

Nottinghamshire SEND Partnership Improvement Board: 24 April 2024 stakeholder update.

The 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 monthly and is chaired independently by Dame Christine Lenehan, Strategic Advisor for the National Children's Bureau and formerly Director Council for Disabled Children.

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 stakeholder 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 [stakeholder briefings](#) from Improvement Board meetings from June 2023 onwards.

The most recent Board meeting took place on 24 April which focused on the deep dive and communications and engagement plan.

Feedback from the Nottinghamshire SEND deep dive

Representatives from the Department for Education provided feedback on the recent deep dive into the improvement programme. The deep dive looked into the operational activity and included a session with parent and carer representatives.

The deep dive found the following areas of progress:

- Positive progress is being made against both priorities 1 and 2, strengthened by the Local Area Partnership (LAP) 'reset' and 'restructure' of the SEND Improvement Programme. The partnership has adopted an outcome-based approach, creating six working groups to deliver SEND improvements. A new governance structure has also been introduced to boost oversight and assurance.
- Additional investment in resource has increased improvements with Education, Health and Care needs assessments and the 20-week timeliness. Complaints have also reduced. Leaders have committed funding over the next five years to ensure sustainability of SEND improvements.

- The new SEND Pathway Officers are supporting improvements in communication between families and settings to promote the right support, right time, right place.
- An extensive review of the children and young people neurodevelopmental pathway (Neurodevelopmental Support Team (NST)) is in progress and is on track to be completed by the end of March 2024. NST waiting times for parental workshops have reduced so there is no longer a waiting list. An opt-in process has been introduced to enable families' quicker access to workshops via self-referral.
- Increased capacity with additional non-recurrent funding and efficiencies in processes have resulted in a reduction in processing times between referral and triage.
- The LAP has introduced onward referral to the adult Neurodevelopmental Specialist Service (NeSS) for 17 year olds awaiting an assessment with NST. Young people are being placed at the same position on the NeSS waiting list, when transferred from the NST waiting list, reducing their overall waiting time for assessment.
- Since establishing more effective use of data, leaders have identified children and young people have access to Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy provision within 18 weeks.
- Stronger partnerships are working to enhance outcomes for children and young people and families, including linking with local family hubs to provide the right support at the right time.
- The partnership continues to explore new ways to build stronger relationships with families, with some examples of positive family feedback. For example, SEND Strategy engagement events and the introduction of the new Parent Reference Group to ascertain wider family perspectives to shape and co-produce ongoing SEND improvements. This is in addition to a Co-production Officer role established in Nottinghamshire County Council.
- Local area partners have a data sharing agreement in place to access and utilise data effectively to understand the needs of children and young people, monitor performance and explore ways to capture impact. Work is ongoing to develop a joint commissioning strategy based upon robust data, which enhances strategic decision making based upon needs of local children and young people with SEND.
- There has been a range of improvements, including resolving challenges of access to specialist equipment, introducing a proforma to ensure all equipment is checked and complete before being distributed to families.

Areas for improvement:

- Social Care should be more engaged with the local area SEND improvement plan. Similarly, wider education settings should also be more engaged with the improvements to ensure active participation of annual reviews and the multi-agency quality assurance framework. **Recommendation** - this needs to be developed further across the LAP to enhance improvements, including

having the right representation within the relevant outcome working groups. A Designated Social Care Officer role would also strengthen social care representation.

- New Governance structures need to be fully embedded with all partners to ensure operational and strategic leaders and colleagues are aware of the processes as some professionals were not aware of recent changes. **Recommendation** - share governance structure overview with all group/board members.
- Partners told us that reporting requests are time consuming and are impacting workload pressures. In some cases, there is a lack of internal challenge and scrutiny around risk reporting. **Recommendation** - explore options to make reporting more succinct, whilst ensuring constructive support and challenge across the partnership help to deliver the SEND improvement plan.
- Families told us that communication remains an ongoing issue with many reporting they often must be the conduit between different services and would prefer a more holistic approach. In addition, some families find it difficult to navigate the local SEND system. For example, families being signposted by other parents/carers to available services and where to find relevant information. Frustration is compounded by long waiting times, particularly for SALT, ICDS, community paediatrics and CAMHS. Some families reported they need to reach crisis before being able to access support services. Families reported they do not feel 'heard' and often told that the solution is a parenting course, which does not always provide the support needed or address gaps in skills and competency of the workforce. **Recommendation** – create a robust LAP communication and engagement strategy to support engagement with wider parent groups, young people, and system workforce. Gather feedback from families at service level and monitor service performance to continue addressing required improvements. Consider the way parenting courses are being offered and the association for families who can feel like they are failing at being parents. Ensure there is a consistent SEND training offer across the partnership.
- Operational workforce resilience has been impacted, with a sense that some staff are reaching breaking point. Due to the volume of improvement work required, concerns were raised that this may affect recruitment, retention, and sickness. In addition, neighbouring areas are offering competitive salaries, intensifying the risk further. **Recommendation** - introduce a LAP workforce risk register, which will ensure leaders remain aware of the risks and actions to be taken as appropriate. Consider options to acknowledge and celebrate the hard work and commitment of the workforce.
- Family feedback and the impact of provision needs to be captured and reported more consistently and efficiently. **Recommendation** - explore additional reporting mechanisms, such as the use of story boards to illustrate change and impact. This will help the LAP to measure success and progress.

[Council for Disabled Children report](#)

The local area has been developing the SEND Strategy since autumn 2023 and has been supported by the Research and Improvement for SEND Excellence (RISE) Partnership. The local area has already approved six outcomes for children and young people with SEND in Nottinghamshire. These outcomes will be the focus of the new SEND strategy and its delivery plan, which will be published by the end of June 2024.

The [RISE partnership has published a report](#) on its work with the local area in Nottinghamshire.

[Partnership progress and assurance from SEND executive leadership group](#)

The Board were presented with an exception report overview showing three areas that are currently experiencing obstacles and the mitigating actions to address these:

- Improve the quality and timeliness of advice received for Education and Health Care Plans from health and social care partners.
- Identify, validate and understand baseline data with regards to patient experience to support growth in information intelligence (e.g. complaints, compliments)
- Agree baseline, trajectory and recovery plans and monitoring performance measures around waiting times for assessment by therapy services.

The risk register exceptions will be brought back once a quarter.

[Communications update](#)

The Board were presented with a communications and engagement timeline and plans to mark the anniversary of one year since the SEND inspection report was published in May 2023.

Board members discussed additional ideas for the one year on communications, which communication leads will take forward into their planning.

There has also been a range of engagement work taking place over the past year including seven roadshows involving hundreds of stakeholders, the establishment of the Parent Carer Reference Group, the RISE work and surveys with families and professionals. The work that Pathway Plan Officers are doing to link between families and settings is also having a positive impact. The results of this engagement work are now making a difference to the way services are provided. For example, following feedback from families regarding lack of communication around wait times for the neurodevelopmental service, a monthly newsletter for families has been

developed which is sent out with the waiting well information. The Board are keen to see some of these positive changes communicated to families.

There was also a strong commitment from the Board to improve communications with families who are receiving services or on the waiting list. It was recognised that all staff working in the SEND system had a role to play in this.