

Nottinghamshire SEND Partnership Improvement Board: December 2025 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.

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 4 December which focused on a speech and language update, case studies and governance structure.

Speech and language update

The SEND inspection in 2023 highlighted some concerns around access to speech language and communication needs pathways (SLCN).

The Board were given an overview of the existing SLCN system and the improvement work completed since the 2023 inspection.

Pilot work was commissioned by the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and delivered by Nottinghamshire Healthcare Trust. This included:

- Open access drop-in sessions targeting under 5's and delivering advice and strategies to support
- Some invited group sessions to support those 'waiting well' on the waiting list for specialist services
- An advice line for parents and carers
- A refocus of resource to the autism pathway to directly address long waiting times, including additional capacity that was funded on a non-recurrent basis

This work has supported a small reduction in waiting times across two SLCN pathways and although waiting times have increased slightly for the community pathway, this is less than was projected before the pilot. A marked reduction in the waiting times compared with the projections set following the 2023 inspection was noted.

Post-pilot improvements that NHT are implementing concurrently with the wider system work mentioned below include:

- A reduced offer of drop-in sessions as these have proved popular with particularly good feedback from families feeling supported and empowered.
- Continuation of the advice line – reduced times, focussing on most popular timeslots observed through pilot phase
- Invited group sessions
- Parent education sessions
- 1:1 clinic sessions where clinically necessary
- Starting with ages 2-3 regardless of pathway and expanding approach through the ages, evaluating impact continuously.
- Full implementation expected by Q2 of 2026/27

The Board heard about the wider system-level work underway, recognising that the specialist service funded and delivered by health partners was not sufficient in isolation to support the full range of young people's speech, language and communication needs. For example, a key issue identified through the improvement work was the targeted level offer for school aged children, which is currently mostly covered by schools themselves. It was noted that this gap in the community has meant that the specialist service is picking up some of the demand in that area, which is thought to be contributing to long waits for the service.

A system-wide workshop took place in September to consider the current offer and identify priorities for system partners to collaborate on to improve experience and outcomes for young people followed by 20 task and finish groups focussing on working up the detail behind the five priorities. A further workshop took place in November to collate the work of the groups and to conduct a 'child at the centre' exercise to better understand the experience from the young person's perspective. Further task and finish groups are now meeting, based around refined priorities and key actions, to formulate an options paper setting out potential options for system-level improvement for consideration in December. The preferred option will then be taken through individual organisational governance, hopefully in March 2026 with costed plans and recommendations for the future. If you are interested in being involved in this work and the next iteration of the options, please email maria.smith1@nhs.net for more information.

An update will be provided at a future meeting in April 2026.

Communications update

SLCN case study:

The Board were shown a case study video featuring Charles, who has received speech and language therapy.

At the age of two, Charles had limited speech which led to his mum feeling concerned. But local support from Nottinghamshire Healthcare's Speech and Language team has made a huge difference.

Tania Wallace, Speech and Language Therapist, conducted home visits and introduced different strategies for the family to try with Charles. These included coaching his parents to create opportunities for him to use words - rather than filling in the words for him or fetching the things he pointed to.

Charles's mum Amy said: "Tania was fantastic with her support – the skills she gave us to help Charles have made such a difference. He's made fantastic progress and we now know how we can help him to continue to progress going forwards."

[Find out more](#)

Neurodevelopmental support groups case study:

The Board were also presented with some positive quotes from parents who have benefited from neurodevelopmental support groups, including the 'Time for Us' group, run by [A Place To Call Our Own \(APTCOO\) in Bassetlaw](#).

Time for Us is designed by parents and carers, for parents and carers and led by parents and carers themselves. Parents and carers receive a warm welcome, in a safe environment to share experiences to feel less lonely and in a place that they belong. The group meets fortnightly during term-time.

Quotes from parents:

"APTCOO literally saved my life. I was so low and felt like I was by myself dealing with it. Since I discovered APTCOO, I've made some amazing friends and feel I've got an extended family! We have tears but mostly laughter. The advice has been amazing! Also, my children absolutely adore going to the holiday sessions and the Monday night group. They love the staff and I feel safe leaving them there on their own." Kelly Jackson

"APTCOO is a safe space where I can share the highs and lows of parenting a neurodiverse child without feeling judged when I say it's hard." Nat Martin

"APTCOO is a welcoming non-judgemental space where I can share what's happening in our family without judgement. The support received is always reciprocated and I'd be lost without everyone there." Bev Ramsbotham

Governance discussion

The Board discussed the future governance of the SEND Partnership. It was agreed that the SEND Board would continue until the end of 2025/26. The SEND Board was originally set up as a time-limited Board following the SEND inspection in 2023.

From April 2026, there will be quarterly meetings of the SEND Executive Leadership Group, which will be supported by the Partnership Assurance and Improvement

Group. These groups will continue to hear the voices and experiences of families and will focus on addressing gaps, waiting times and quality; workforce and systems development; transitions; and inclusive practice.

Dame Christine Lenehan
Independent Chair of the Nottinghamshire SEND Partnership Improvement Board