

West Northamptonshire Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Partnership Improvement Board Summary

23 May 2025

Item 1: Minutes and action log

The minutes from the previous meeting was approved without changes. The action log was updated.

The partnership approach focuses on how to meet high levels of need in the local SEND community by focusing scarce specialist resources and ensuring families get effective support through targeted and universal services.

Item 2: Update from West Northants Voices in Partnership (WNVP)

There was a recognition that the long standing issues raised by families continue to be a concern.

April and May were relatively quiet, though concerns remain around adult social care transitions, historic Education, Health and Care (EHC) delays, vaccination checks in health reviews, and misinformation on Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) waiting lists, with some progress noted in welfare support and communication efforts.

Concerns were raised about social model of disability and legal protections for undiagnosed young people once they reach adulthood, alongside safeguarding feedback handling, national policy uncertainty causing parental anxiety, and a sharp rise in Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) requests revealing systemic pressures and a disconnect between family and school.

Item 3: Review of workstreams

Partnership and Leadership

Workstream remains amber due to ongoing pressures. Key documents; Joint Commissioning Strategy and Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) are now ready for submission in Health and Wellbeing Board.

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)

The JSNA, endorsed for submission, highlights rising demand and recommends improvements in early identification, EHCP timeliness, health wait times, joint commissioning, capacity, and data quality, with calls for clearer alignment with existing strategies, a defined review cycle, future demand projections, and confirmed leadership for implementation. These are all areas that are being addressed through existing workstreams.

Joint Commissioning Strategy

The Joint Commissioning Strategy, endorsed for submission, sets out a shared vision and priorities for the next year, focusing on assessing service capacity, embedding integrated commissioning, and ensuring quality assurance, with a dynamic, annually refreshed approach and a detailed action plan due by July.

Short Breaks

The short breaks service, commissioned in November 2024, faced repeated suspensions due to staffing and regulatory issues, affecting 13 children, with an audit ongoing and strong partnership support praised for its collaborative response.

Right Support, Right Place, Right Time

A deep dive into Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) highlighted progress in services aligned with the Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability, Engagement (THRIVE) model, ongoing challenges in acute care, and efforts to address the ASD/ADHD backlog, with a business case launched and a broader strategy in development, while concerns around interim support, communication clarity, and equitable access prompted actions to consolidate available services, improve prioritisation, and coordinate updates for future board meetings.

Timeliness and Quality of Assessment and EHCPs

Plans to clear the EHCP backlog are underway with 278 cases assigned to review teams, supported by the JADU system rollout and a new policy prioritising children in care, while improvements in annual reviews, QA processes, and data systems are progressing despite temporary capacity pressures, with further updates and funding considerations in development.

Transition and Preparation for Adulthood

Despite strong engagement, it has been agreed that the workstream needs a restructure into two separate strands: one focuses on educational transitions and two on post-18 pathways with new targets and outcomes being developed and formalised for board approval.

Item 4: Items for board consideration

Prioritisation Criteria – The prioritisation criteria offer potential for integrated support for those Children and Young People (CYP) with greatest need or those at greatest risk.

Communication plan – The plan covers activities through December 2025, will be re-presented at the next board to align with the updated programme plan and incorporate full partnership input.

Item 5: Risk log

The board discussed the importance of maintaining a live risk log that reflects emerging structural and policy changes in the SEND, education and wider National Health Service (NHS) sectors, with agreement to include these as formal risks to support mitigation planning.