



Sefton Special Educational Needs and Disability SEND Strategy

Working together to improve inclusion and
outcomes for children and young people with SEND

2025-2028



Foreword

We are pleased to introduce Sefton's SEND Strategy. We aspire for all children and young people in Sefton, to have the best start in life, feel included, listened to, excited about their future and supported to reach their potential. Our strategy sets out the actions we will take to deliver important improvement and change to our local SEND and inclusion systems and provision. Sefton has a strong SEND partnership and is committed to working as a local system, together with local schools, parents and carers, children and young people, to deliver change that will improve experiences and outcomes for children and young people 0-25 with SEND.

We have listened to feedback from children, young people, parents/carers, schools and partners, and we are confident in the steps that we need to take to deliver a sufficient local 0-25 SEND offer. We want to make sure that Sefton children, young people, families and schools receive the right support, in the right place, at the right time, with integrated services across education, health and social care working closely with children, young people and their parents and carers, to ensure that individual needs are identified, outcomes are improved and met without unnecessary delay.



Cllr Diane Roscoe, Cabinet Member for Schools, Children and Families



Dr Risthardh Hare
Executive Director for Children's Services



Deborah Butcher
Place Director (Sefton) NHS Cheshire & Merseyside



Nadine Carroll
Assistant Director for Education Excellence

Introduction

We have jointly developed Sefton's SEND Strategy with partners including schools, professionals, children, young people and their families and have listened to what you have told us.

Our vision is that this Sefton is an inclusive place for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). This strategy outlines how we will achieve this by focusing on our key priorities over the next three years.

We are committed to working stronger together within a culture of collaboration, integrity, and transparency.



Coproducing Our Strategy

We co-produced the [Sefton Co-Production Charter](#) with children, young people, parents, carers, schools and professionals. The charter represents our commitment to working collaboratively and inclusively with our stakeholders. We followed the principles set out in that charter when putting this SEND Strategy together. Co-production is a continuous process and we will continue to gather feedback from our families.

We have listened to what you have told us in the past to help us to develop our vision and priorities. We have also taken steps already to make improvements and act on feedback you have given us at past events. We already have a number of forums and places to hear the voice of our families and this will continue. Activity so far has included:

- Annual Local Offer Live events established in 2023 in collaboration with the Sefton Parent Carer Forum
- The launch of a holistic Early Years Graduated Approach toolkit in September 2023, covering health, social care and education with training provided to schools and other professionals as well as the launch of the toolkits for Early Years, School Age and Speech & Language.
- Team Around the School established across 10 clusters of schools in Sefton, which promotes a multi-agency approach to supporting children and families at the earliest opportunity.
- SEND Parent Carer SEND Awards in 2024 to enable people to feel comfortable sharing their positive experiences.
- Co-production sessions to contribute to our Inclusion Strategy with attendance from partners across Health, Social Care, Education including schools, parents and carers. We also held sessions where we collectively mapped the neurodiversity and social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) pathways for children and young people, with 52 partners, including education, parents and carers, across the sessions.
- Two education transition events were held in May 2024 for Early Years and secondary transitions preparing for September 2024, with health colleagues also in attendance from Sefton's Mental Health Support Team (MHST). For the secondary transition event, 100% of secondary schools and 78% of primary schools were in attendance. Inclusion Consultants and health colleagues are jointly delivering training around transitions for parents and carers, schools and settings.

What You Told Us

We have listened to the feedback from children, young people, parents and carers, schools and professionals. We have engaged and gathered feedback through consultation, including the SEND Consultation, stakeholder groups, face-to-face engagement and events across the borough which has contributed to our vision and priorities in this strategy.

Staff Training

It is essential to deliver the knowledge and skills to support children and young people with a range of needs and improve inclusion, particularly for staff in schools and those working directly with children, young people and families. There is training on mental health, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and neurodivergence including dyslexia, autism, demand avoidant profiles, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) and sensory needs.

We want more training and awareness of ASD for professionals working with our children.

Post 16 Adult Transition Support

Transitions and post-16 support needs to be well-coordinated so that children, young people and families are prepared for transitions with the right plan and support in place and information readily available in advance, including shared by professionals or signposted to, so there is less ambiguity around what to expect or next steps so there is a clear roadmap for children and young people with upcoming transitions, particularly for those that access several services.

You also feel that information around financial and legal planning and responsibilities is important.

Transitions are not good. This wasn't available for my older child and now I'm worried about my younger child. There is a lack of co-ordination between each area.

Local Provision

Local provision must be inclusive and meet the needs of Sefton children and young people and family circumstances, so that they can access education and recreational activities, including short breaks, in their local area and stay connected to their community. There should be good information about the local services and support available.



There is no specialist SEND provision available to meet needs within our area, has to travel to an independent within another local authority.

Waiting Times

Wait times for assessments and appointments need to be shorter so children, young people and families spend less time waiting to access the right support. This includes the education, health and care needs assessments, early help and social care assessments, speech and language therapy (SaLT), occupational therapy (OT), ASD and ADHD pathways, paediatric hospital appointments and CAMHS. Information and support needs to be available while waiting for assessment, including when a child does not have a diagnosis or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Trust and Confidence

Trust in the system must be stronger so that there is assurance that it will deliver the support that children, young people and families need. Good communication from the local authority is also an important part of this. Services also need to communicate responsively to better support families. Families want to know their feedback will make a positive change and see the impact on children's outcomes and experience and to know that leaders are listening. Making a complaint needs to be easier and negative feedback that is not raised through the formal complaints process is listened to and contributes to improved service delivery.

Sefton In Stats

School Settings

1,359 in a Sefton Mainstream

Nursery/Primary/Secondary School

778 in Sefton Maintained Special School

61 in Sefton Non Maintained Special School

406 placed outside of Sefton

14 in Sefton Alternative Provision Settings

10 Sefton Out Of School Register

61 in Sefton Education Otherwise

145% increase in EHCPs in Mainstream Settings



Post 16 Education, Employment, Training

87% aged 16-17 in Education, Employment, Training

77% aged 16-24 in Education, Employment, Training



Social Care and Early Help

300 with an EHCP and a Child In Need Plan

28 with EHCP and Child Protection Plan

74 Cared For Children on EHCP's

140 working with Early Help



Demographics

74,826 Population 0-25 Years

3,470 Education Health & Care Plans

76% Primary Need of Learning Difficulty, Speech, Language and Communication, Social, Emotional or Mental Health



SEND Spending

33% inc in High Needs Spend 2023/24

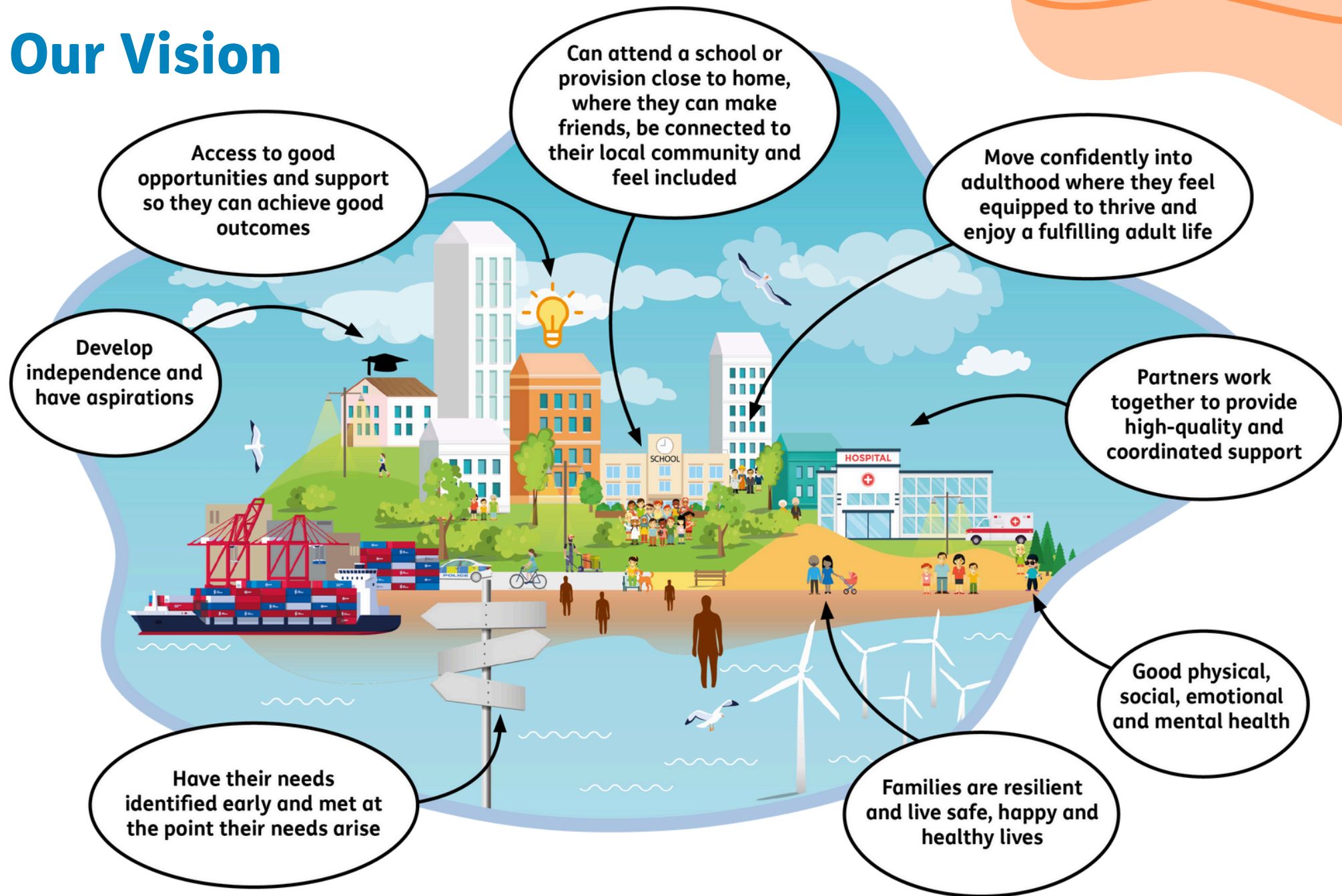
15% inc in High Needs Spend 2022/23

80% inc in demand for EHCPs



[To find out more about our needs and demographics, take a look at our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment \(JSNA\).](#)

Our Vision





Our Priorities

Priority 1: Supporting Inclusion

Our Commitment To Children, Young People and Families

There will be a consistent, holistic and graduated approach to support inclusion across Sefton. There will be a system-wide vision of inclusion with investment from, and accountability for, all.



The whole team are so supportive, nurturing and understanding. When your child becomes part of this school you gain a community. The commitment to their pupils and fostering the best of them is outstanding.



How Will We Achieve This

Quality Information and Advice

- The Local Offer is the main resource for finding out what support is available for 0-25 year olds with SEN or disabilities and is accessible to all. It will be accurate, up to date and co-produced and will include improved information relating to services including community activities and short breaks.
- Services will provide access to information, guidance and support to families with babies and children with additional needs. This includes Early Help, Early Years Service, Team Around The Baby and the Building Attachments and Bonds Service (BABs).

Our Priorities

Priority 1: Supporting Inclusion

Workforce Development

- There will be a partnership approach to developing the workforce in Sefton across schools and services. There will be a sustainable and effective workforce programme to support the development of skills and expertise of staff across Sefton schools and services. This will include a variety of training not limited to emotionally-based school avoidance, neurodivergence, OCD, mental health, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and trauma-informed practice.

“ It is frustrating that the team are not always able to update plans following review. But without further staffing this will never be an option.

- We will establish community of practice where we learn from each other and have regular opportunities to share good, evidence-based practice between professionals, settings and partners to support a confidence, skilled and knowledgeable workforce.
- We will work with families, educational settings, professionals and services, to ensure the graduated approach is being implemented and that services are being utilised when they are needed.

Pathways

We will monitor waiting times for assessments through our SEND Partnership Board and put in robust plans where there is an impact on early identification of needs and access to timely support. We are working as part of the Cheshire & Merseyside Health Care Partnership to deliver a transformative programme of work on Children and Young People's Neurodiversity and Adults ADHD Pathways.

“ My child has been on ASD Pathway for almost a year, no communication, still awaiting appointment.

Our Priorities

Priority 1: Supporting Inclusion

Our Pathways work is in recognition of rising demand for Autism and ADHD diagnosis and as a consequence of long waiting lists – leaving unmet needs within our population. The partnership aims to fulfil the following key ambitions:

- To view neurodiversity as a difference, from a strengths-based perspective rather than a disability, whilst recognising the challenges associated with lifelong neurodevelopmental conditions across our Health and Care Partnership
- Focus is on effectively and consistently supporting each child's needs, with easier access to early support and empowering them and their families to maximise potential, rather than focusing only on diagnosis.
- Formalise the graduated approach.
- Hear and use the voice of lived experience to redesign our offer.
- Work through and with Local Authorities to ensure education and early years settings are better able to include and support those with neurodiversity.
- Address our long waiting lists, focusing on level and type of need, expanding the number of professionals who can undertake assessment/diagnosis and streamlining the assessment process itself.
- Many people with neurodiversity also experience mental health and educational challenges. We will redesign how professionals work together to support and address these needs, providing earlier support wherever possible.

Our Priorities

Priority 1: Supporting Inclusion

Service Performance and Development

- The Team Around The School (TAS) initiative will continue to be piloted across Sefton schools so that children and families are supported at the earliest opportunity, including children at risk of harm and offending.
- Focus on improving attendance of children with SEND in educational settings through agreed multi-agency, family-centred support. Access to education for particularly vulnerable groups, for example, Cared for Children, children missing from education and those with emotionally-based school avoidance (EBSA), so that every child is on the roll of a school, regardless of their circumstances, unless their parents have elected to home educate. This will include guidance and training on EBSA.
- Services will work in a more joined up and co-ordinated way to benefit children, young people and families, so that they can get the right support at the right time. There will be strengthened links between our approaches to Early Help and SEND to improve our identification and assessment of need.
- The identification and assessment of special educational needs and disabilities will take place as early as possible, ensuring that all children and young people in Sefton receive the right support at the right time. There will be timely identification, assessment and support for all children and young people with SEN and social, emotional, and mental health needs (SEMH).
- We will improve timeliness of Education, Health and Care needs assessment and statutory timescales. Their EHC plans will accurately reflect their needs and support required as they age and develop, so that they continue to receive the right support at the right time. EHC plans will be of a consistently good quality and families will be empowered to understand what makes a 'good' plan.



Our Priorities

Priority 2: Developing Local Provision

Our Commitment To Children, Young People and Families

Children and young people will have timely access to local provision that can meet their needs, so that they can achieve their potential and be connected to their community. This will mean that children and young people will live and be educated in their local community, wherever possible, and have access to local services.

Provision will be driven by continuously improving outcomes and experiences, with a holistic approach to meeting need, and be co-produced by the children, young people and families who access them, achieving better value as a result.

I feel listened to through the Parent Carer Forum.

How Will We Achieve This Co-production

- Partners, including children, young people, families and schools, will have regular opportunities to feedback on services, so that they are heard, we better understand how services are performing and feedback informs continuous improvement of services, models and commissioning processes. They will have co-production opportunities to shape and influence local services.
- Children and young people, parents and carers, schools and professionals will be involved in co-producing guidance and information, so that it is tailored and useful to them.
- We will train partners in co-production and our principles so that it is embedded into culture and practice across the system.



Our Priorities

Priority 2: Developing Local Provision

Joint Commissioning

- The Council will understand the needs of the local population through regular stakeholder feedback, monitoring, review and analysis, including regular review of the SEND Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and local area SEND self-evaluation.
- We will review local provision, understand our market position and assess how to best to meet sufficiency in the borough, this will include making sure there are enough of the right types of school places for children available. We will publish a SEND Sufficiency Strategy to communicate our plan.
- We will work with other local authorities and organisations to share best practice, data and information and to explore opportunities to improve services.
- We will deliver our joint priorities through the SEND Joint Commissioning Strategy and action plan which sets out how the health, education and care system will come together to jointly commission services and use resources effectively and sustainably to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.
- We will ensure there are enough short breaks and inclusive community and leisure activities available for children and young people for a range of additional needs and disabilities and opportunities for their families to socialise and feel supported in their community.
- We are implementing quality assurance frameworks for SEN and alternative provision (AP) to improve the quality of provision and support alternative providers of education to understand and comply with legal requirements.

Our Priorities

Priority 2: Developing Local Provision

- We will continuously monitor and improve commissioned services by creating effective feedback loops and working to monitor, review and co-produce them, with consistent focus on outcomes and the voice of children, young people and families.
- Family Hubs will be better equipped to meet the needs of children with SEND and their families by enhancing the offer of hubs through partnership working and joint commissioning. This will include developing the offer to support children at risk of harm and offending through early intervention.
- We will ensure that there are services and support available for children and young people awaiting assessments, including the support available for those in the youth justice system.

I'm really unhappy about his lack of opportunity for socialising, his level of isolation and the fact he can't join in other activities. clubs, holiday clubs in school holidays because of his high needs - especially as we are both full time working parents.



Our Priorities

Priority 3: Improving Transitions and Preparation for Adulthood

Our Commitment To Children, Young People and Families

Children and young people with SEND will have successful transitions and better outcomes as a result of effective person-centred planning, preparation and support from co-ordinated services that share information and work well together.



We need better transitions support.



How Will We Achieve This Planning and Coordination

- Embedding long-term planning for children and young people into effective processes.
- Services will work together in a coordinated way to assess need and to plan and support successful transitions for children and young people with SEND approaching transition and from Year 9 upwards in preparation for adulthood. This will help build confidence and the resilience needed for children and young people with SEND and their families to navigate change and transition successfully.

Improving Pathways and Information

- Ensuring that information about services for children and young people with SEND, particularly for those 16-25, is accessible on the SEND Local Offer, including relevant guidance around transitions such as the Preparation for Adulthood Guide, and through the SEND Information, Advice and Support (SENDIAS) Service.

Our Priorities

Priority 3: Improving Transitions and Preparation for Adulthood

- We will improve the 0-25 offer by developing clear pathways from birth to adulthood. There will be robust pathways and processes around transitions, including preparation for adulthood and education (including Early Years, secondary, reintegration), health and social care transitions. We will support reintegration for children that are electively home educated (EHE), children missing school and children accessing alternative provision (AP). We will improve transitions between health services as young people move into adulthood and review commissioned services to ensure they meet the health needs of young people with SEND from the age of 16 and 18.
- We will improve opportunities for children and young people with SEND as they prepare for adulthood and move into further education or out of education and into employment, including voluntary work and supported internships. This will include improving social opportunities to reduce social isolation and support emotional health and wellbeing.
- We will strengthen relationships with further education providers and employers to improve inclusion and opportunities for young people.
- We will work with partners to ensure that safe and welcoming living options are available and accessible within local communities, including supported living and day support, and that young people are aware of the options available to them.
- We will review the experiences of transitions between services supporting children and young people with their parents and carers to improve service delivery and improve children and young people's experience and outcomes.
- Post-16 attendance for children with an EHCP will be monitored by the provision through its policies and procedures and the placing authority, so that the local authority can consider whether needs continue to be adequately supported through the existing plan. This will enable the young person to be adequately supported, and to receive the right provision to meet their needs and support their outcomes.



Our Priorities

Priority 4: Strengthening Communication and Information

Our Commitment To Children, Young People and Families

We will work collaboratively to build trust with children, families and schools through improved communication and co-production, keeping them involved and informed.

We will build confidence in our local systems as children, young people and families benefit from a 0-25 graduated offer that provides them with the right support at the right time and promotes inclusion.

They will have the right information to make informed decisions, know what is available to them and to feel empowered.



After all the negativity I hear about caseworkers I was really untrusting... built up a trusting and transparent relationship from the start. Everything she said she would do, she did. She's an absolute superstar who always went above and beyond and deserves recognition.



Our Priorities

Priority 4: Strengthening Communication and Information

How Will We Achieve This

Communication

- Children, young people and their families will receive timely and helpful communication from services, so they feel supported and listened to
- Children, young people and families will be kept informed by services, partners, the Local Offer and other communications such as the SEND newsletter and social media. We will continuously improve our communications, listening to what children, young people and families say is important to them and how they would like to receive information and to be involved. We will develop a SEND Communication Strategy and plan so that we communicate effectively and hold ourselves accountable on improving communication with all our partners.
- They will be involved in decisions made about them and understand how they are made and what we can do to improve, to support a culture of integrity, transparency and trust between services and families.
- Children, young people and families will understand how their feedback is used and we will tell them what changes we are making (or have made) as a result.

I engage in all consultations but rarely hear about positive changes being made. I don't know what my child is entitled too and what provisions are in place to support her.

Governance, Monitoring and Review

We know that we are accountable to children and young people with SEND, their families and the wider public and that it is important for them to understand the progress that we are making against the priorities in this strategy. There are strong governance arrangements in place to oversee and support the implementation of our SEND strategy. The SEND Partnership Board (SENDPIB), a multi-agency board with representation from a range of partners, will provide oversight and hold us accountable on our progress against the strategy. It consists of the following stakeholders:

- Council members
- Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council including representatives from education and social care
- Health partners
- School representatives
- Sefton Parent Carer Forum (SPCF)
- SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)
- Sefton Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS)

We will develop an action plan to show how we will deliver our priorities including key milestones, timescales for completion and a set of measures to track the impact we are making. We will also co-produce the Children and Young People's Outcomes Framework so it is designed with them at the centre and we are having the right impact.

Our progress will be informed by self-evaluation, stakeholder feedback including the annual SEND consultation, monitoring, and analysis of data. We will use qualitative methodologies to understand the impact we are making on children, young people and their families including case studies, interviews and focus groups with parents and carers and children and young people. When the action plan and outcomes framework are finished, we will publish them on the Local Offer website. We will use the action plan measures to provide regular updates on our progress to the SEND Partnership Board (SENDPIB).

How We Will Work Collaboratively And With Shared Responsibility

Everyone that is involved in helping a child or young person to succeed and reach their potential should be working together and with shared responsibility, this includes families, early years, and post-16 providers, partners, support services and the Local Authority. We all have a role to play in improving the lived experience and outcomes of children and young people with SEND.

As education providers we will:

- Be aspirational for all children and young people.
- We will honour the uniqueness of each child and young person and working together to create a friendly and inclusive community where all children and young people can succeed and thrive.
- Provide good or outstanding education.
- Understand barriers and respond to need using the graduated offer.
- We will remove or overcome barriers and create equitable opportunities for children/young people to participate and realise their aspirations.
- Support families to support their child, understand and overcome challenges and help them feel able to discuss concerns they have.
- We will provide access to people with empowering attitudes with supportive skills and expertise.
- Our children/young people and their families will actively participate in decision making.



As parents, carers and families we will:

- Be aspirational for our children.
- Make sure children and young people attend regularly and on time unless they are unwell.
- Make sure they are ready to learn.
- Encourage them to learn and reach potential by taking an active role in their work and activities.
- Ask for help or advice if they believe their child is struggling.



As health partners we will:

- Be aspirational for all children and young people and measure impact.
- Enable all children and young people have to access high quality health services in a timely way.
- Ensure collaboration and co-production with all stakeholders.
- Promote seamless transitions.
- Continue to monitor and act on feedback.



As the local authority we will:

- Be aspirational for all children and young people.
- Enable all children to access high quality education and learning opportunities suitable for their needs and phase of development.
- We will value all children and young people by securing relationships and providing support to children/young people, families and settings when they need it.
- We will remove or overcome barriers and create equitable opportunities for children/young people to participate and realise their aspirations.
- Support and work in partnership with schools and other settings to develop a highly skilled workforce that keeps children and young people safe and enables them to reach their potential.
- Our children/young people and their families will actively participate in decision making and co-production.
- Work in partnership with schools, other settings and partner agencies to identify the inclusion and SEND needs and priorities year on year, using hard and soft data, research and local intelligence.

