

Southend Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Partnership Strategy 2021 - 2024



**Helping children and young people in Southend to
thrive and be happy**

1. Foreword

Welcome to the Southend Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Partnership Strategy for children and young people aged 0-25 for the period 2021 - 2024

The Southend SEND partnership is ambitious for all children and young people in the borough and this is reflected in our aspirations for children and young people with SEND. Our vision is for all children and young people to thrive and be happy in communities where families and services work together to help them achieve their potential and fulfil their dreams.

Through this strategy we will positively raise the profile of SEND, so our community understands that every child is unique and the only thing that is normal is difference.

We want children and young people to be at the centre and not at the margins. Our partnership values underpin our vision, we recognise that children and young people with SEND require additional support and a strong local partnership to help them achieve this shared vision.

This SEND Partnership strategy outlines our five key priorities, which ensure we continue to improve the lived experiences of children and young people with SEND and their families. The Strategy further develops existing work and ensures continuous improvement of the SEND offer.

Our Strategy will help signpost to a clearly defined, easily navigated, open transparent SEND system focussing on outcomes that make a real and measurable impact on the lives of the children and young people with SEND. Together we are ambitious about raising aspirations and improving outcomes through high quality local opportunities and services whilst maintaining a focus on resilience and independence towards a successful transition into adulthood and beyond.

2. Overview

What are special educational needs and disabilities?

A child or young person has SEND if they have a learning difficulty or a physical or mental impairment which has a long-term and substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

This is a combined definition from the The Children and Families Act 2014 and the Equality Act 2010 and the Southend SEND Partnership has responsibilities and statutory duties to ensure that a child or young person has the support they need.

We asked our children and young people what does having SEND actually mean for you?

“People judge before getting to know you”

“It affects your confidence quite a lot”

“You feel the need to prove yourself”

“SEND is helpful in schools as people understand and I have support to get involved”

“I am comfortable and happy at home or at school but outside in the community is more difficult”

The Southend SEND Partnership is committed to improving and enhancing the experience of our children and young people by providing the right help and support at the right time, providing opportunities to maximise life chances, make good progress and achieve outcomes that prepare them for adulthood. We want children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and their families to thrive and be happy.

The SEND Partnership

The local area SEND partnership governance structure was implemented in November 2020*. The Partnership is formed of Local Authority teams that deliver SEND services across Education and Early Years and both Children’s and Adult Social Care:

and key stakeholders across the local area:

- Health colleagues from the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), The Lighthouse Centre, Southend Hospital, Essex Partnership University Hospital (EPUT).
- The Parent Carer Forum for Southend, Southend SEND Independent Forum (SSIF)
- Educational representatives from mainstream and special schools, early years and further education settings
- The voluntary sector and representatives from a range of community services such as A Better Start Southend and Healthwatch

The partnership works together to ensure the local area:

- Is effectively identifying and assessing need
- has support, provision, arrangements and services to meet local need
- supports children and young people to achieve and improve their life outcomes

The partnership aims to promote high standards and to foster a culture of continuous improvement, whilst each organisation retains its own existing line of accountability and delivery.

** the SEND Partnership Governance chart and related bodies can be found on our Local Offer website.*

3. Looking back

In 2016 Southend Borough Council developed a 3 year SEND strategy which focussed on these priorities:

1. Timely intervention: commissioning effective services, timely identification and assessments.
2. Partnership working: more joined up EHC needs assessment, planning process, transitions and protocols to support working together.
3. Quality and effective SEND provision: commission or deliver a range of high quality provision (including specialist provision and outreach services) for all children and young people with SEND that work together flexibly.
4. Raise attainment and expectations: set sights high for every child and young person so that their hopes and aspirations can be realised both now and in their future lives
5. Ensure value for money: resources are used effectively, are cost effective and distributed equitably and transparently with performance monitoring and measurement of impact.

In 2018 a Local Area joint inspection of the SEND offer being made by the Southend SEND partnership was undertaken by the Care & Quality Commission (CQC) and Ofsted. The review identified four areas of weakness. The local area sought to address these weaknesses through a written statement of action (WSOA) plan. The partnership then embarked on a three year journey to both deliver strategic priorities and evidence the impact of actions undertaken in delivering the WSOA.

In early 2021 the Southend SEND Partnership completed a 'Self-Evaluation' to evidence progress against the previous strategy, WSOA and wider improvement programmes. Whilst there was clear evidence of good and continuous improvement, the Southend SEND Partnership recognised that services for children and young people with SEND could further improve, deliver better outcomes and do more to evidence the impact on children, young people with SEND and their families.

Some examples of progress and improvement were noted as follows;

1. Timely Intervention: New joint commissioning projects were underway. Statutory Assessment timeliness is now well above England average at 94% issued within 20 weeks
2. Partnership working: Multi-agency panels and protocols are in place and working effectively. "Area leaders have established a multi-agency process for the assessment, decision making and quality assurance of EHC Plans".
3. Quality and effective SEND provision: All young people and adults with EHC plans post 16 are enrolled on full time programmes.
4. Raise attainment and expectations: Southend has consistently narrowed the gap to the national average over a three year period in EHCP pupils' KS1 reading, writing, science and phonics. There are fewer young people who are NEET than nationally (97.6% at December 2020 compared to 95.5% the year before and 88.2% nationally).
5. Ensure value for money: High Needs Block budget deficit recovered, effective place planning has ensured very few pupils (1% of total EHCPS) cannot have their needs met in a local school. A new scheme for the consistent and transparent allocation of high needs top up has been introduced in 2021.

An Ofsted and CQC revisit to check the Southend SEND Partnership's progress in addressing the four areas of weakness took place in May 2021. The revisit letter issued shortly afterwards concluded that *"The area has made sufficient progress in addressing three of the four significant weaknesses identified at the initial inspection."*

Further work was required to fully embed and evidence the impact of some of the joint commissioning activities undertaken as part of the WSOA.

4. Looking Forward

In April 2021 a SEND Summit was held which included partners from the three main SEND partnership governance groups, voluntary sectors and SSIF. The Summit provided the opportunity for partners to scrutinise the evidence of progress within the Self Evaluation and reflect on future priorities, including strategic intentions and priorities for inclusion in the new Southend SEND Strategy.

This led to a wider programme of engagement with parents, carers, young people, settings and colleagues who support children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Various formats for engagement were used including online surveys group meetings and one to one conversations, all of which informed the emerging strategy.

Through our engagement activity and the consultation feedback we have listened to what children and young people with SEND and their families and carers have told us.

Parents and Carers told us:

"we need joined up services with a strong parental input"

"better and quicker access to services for families"

"putting the right people in the important, supportive roles"

"help should be timely not taking years and appointments should be given in an effective time span"

"Early mental health intervention"

"Ensure that what is in the EHCP is delivered, Hold schools accountable so parent doesn't have to fight school alone for provision to be made."

Children and Young People told us:

"staff need more training to help me and understand what support I need"

"Share information using videos and animations; they are easier than reading lots of writing"

"we want our own spaces where we can meet other young people and socialise and know that we have a refuge if we feel unsafe"

“we feel we have to live up to older people’s expectations and want to be valued for ourselves”

“it would be good to have taster sessions before choosing my options so I know what they’re about”

We also listened to those who work closely or provide services for SEND children young people and their families.

Partners told us:

“we need better systems in place to identify SEND”

“ensure health services have capacity to undertake assessment”

“smooth transition to adult services”

“the voice of the child and their family should be central to all decisions made in relation to the young person’s life and future”

“ensure our education workforce is fully trained and upskilled in supporting children and young people with SEND and their families”

“more investment in early intervention and prevention”

Using this feedback and incorporating it together with feedback from parents, carers, every step of the way - the SEND Summit, the Self Evaluation, the SEND Inspection Re-visit and the wider improvement programme we have shaped our vision, values and priorities for the next 3 years into the new Southend Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy 2021-2024. The strategy has been co-produced across the SEND Partnership.

5. Our shared vision, values and priorities

The SEND Partnership will commit to continue to draw upon the child and young person’s voice and lived experiences to measure the impact of everything we do. It is part of our commitment to make a difference and to improve the life long outcomes for children and young people from across Southend. Everything we do will be shaped by better understanding of the individual needs of all children and young people with SEND and their families, no matter their circumstance, characteristics or need.

We can only do this with a whole system partnership, that has a shared mutual purpose with one vision.

Our Vision:

Helping children and young people in Southend to thrive and be happy

To our children and young people this means:



To be in control
and choose
what I want to
do, feeling
welcome.

Looking
forward to
each day
as it
comes!

A feeling of
belonging and
inclusion in the
school and
local
community.

Smashing
your own
goals!

Values:

Underpinning our vision is a set of ten jointly agreed and owned values. We want Southend to be a place where all children, young people with SEND and their families:

- 1) Feel welcomed, have a voice, are listened to and are equal, respected and valued partners in decision-making.
- 2) Have high aspirations, choice and control over their future and can make a positive contribution to the wider community.
- 3) Are communicated with clearly in a respectful way through transparent and clear processes.
- 4) Are supported and nurtured through an education, health and care system that is responsive and both culturally and disability competent with skilled SEND practitioners, who understand individual circumstances and needs, and how these can be best met.
- 5) Have consistent access to the best childcare, health care, education and training opportunities and employment.
- 6) Benefit from an evidence based partnership approach to achieve the best possible outcomes.
- 7) Benefit from a inclusive culture of high expectations where SEND practitioners ensure children and young people have equal access to services alongside their peers.
- 8) Can access services that are both responsive and preventative and not reactive.
- 9) Receive support that is person centred and flexible to personal needs and enables individuals to become the best version of themselves. The SEND offer will be underpinned by self-help and building resilience.
- 10) Supported by a Local Area SEND Partnership which is committed to continuous improvement and is open to feedback

Five Priorities for children and young people:

Our five priorities for 2021-2024 focus on how we can improve the lives and life chances of children and young people and their families, supported by actions that the partnership will drive to help deliver these.

1. Transitions: Children and young people are prepared and supported to thrive at each change in their lives, helping them to feel secure and confident

This is important because:

Change is difficult for most people, but change is part of everyday life so it is important to help children learn how to successfully adapt.

As a SEND partnership we must plan and support children and young people with SEND and their carers so they can be happy and thrive when change occurs. Changes are many and varied but may include a change of worker or service provider, school or setting, into adulthood, or a change specific to their circumstances and needs.

We will:

- Produce a roadmap of what is expected at each stage for key transition points in a child or young persons journey (health, education & social care) – all professionals working towards the same goals and pathway.
- Produce best practice guidance detailing shared and minimum expectations for school based transitions for children and young people with and EHCP and SEN Support including those with complex medical conditions.
- Work towards a single pupil record so that (where appropriate) information will be available to ensure children, young people and families, do not have to repeat their story and risk or vulnerabilities are mitigated

It means feeling prepared and ready

2. Early Intervention: identification, assessment and effective support are provided at the earliest opportunity

This is important because:

The earlier children and young people's needs are identified, the sooner the right support can be provided. This may prevent or reduce further needs from developing. A key focus for our strategy is how we can get better at providing the right support earlier, and how the identification and assessment of SEND across the partnership can be better coordinated.

We will:

- Start at the earliest opportunity both before and when potential need is identified, we will work together to chart the potential journey for a child.

Support means being empowered to do things on my own

- **Positively raise the profile of SEND and celebrate that each child is unique and the only thing that is normal is difference.**
- **Stop the battle, and ensure proactive signposting to appropriate services and support.**
- **Increase the focus on nurture, building towards making Southend a nurturing town, working with all settings/professionals to embed thinking in a nurturing way.**
- **Build resilience in schools to manage challenging behaviours – improve the life chances of young people to prevent escalation to crisis and entering the criminal justice system.**

3. Good mental health and wellbeing: Children and young people with SEND are happy and thrive within their family, education and social lives. Our strategy will ensure that all CYP with SEND can develop their potential, build strong relationships and contribute to their community.

I see a counsellor and my music has helped me through my thoughts and feelings.

This is important because:

Mental Health affects everything at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood. This includes emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing; how children and young people think, feel, and act; helps determine how they handle stress, relate to others, and make choices; feel supported at all stages in their lives and have a positive self-image.

We will:

- **Focus on the benefits of positive mental health and emotional wellbeing**
- **Change the language / narrative, it's OK not to be OK – provide different access routes for support including self help**
- **Support the community to be inclusive because inclusive services will improve mental health, provide better support, improve life chances and build confidence.**
- **Build resilience for parents, carers and families to manage challenging behaviour and personalise the offer for families.**
- **Increase training offer to front line practitioners and all that have contact with children and young people so they can identify need when it first arises and appropriately signpost**
- **Improve data collection to support effective commissioning.**

4. Plans: EHCPs and other plans for children and their families have the young person at the centre, are well co-ordinated, co-produced, timely, and lead to well informed and effective support, which is regularly monitored and reviewed.

The support I receive is a really big balancing act as it needs to be at the right time in the right way.

This is important because:

We want every child or young person with a plan to feel that their needs are well described and can be easily understood by those who help them. The provision and outcomes in the plan are both relevant and meaningful to each child or young person.

We will:

- **Develop a more co-ordinated approach for review and development of plans to ensure a robust, meaningful, aspirational review process for all plans making them an agile living document that continues to grow with the child. We will work with providers to ensure the support detailed in all plans is delivered effectively**
- **Enhance our quality assurance processes around EHCPS to ensure a consistent, person centered approach, unique to each child and young person which raises parental confidence in the quality and impact of plans,**
- **Capture and act upon the voice of the CYP and families at the earliest opportunity to influence and shape plans**

5.The Local Offer: The Local Offer is a comprehensive, widely and easily accessible resource that signposts to a range of effective services and high-quality provisions



We need fully accessible sports clubs that are clued up on SEND specifics

This is important because:

We want to commission or deliver a breadth of high quality provision for all children and young people with SEND. We want to ensure that our Local Offer Website and supporting social media provides swift and easy access to helpful, up to date advice and information about SEND in Southend and the services available.

We will:

- **Complete a SEND partnership review of specialist provision for Social Emotional and Mental Health, Autism and sensory needs**
- **Develop a communication plan which advertises and promotes the Local Offer to be the 'go to' information source for all children and young people with SEND, their families and SEND professionals.**
- **Finalise the evaluation of the Local Offer Website and deliver improvements. If necessary a new website will be reprocured to ensure that the website is the best it can be.**

6. Partnership actions to support effective delivery of our priorities for children and young people

Achieving our priorities for children and young people will require improvements in how we work together, how we listen and engage, how we communicate and how we understand the quality and effectiveness of our actions.

We identified five partnership actions to drive effective implementation and sustainability of our priorities:

1. Increasing the voice and engagement of children and young people with SEND and their families with a specific focus on the children and young people
2. Developing our workforce across the partnership to ensure they have the right knowledge, skills and confidence providing opportunities to learn together
3. Be the best we can be; focus on quality, impact, innovation and improvement supported by the Quality and Outcomes framework, values, a robust evidence base and effective governance
4. Improve communications within the partnership, children, young people and families, professionals, settings and the independent sector are informed, can influence and understand their part in improving life chances and outcomes
5. Further improve joint commissioning and effective use of resources

We will:

- Ensure the voices of children and young people with SEND and their families are recognised, valued, planned and resourced
- Ensure that co-production activity is evident at all stages in the planning, delivery and monitoring of services.
- Set out clearly defined roles for children, young people with SEND and their parents as equal partners in the Southend SEND partnership
- Develop strong feedback mechanisms to ensure that children, young people, parents/carers understand the impact their views, experiences and their engagement is making
- Improve communication within the partnership, professionals and the wider borough so that people are informed, can influence, and understand their part in improving the lives of children and young people and their families.
- We will share information appropriately and ensure it is fully accessible.
- Provide a robust evidence base through our Quality and Outcomes framework
- Scrutinise progress and development activity through the SEND governance structure
- Regularly reflect and take action as necessary.

Our commissioning plans will support the delivery of the priorities in this strategy.

How we measure progress and impact

The SEND partnership is accountable for, and will drive this strategy and plan. This overarching strategy is underpinned by an action plan and detailed plans, enabling stakeholders to be informed and also challenge the progress we are making

Progress against the strategy will be monitored at least termly, with scrutiny and challenge from:

- Southend Borough Council Children's Improvement Board
- Health and Wellbeing Board
- Clinical Commissioning Group Governing Body
- Southend Borough Council Scrutiny committee
- SEND Strategic Partnership Board

Our success will be determined by the lived experience of our children, young people and families, therefore in addition we will monitor our impact by:

- Hearing from children and young people and their families
- Working with SSIF to understand whether and how families are seeing the difference.
- Working with youth engagement teams such as SEND Schools Council and Youth Council to hear directly from young people.
- Reviewing feedback from our annual Local Offer survey
- Designing new innovative ways to capture and measure feedback.
- Rigorously reviewing provision arrangements for SEND in Southend schools and settings.

Keeping you informed:

Our strategy will be regularly reviewed and updated in response to feedback from children, young people with SEND and their families. We have therefore created a page dedicated to the strategy on the Local Offer website: www.livewellsouthend.com/localoffer. This will provide progress updates, key documents and an opportunity to feedback, ask questions or make suggestions.

With special thanks to everyone who worked on this strategy, including local authority teams, the Southend NHS Clinical Commissioning Group and other health organisations, SSIF, the children, young people and families who took part in the engagement meetings and online survey, as well as to the elected members of Southend Council and the schools, youth groups and other organisations in Southend who have been involved.

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Appendix 1

Legislation and Policy

Legislation driving provision to children and young people with SEND is currently under review by HM Government. We will ensure that this strategy is in line with any changes to legislation, national and local policy and best practice during its lifespan. At present, that legislation and policy is:

National

- The Children and Families Act 2014
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 2015
- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- Care Act 2014
- Children Act 1989/ 2004
- Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Breaks for carers of disabled children regulations 2011
- NHS Long Term plan 2019
- Autism Act 2009
- *Statutory guidance - Working Together to Safeguard Children (2013)*
- *The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2 (Care Planning Placement and Case Review) and Volume 3 (Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers):*
- *Reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils (2012): Technical guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission*
- *Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions (2014): statutory guidance from the Department for Education*
- *The Mental Capacity Act Code of Practice: Protecting the vulnerable (2005)*

Local

- Inclusion Strategy
- Early Help strategy
- Southend 2050
- CCG health care partnership strategic plan
- Early Years Strategy
- Local Transformation plan for EWMHS