

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

27 March 2025

Item 1: Minutes and action log

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

Progress on the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) pathway, interim arrangements with Northampton General Hospital (NGH), and commissioning had been slower than expected, but significant momentum had been gained recently with NGH identifying a provider for those cases that were already started, The board sought clarity from the Integrated Care Board (ICB) about plans to re-instate the Primary age pathway by NGH. The importance of prioritising the outstanding, addressing data sharing obstacles, and developing a robust recovery plan to manage the backlog and continuous demand for ASD/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) assessments was emphasised.

Three business cases are being developed by ICB, with the main case for clearing the backlog, and future investment in addressing the wider ASD/ADHD backlog as part of a larger business case within the Community Paediatric Review.

Item 2: Review of key performance indicators

The data matching progress was highlighted but challenges in finalising the data set. Plans to integrate key performance indicators into a Power BI scorecard, with ongoing governance work to ensure security, were discussed, with a timeline for sharing the interactive dashboard set for May.

Item 3: Update from WNVP

Issues with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), transitions from children's to adult social care, and disparities in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service

(CAMHS) services were highlighted, noting variability in family experiences. The high demand for EHCPs was linked to school admissions, suggesting a review of admissions criteria for children on the SEND register. The need for schools to cater to different children, improve inclusivity, and address transition issues was emphasised, along with incorporating parental feedback into joint training and exploring additional transition training opportunities.

Item 4: Review of workstreams

Partnership and Leadership

Joint commissioning strategy and Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) were confirmed to be completed and are planned to be tabled at the May board. Gaps in the data were being addressed, and data sharing protocol timeline was extended to June to ensure a realistic and achievable plan.

Right Support, Right Place, Right Time

Focus on ASD/ADHD, emphasising realistic timelines and trajectories, with progress in standardising data for CAMHS and SALT services, aiming to extend this to ASD/ADHD pathways for under-11s. Risks related to data quality, standardisation, and commissioning delays at NGH were addressed. The importance of clarity around trajectories for major areas such as Neuro-Developmental Disorder (NDD) pathways, Speech and Language Therapy (SALT), and CAMHS, and accountability in delivering against them was reiterated, along with actions taken behind the scenes.

Timeliness and Quality of Assessment and EHCPs

Focus on the 20-week process, mapping challenges and barriers to improve efficiency through a new case management system, resulting in a 50% increase in EHCP production and significant progress in reducing outstanding of annual reviews. A new phase transfer process and a quality assurance framework are being developed. 10-week panel is being introduced to improve timeliness of advice contribution and communication among key partners.

Transition and Preparation for Adulthood

Data discussions are ongoing with concerns around identifiable data being escalated to better target young people. The focus has been on engaging more employers and developing post-school opportunities for children and young people, highlighted by a

successful event hosted by Barclays, where local employers were encouraged to create more opportunities for young people with neurodiversity.

Item 5: Deliverables

Part F SALT provision: Recruitment for the Part F SALT provision had commenced with most positions filled. The formal launch of the provision was anticipated for September with some planning and delivery starting from May.

New Mental Health navigation tools for Children and Young People (CYP) and professionals: Update was pending but was noted for next month's milestones. Clear messages to young people and families regarding additional SALT funding and assessments was needed, with communications to be reviewed for clarity and transparency. Concerns were raised about communication to parents of children with EHCPs regarding access to SALT, and actions were planned to address this.

Item 6: Items for board consideration

Communication strategy and plan: The communication strategy was approved by the board with minor amendments. Suggestions included inviting a communication officer to future meetings, standardising communication themes across the partnership, and involving WNVP to ensure clarity. Local offer is expected to be used as a main platform for communication.

School engagement: It was agreed for the education representatives to communicate to education providers about the discussions of the board, aiming to ensure effective feedback collection from schools.

ICB update: Significant policy changes are expected over the next 18 months to 2 years. The Sleep service, jointly commissioned with Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT), has been re-procured and will resume on 1st April, while Short breaks have partially reopened. Actions were planned to discuss the Sleep service's legal constraints and improve communication and co-production processes.

Item 7: Summary

Reflections on the meeting highlighted the importance of discussing key risks and ensuring effective board operations. Progress was acknowledged, despite occasional lapses, with encouragement to stay focused on foundational work. The growing trust and openness in meetings were noted as positive, along with satisfaction with reporting quality.