SEND partnership assessment — gaps and improvement priorities

Pillar 1: Co-production with parents and carers and children and young people

Gap or issue	SJ workstream: gap or issue	Improvement priority or support need	SJ workstream: priority or support need
Schools' use of co-production materials is variable and they have struggled to participate in workshops. Not all schools and partners are familiar with the Together/HAPI principles; some schools experience co-production as not reciprocal and have limited capacity to attend sessions.	WS6: Coproduction, comms and engagement	Fully embed co-production principles, standards and methodology across all services and governance.	WS6: Coproduction, comms and engagement
Parents feel interaction with schools is not always strong or meaningful, and report that they would like to see more proactive and facilitative communication with education settings.	WS6: Coproduction, comms and engagement	(as above)	WS6: Coproduction, comms and engagement
Parents and carers share they experience inconsistent co-production practice across services; this is not yet embedded as core practice.	WS6: Coproduction, comms and engagement	(as above)	WS6: Coproduction, comms and engagement
Jigsaw SEND Youth Forum currently only represents small numbers / a small voice, and wider representation of CYP and parents from across the borough, and with all types of SEND needs, is needed.	WS6: Coproduction, comms and engagement	Expand engagement reach: targeted activity with less represented CYP, parents and communities.	WS6: Coproduction, comms and engagement
Communication can be one-way; clearer feedback loops are needed in communities. There are gaps in “you said, we did" and feedback loops with CYP and parents are not consistently closed, especially after strategic meetings. Parents report there is a lack of clear measurement of the impact of parental voice.	WS6: Coproduction, comms and engagement	Strengthen systematic feedback loops (“you said, we did”) across all projects.	WS6: Coproduction, comms and engagement

Communication can be reactive, particularly during assessments/reviews; SEND team capacity limits timely updates.	WS2b: Identification and Assessment	Improve communication and participation during assessments and reviews through redesigned workflow and service efficiency improvements. Revise paperwork for plans and reviews to ensure it facilitates active particiation of children, youmg people and their families.	WS2b: Identification and Assessment
Awareness and use of the Local Offer for SEND varies, with children and young people least aware.	WS6: Coproduction, comms and engagement	Refresh Local Offer content and promote significantly across schools, settings and communities.	WS6: Coproduction, comms and engagement
Parents share there is imited use of alternative communication methods for engagement.	WS6: Coproduction, comms and engagement	Introduce more accessible and creative communication approaches (e.g. video, social media, varied formats) and feedback loops to demonstrate impact	WS6: Coproduction, comms and engagement

Pillar 2 :Effective system leadership and governance

Gap or issue	SJ workstream: gap or issue	Improvement priority or support need	SJ workstream: priority or support need
Fully establish the new governance arrangements with clear terms of reference and levels of authority for decision making. Clarity needed on levels of sign-off and which decisions require board approval.	WS1: Vision, Leadership and Governance	Define governance route and decision thresholds, complete ToRs with co-production and communications; map accountability and ownership.	WS1: Vision, Leadership and Governance
Ensure that the governance arrangements are able to hold partners to account, and that both current performance and future plans are kept under review.	WS1: Vision, Leadership and Governance	Reframe DSG plan with realistic actions tied to place growth (including post-16); reduce reliance on reactive crisis management.	WS1: Vision, Leadership and Governance
Ensure that Cheshire East has a clear focus on improving outcomes for its children and young people with SEND, and an agreed set of metrics against which to measure progress.	WS2a: Information and Intelligence	Improve integration of board oversight with operational performance and budget decision making.	WS1: Vision, Leadership and Governance
Improve data quality and its use across the partnership.	WS2a: Information and Intelligence	Recruit specialist data, QA and impact role to strengthen performance and evidence base.	WS2a: Information and Intelligence
Continue to expand engagement across providers; facilitate the involvement of all education settings.	WS1: Vision, Leadership and Governance	Embed co-production in all governance structures with standing items in project groups.	WS1: Vision, Leadership and Governance
		Launch and embed renewed Education Partnership (Heads and CEOs) linked directly to strategic priorities.	WS1: Vision, Leadership and Governance
Establish effective commissioning across education, health and social care.	WS4b: Resources - Commissioning	Develop joint commissioning strategy and expand Children's Services commissioning capacity.	WS4b: Resources - Commissioning

Understand the workforce and develop an agreed development strategy and plan.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning		

Pillar 3 : Accurate understanding and Anticipating Need (Data and Intelligence)

Gap or issue	SJ workstream: gap or issue	Improvement priority or support need	SJ workstream: priority or support need
Whilst data is gathered and analysed in various parts of the system, there is no shared data set, thus there is a lack of a single authoritative narrative across the partnership. Data infrastructure is underdeveloped.	WS2a: Information and Intelligence	Build a shared outcomes framework and associated data set and narrative, and co-produce key metrics and feedback loops with PCF and youth forums to integrate lived experience. Prioritise and strengthen data capacity and analytical tooling, with agreed reporting cycles.	WS2a: Information and Intelligence
Qualitative evidence and feedback loops are not integrated into datasets.	WS6: Coproduction, comms and engagement	Build a shared, integrated dataset and narrative for needs, demand and sufficiency planning. Agree realistic timelines and QA processes for reporting and sufficiency planning.	WS4a: Resources - Sufficiency
As above		Embed multi-agency QA and audit to ensure data quality and comparability.	WS2a: Information and Intelligence
Variability in SEND registers reduces strategic clarity and reliability of needs analysis to inform planning.	WS2a: Information and Intelligence	Develop shared LA–school data dashboards within the Inclusion Framework.	WS2a: Information and Intelligence
Data processes are not consistent between health, social care and education.	WS2a: Information and Intelligence	Refresh templates for partnership advice (health, social care, education) to improve quality of information flow.	WS2b: Identification and Assessment
Service delivery metrics assist with understanding of performance, but do not give an accurate picture of need.	WS2a: Information and Intelligence	Improve consultation and transparency around commissioning.	WS4b: Resources - Commissioning

Pillar 4: High quality service delivery at universal, targeted and specialist levels to promote inclusion

Gap or issue	SJ workstream: gap or issue	Improvement priority or support need	SJ workstream: priority or support need

Funding constraints; services need to model and deliver direct work in schools.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning	Develop consistent direct in school practice models for specialist services.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning
Definitions of Alternative Provision (AP) use, entry routes and monitoring vary, and there are gaps in AP commissioning, with reliance on independent sector. Limited evidence base for AP effectiveness. Definition and use of AP and the “front door” require clarity.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning	Define AP purpose, access and the “front door”. Strengthen AP monitoring, guidance, and commissioning frameworks.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning
Inconsistency across LAs on accepting private reports;	WS2b: Identification and Assessment	Publish guidance on private reports and thresholds (private reports guidance already shared by DCO).	WS2b: Identification and Assessment
implementation of ND tools/pathways still in progress;	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning	Complete implementation of ND tools and pathways, including roll out and embedding of the new profiling tool; model direct in-school practice.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning
gaps in capturing lived experience;	WS6: Coproduction, comms and engagement	Embed systematic collection of lived experience to inform QA and commissioning.	WS6: Coproduction, comms and engagement
challenges around number and focus of commissions.	WS4b: Resources - Commissioning	As above	
Social care advice for EHCPs inconsistent and not routinely QA’d.	WS2b: Identification and Assessment		
Lack of early years SaLT capacity (noted especially by EY settings). ND assessment and SALT/OT waits affecting timely intervention.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning	Upskilling across all health teams in SEND (rolling programme of SEND training already in place for NHS across the ICB).	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning
Inconsistent specialist offers and provisions across schools.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning	Implement single access point and triage for specialist outreach.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning
Inclusion practice inconsistent across mainstream schools.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning	Refresh graduated approach and Inclusion Toolkit with clear, accessible pathways.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning
Some schools experience lack of clarity on graduated approach.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning	As above	
Every school needs a named contact for PCF escalation.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning	Ensure each school has a named PCF contact.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning
High mediation/complaint levels.	WS6: Coproduction, comms and engagement		

Pillar 5: Effective Partnership working across education, health and social care			
Pillar 5 is organised into three service groups below.			
Education providers			
Gap or issue	**SJ workstream: gap or issue**	**Improvement priority or support need**	**SJ workstream: priority or support need**
Co-production is not consistently embedded across all agencies and is inconsistent with families.	WS6: Coproduction, comms and engagement	Strengthen joint commissioning and feedback pathways with ICB and LA,	WS4b: Resources - Commissioning
As above		and strengthen youth forums.	WS6: Coproduction, comms and engagement
Inconsistent and insufficient transition information sharing between early years → primary → secondary → post 16.	WS5: Transitions and PfA	Standardise transition information flows and embed shared processes.	WS5: Transitions and PfA
Approaches to exclusion, suspension and early intervention vary. Engagement is variable across providers and service lines.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning	Review and embed fair access protocols and expand participation of AP, post-16 and early years partners.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning
Inconsistent AP commissioning and quality monitoring.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning	Strengthen AP commissing and quality assurance and ensure a consistent AP offer across schools.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning
Timeliness issues (EHCPs, decisions, updates, annual reviews). Quality and timeliness of multi-agency advice varies (EP, SALT, social care).	WS2b: Identification and Assessment	Improve timeliness and consistency of statutory processes.	WS2b: Identification and Assessment
Data infrastructure issues shared with schools: lack of alignment, lack of updates.	WS2a: Information and Intelligence	Encourage all education settings to engage with existing cluster arrangements.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning
Schools unclear on how to support medical and health needs.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning	As above?	
Not all schools understand the “Team Around the School” model or how to access support.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning	As above?	
Gaps in speech and language delivery.	WS4b: Resources - Commissioning		

ND pathway waits create pressure across partners.	WS4b: Resources - Commissioning		
Health services			
Gap or issue	**SJ workstream: gap or issue**	**Improvement priority or support need**	**SJ workstream: priority or support need**
Not all health/medical needs guidance for schools is clear or consistently communicated.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning	Revise and recirculate medical needs guidance for education settings.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning
Joint commissioning underdeveloped; health data sharing inconsistent.	WS4b: Resources - Commissioning	Strengthen joint commissioning and feedback pathways with ICB and LA,	WS4b: Resources - Commissioning
Co-production not consistently embedded across all agencies.	WS6: Coproduction, comms and engagement	and strengthen youth forums.	WS6: Coproduction, comms and engagement
As above		Improve health data completeness.	WS2a: Information and Intelligence
Quality and timeliness of multi-agency advice varies.	WS2b: Identification and Assessment	Improve partnership QA of advice.	WS2b: Identification and Assessment
		Review funding bands in partnership with health and education settings.	WS2b: Identification and Assessment
Gaps in speech and language delivery.	WS4b: Resources - Commissioning		
ND pathway waits create pressure across partners.	WS4b: Resources - Commissioning		
Social Care / Local Authority			
Gap or issue	**SJ workstream: gap or issue**	**Improvement priority or support need**	**SJ workstream: priority or support need**
Training and support needs for joint working are not fully assessed and understood.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning	Strengthen joint commissioning with ICB and social care partners.	WS4b: Resources - Commissioning
As above		Revisit expectations in terms of joint working with children, young people and families.	WS6: Coproduction, comms and engagement
Quality and timeliness of multi-agency advice varies (EP, SALT, social care).	WS2b: Identification and Assessment	Develop Social Care Reference Group and embed DSCO role across all teams.	WS2b: Identification and Assessment

Pillar 6: Skilled and organised workforce across local authority, education settings, health and social care

Gap or issue	SJ workstream: gap or issue	Improvement priority or support need	SJ workstream: priority or support need
Workforce mapping required across all areas.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning	Complete workforce mapping and multi-agency TNA.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning
Training needs analysis (TNA) outstanding. Inconsistent training uptake across the borough.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning	Develop a co-ordinated, multi-agency CPD plan incorporating lived experience. Ensure training includes universal, targeted, and specialist tiers. Increase joint training opportunities across agencies. Include TAs and support staff in training planning.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning
As above		Implement training programme for EHCP quality (“Stronger Plans”) and shared standards.	WS2b: Identification and Assessment
Recruitment and retention challenges across health, social care, early years and education. Staff retention issues reduce the benefit of training in some settings.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning	Strengthen workforce capacity planning (EP, SALT, therapy services); develop a capacity plan (including EP and SALT supply)	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning
SENCO capacity/time constraints limit strategic contribution.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning	and address SENCO release time.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning
Smaller schools struggle with capacity to release staff for training.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning	Relaunch SENCO networks, and allocate time for SENCO development and networks to influence strategy.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning
EP backlog causing system delays and limiting early intervention.	WS2b: Identification and Assessment		
QA of social care advice and multi-agency consistency not yet embedded.	WS2b: Identification and Assessment	Embed manager led QA and shared standards across partners.	WS2b: Identification and Assessment
		Develop AP service overview to show which schools engage with which provisions.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning

Pillar 7: Targeted and judicious use of resources including place planning, sufficiency and use of capital

Gap or issue	SJ workstream: gap or issue	Improvement priority or support need	SJ workstream: priority or support need
Post-16 sufficiency gaps identified; capital allocation not aligned to needs. Need better data to drive sufficiency priorities and close the loop from audits. Stakeholder input not always embedded in service adjustments.	WS4a: Resources - Sufficiency	Undertake thorough needs analysis based on existing data and projections.	WS4a: Resources - Sufficiency
High reliance on independent sector placements with escalating costs.	WS4a: Resources - Sufficiency	Develop sufficiency strategy with balanced mainstream, RP, unit and specialist growth, including post 16 provision.	WS4a: Resources - Sufficiency
Resource provisions small and static with limited or inconsistent review.	WS4a: Resources - Sufficiency	As above	
Lack of regular monitoring structures.	WS4b: Resources - Commissioning	As above?	
As above		Strengthen data to support place planning.	WS4a: Resources - Sufficiency
Insufficient and uneven distribution of mainstream SEND support / EMP funding.	WS4a: Resources - Sufficiency	Create equitable funding stream to replace EMP model.	WS4a: Resources - Sufficiency
Lack of dataset for part-time timetables and limited data to inform their use; need a strategy to move from reactive to proactive planning.	WS2a: Information and Intelligence	Build dataset for part time timetables and embed system-wide review.	WS2a: Information and Intelligence
Limited return-on-investment (ROI) analysis / insufficient deep dives on investments; stronger ROI focus needed to guide commissioning.	WS4b: Resources - Commissioning	Implement ROI measures and audit feedback loop to inform commissioning.	WS4b: Resources - Commissioning
Underdeveloped joint and aligned commissioning arrangements and a need to refresh strategic intent and direction.	WS4b: Resources - Commissioning	Establish joint commissioning arrangements as part of SEND governance to refresh strategic intent and key deliverables.	WS4b: Resources - Commissioning
ICB running cost reductions programme may lead to reduced capacity, a shift towards strategic commissioning only and delays or reduced bandwidth for joint projects.	WS4b: Resources - Commissioning		
Inconsistent AP entry criteria.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning	Define AP purpose, access routes and monitoring framework.	WS3: Meeting needs, delivery and workforce planning

		Improve stability of locality managers.	WS2b: Identification and Assessment