissioning practices have been improved by **strengthening the local decision-making threshold** through the Requests for Specialist Educational Provision (RSEP) governance. Independent providers are invited to outline earlier what provision is available for the following year to support in removing delays for families later in the process.

- We have undertaken a **full operational review of our people processes and systems** within ICDS. Feedback from families have been incorporated around what works and does not work with our processes. We are starting to design changes and develop improvements that will benefit our education settings, parents, carers and young people.
- We have **launched a new EHCP survey and further embed parent/carers feedback** in ongoing processes to monitor and improve the lived experience of the EHCP process.

The Board also heard about what difference this work has made to children and families and how this is measured:

- More Families Receiving EHCPs within timescales - year-to-date in 2024 (as of September) **35% of our children and young people received their EHC Plan within 140 days** compared to the year-end position of 4.5% in 2022.
- Over the last 12 months, **98% of 'priority' plans were issued within the 140-day timescale**. On average, they were issued 7-21 days early. The 2% of plans not issued within 140 days were due to them not being a priority at the point of 'yes to assess' but became a priority several weeks into the process due to changing circumstances. 591 EHC plans that were not 'priority' were issued - 96% were issued within 6 weeks of the yes to plan decision, typically **7-14 days early**.
- There is a **significant increase in the number of educational psychology assessments completed each month**; on average 118 received an assessment in 2024 to date compared to 72 in 2021/22
- School leaders feel **'hopeful' and 'heard'** as part of the ongoing **collaborative engagement work** around supporting inclusive practice in our local education settings. Over 250 school leaders attended 7 in-person events hosted by NCC Education Learning and Inclusion in June-July 2024.
- 43 parents, carers and young people have been **directly involved in shaping our SEND Journey Map**.

Work still need to do:

- **Embed young people, parent/carers feedback** in ongoing processes to monitor understanding, expectation and confidence in the graduated response and inclusive practice.
- **Action improvements identified during school engagement events** through district level meetings. Use locality oversight through District SENCOs and locality-based networks of schools and support services to support oversight of SEN K cohort.

- Use new shared datasets to **track and improve outcomes for our SEN Support Cohort** across the partnership, alongside locality intelligence gathered through district level networks. E.g., academic achievement, school attendance, school inclusion.
- Continue to **develop, improve and embed understanding of the graduated response** via the SEND Journey Map and NottsHelpYourself.
- Improve our **quality assurance arrangements** and **embed learning to improve practice and outcomes.**

Representatives from the special educational needs and disabilities improvement board visited Foxwood Academy in Bramcote this morning to find out more about the school's services.

Summary of progress for Area for Priority Action 2.

The Board were updated on the work done in response to the Ofsted/CQC inspection to date:

- **A SEND Data dashboard has been developed**, bringing together data and intelligence from across the Partnership to enable a better understanding of the local SEND population, to provide oversight and assurance of provision and of experiences and to provide an evidence-base to inform future commissioning intentions. A governance structure to ensure this is utilised and is meaningful has been identified.
- **A system-wide Nottingham and Nottinghamshire SEND Joint Commissioning Strategy has been developed** and approved for publication – this sets out the local area partnership's vision, outcomes and key actions to improve the lived experiences of children and young people with SEND and their families. A governance route for the annual delivery plan to be reviewed has been agreed and new opportunities for joint commissioning will be identified utilising an evidence-based approach through the SEND Data Dashboard and feedback from families, children and young people.
- **Changes have been made in relation to Partnership-held contracts** to ensure that SEND quality and performance is reported against – numerically and in relation to the experiences of children and young people with SEND and their families. Initial reports have been received.

Work done to support neurodevelopmental pathway waiting times:

- **A greater understanding of the pressures on the Neurodevelopmental Support Team (NST)** has allowed us to make tangible change to the ways the service is delivered to meet the recommendations of families, children and young people who have shared their lived experience with the workstream. This will allow for a more positive experience for those currently accessing the

service, or who will access the service in the future. The work has focused on implementing long-term, sustainable change and not short-term temporary impact.

- The work done to date to support the neurodevelopmental pathway has cumulated in **a reduction in average wait times from 68 weeks in December 23 to 54 weeks in September 24 for NST**. The longest wait is currently 121 weeks.
- Since the introduction of opt in waiting well resources and regular newsletters, the service has reported a **significant decrease in telephone contacts to the service** from families enquiring about current wait times indicating that families feel more informed during the wait period.
- As part of the **neurodevelopmental pathway review 17 recommendations** have been identified and will be driven forward to implement change and improvement across 2024/25.
- An extensive review of the neurodevelopmental pathway has led to the recruitment of additional staff to the NST. As a result, **children and families are now experiencing shorter wait times for assessments** - average waiting times have steadily decreased from 68 weeks in December 2023 to 54 weeks in September 2024, in line with the planned trajectory. Based on the current progress, the assessment waiting time is therefore expected to meet the planned trajectory of 50 weeks by the end of December 2024.
- Significant engagement with families, children and young people has informed a broader understanding of the lived experience of people accessing these services. Feedback has resulted in **children and families now being supported** through the introduction of resources to ensure they can wait well along with the introduction of **referral pathway infographics** and **monthly newsletters** providing the latest wait times and resource support information.
- Implementation of the **e-referral process to facilitate direct onward referrals** from NST to Community Paediatrics has commenced, reducing wait times for families and unnecessary GP appointments.
- **Joint case review with CAMHS/NST** has been implemented to ensure the primary need of the child/young person is identified promptly, be it a neurodevelopmental or mental health need. This approach helps prevent the child or young person from being passed between different services, thereby ensuring they receive the appropriate care more efficiently.
- **Young people (17+) transitions to adult's services** we addressed the needs of young people aged 17+ transitioning to adult services. Previously, this cohort couldn't access either Community Paediatrics or the adult service due to their age. This gap in provision has now been addressed and these young people are now transitioned to the adult service at 17+, maintaining their position on the wait list and preventing them from falling to the bottom of the adult service wait list at 18 years and a subsequent extended wait time.

- A **Notts Care Record** access pilot within NST has commenced with phase one giving NST access to GP records speeding up the assessment process and reducing waiting times by eliminating inappropriate or duplicated referrals.
- The **implementation of the Vanderbilt Questionnaire** as part of the pre-assessment process to reduce waits further (impact to be monitored).

What could be done better to support the neurodevelopmental pathway:

- Scoping of the **additional support required to schools' pathway process, reasonable adjustments and education** required in schools for supporting autistic children and young people and those with ADHD.
- The development of the **Children & Young Peoples Neurodevelopmental website "Minds of all Kinds"** to be re-instated following the sourcing of website development provision externally.
- Secure **recurrent funding** to sustain capacity over the long term, supporting an increase in assessments completed each month to reduce wait times ensuring timely access to care and support for families.

What difference has been made to children:

- System partners have worked collaboratively to review all provision. **We now better understand services and have identified commissioning gaps and duplication in service offer.** The **SEND Joint Commissioning Strategy and annual delivery has been developed**, identifying areas for joint commissioning where there has previously been a gap in commissioning or an inefficient model. These areas were identified through a triangulation of feedback from lived experience and data and intelligence.
- **Additional capacity has been added to local SLCN provision** to mitigate against long waiting times and to provide services to support children and young people with SEND, and their families, whilst they wait for access to services (advice line and drop-in sessions).
- **Families identified that sleep support is a key area of need in Nottinghamshire – a service has been commissioned to support this** – this will include training for professionals working with children and young people (with a focus on early years professionals), and an advice line that families can access support.
- **Quality assurance mechanisms have been put in place in local equipment provider services** to ensure families receive equipment that is fit for purpose

- Following feedback from young people having gone through transitions processes **a framework has been developed and is being embedded within Trusts to ensure there is a smooth transition from paediatric to adult services** and as positive experience as possible.

### Data dashboard

The Board were updated on the current data dashboard and capabilities.

The data team are keen to link up information at an individual child level for education, health and social / demographic data.

Data can now be compared for things like elective, A&E attendances, emergency admissions and GP appointments by area, age and deprivation. This is helping to identify any patterns and issues.

The next stage will be to add the education data so issues can be mapped by individual schools.

### Communications and engagement plan

Case study: the Board were presented with a case study showing a family's positive view of their involvement with the Education and Health Care Plan review process.

[Read the case study.](#)

Comms and engagement plan: The Board were presented with the communications in engagement plan, which was updated in July 2024 and approved by the SEND Executive Group.

- This communications and engagement plan includes stories and case studies from people with lived experience, voices of professionals and details about engagement and coproduction work.
- Themes: all the activity in the communications and engagement plan is linked to the outcomes children, young people and families said they wanted as part of the SEND strategy:
  - SEND improvement programme
  - I need to be listened to and heard
  - I need to be the healthiest I can be
  - I need to be safe and feel safe
  - I need to be accepted and valued by people I trust
  - I need to be prepared for my future
  - I need to enjoy life and have fun

- The communications and engagement plan goes up until June 2025 and future activity includes:
  - features on the 0 – 19 service
  - partnership leader blog
  - a day in the life of a SENCO
  - spotlight on preparing for adulthood team
  - a feature with parents involved in the neurodiversity and sleep service coproduction
  - a feature on the speech and language therapy service.

### Annual engagement meeting with Ofsted and the CQC

Ofsted are reviewing the SEND inspection process. This covers the way the inspection is conducted, particularly the interaction with parents. Monitoring visits are currently suspended.

An engagement visit with Ofsted and the CQC will take place on 25 November. The self-assessment will be shared with the Board at the next meeting on 24 January 2025.

Dame Christine Lenehan

Independent Chair of the Nottinghamshire SEND Partnership Improvement Board