

East Sussex Children's Services Accessibility Strategy 2022 to 2025



Our Strategy for improving access for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities

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1. The Purpose of the Strategy:

This strategy outlines East Sussex County Council's vision and the practical implications for improving access of disabled children and young people to the services which we provide directly, and those which we provide alongside our partners, including education. This strategy updates the previous strategy for 2018-2021.

i. The Legal Context:

The Equality Act 2010 replaced existing equality legislation, including the Disability Discrimination Act and others. Its function has been to simplify the law and bring together the duties and requirements within one piece of legislation. The effect of the Equality Act is to extend protection to groups of people who were previously covered by separate laws and to incorporate all provisions into one piece of legislation.

The Equality Act introduced a single Public Sector Equality Duty – sometimes also called the 'general duty' that applies to public bodies, including maintained schools, academies and Free Schools. This duty extends to all protected characteristic – race, disability, sex, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment. This combined duty came into effect in April 2011.

There are three main elements to this duty. When carrying out their functions, public bodies are required to **have due regard to the need to:**

- eliminate discrimination and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- foster good relations across all characteristics – between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act details the requirements for a local authority's accessibility strategy and the **accessibility arrangements for pupils in schools** (Section 88):

- increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the schools' curriculum
- improving the physical environment of the schools for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the schools
- improving the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.

The duty states that the above must be delivered 'within a reasonable time' and 'in ways which are determined after taking account of the pupils' disabilities and any preferences expressed by them or their parents'.

ii. Who is considered as having a disability?

You are disabled under the Equality Act 2010 if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities.

What 'substantial' and 'long-term' mean:

- 'substantial' is more than minor or trivial, e.g., it takes much longer than it usually would to complete a daily task like getting dressed
- 'long-term' means 12 months or more, e.g., a breathing condition that develops as a result of a lung infection.

This strategy is based on the social model of disability which is a positive view of disability that focuses on ability rather than disability. It challenges us all to identify and take action to remove the barriers that prevent disabled people from taking their rightful part in the normal life of the community. It requires all agencies to work together to address inequalities across health, education, employment, housing, access, transport, sport and leisure.

iii. Disability and Special Educational Needs

A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she:

- has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or
- has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions.¹

For children aged two or more, special educational provision is educational or training provision that is *additional to* or *different from* that made generally for other children or young people of the same age by mainstream schools, maintained nursery schools, mainstream post-16 institutions or by relevant early years providers. For a child under two years of age, special educational provision means educational provision of any kind.²

A child under compulsory school age has special educational needs if he or she is likely to fall within the definition above when they reach compulsory school age or would do so if special educational provision was not made for them.³

A child or young person who has either special educational needs or another disability will be referred to in this strategy as having Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND).

¹ SEND Code of Practice

² SEND Code of Practice

³ Section 20 Children and Families Act 2014

2. Our Vision, Values and Shared Outcomes:

In East Sussex our vision for children and young people with special needs and/or disabilities is the same as for all children and young people – that they achieve well in their early years, at school and in college; are well cared for, have their health needs met, lead happy and fulfilled lives and have choice and control over the key decisions that affect them.

At the heart of the East Sussex Education and ISEND Division is a set of core values:

- all children and young people, irrespective of background or needs, are entitled to a good education that enables them to fulfil their potential
- settings, schools, colleges, academy sponsors and the local authority share responsibility for children's and young people's educational outcomes
- providing challenge on the performance of settings, schools and colleges, and being willing to use powers of intervention where particularly rapid improvement is needed, is an important part of the local authority's advocacy for children and young people
- working in partnership and jointly brokering appropriate high-quality support for children with special educational needs and disabilities, from a range of providers, is the key to sustainable improvement and makes a real difference to schools, children and families
- support is provided based on a sound understanding of the local context and interventions are flexible enough to meet the particular needs of schools, children and families.

In order to achieve our vision, all services will adhere to the following principles:

- **Integration** of key services to ensure there is a streamlined response and any potential duplication is minimised
- **Innovation** in all of our work, continually evaluating the efficacy of what we do and striving to become a progressive organisation
- **Transformation** of our work and the work of others, to bring about sustained improvements in the outcomes for children and young people.

In order to provide a framework for our vision and values the East Sussex Local Authority, our Clinical Commissioning Group, East Sussex Parent Carer Forum and other key stakeholders have agreed the following 5 child-focussed outcomes for children and young people that will underpin all of our development work in the local area:

- My voice is heard and acted upon
- My optimum health and wellbeing are supported
- I feel confident and secure
- I belong and feel valued for who I am
- I am supported to develop and achieve my goals.

East Sussex guidance and support for schools on diversity and equality is underpinned by the following key principles:

- we are all of equal value
- we seek to improve the access, participation, achievements and life chances for all.

Our vision, values and shared outcomes underpin the council's strategy for children and young people as set out in:

- [The Council Plan](#) 2021/22
- The Local Area SEND Self-Evaluation Framework
- The [Children's Services Portfolio Plan](#) 2020/21 – 2022/23
- The Special Educational Needs & Disability Strategy 2019-2021
- [Excellence for All](#): A strategy for education improvement in East Sussex 2021-2023
- East Sussex [Joint Strategic Needs and Assets Assessment](#) 2021

SEN and Inclusion

In East Sussex we believe that, in relation to education, meaningful inclusion:

- is based on genuine acceptance of diverse needs and a respect for cultural differences
- enables all children, including those who may experience barriers to learning, to access an appropriate curriculum in order to progress, achieve and thrive
- enables children to learn, enjoy and participate alongside their peers
- means identifying and removing the barriers some children face in accessing the most appropriate setting
- requires commitment, dialogue, collaboration and initiative.

Principles of inclusive practice:

- all children and young people have a right to have their needs met
- the local area is committed to supporting children and young people with SEND to attend their local mainstream school
- the views of the child or young person should be sought and taken into account
- parent/carers have a vital role to play in supporting their child's education and development
- all children and young people, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, should be offered access to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum.

3. The Priorities of the Accessibility Strategy

Taken from the Equality Act requirements for a local authority's accessibility strategy:

A: Increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the schools' curriculums

B: improving the physical environment of the schools for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the schools

C: Improving the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled

A. Increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in their school's curriculum

The Council's commitment to increasing access to the curriculum is underpinned by the aim to improve achievement and progress for all children (*Children's Services Portfolio Plan 2020-2023*); relevant extracts from the plan include

- We will contribute to the Council's priority outcome of making best use of our resources through strategic commissioning and consider changing our service offer in all areas to become more innovative, efficient and effective, whilst safeguarding vulnerable children and helping all children to succeed. We use robust evaluation, performance data and case auditing to ensure that our work with children and young people and families is effective and that we are investing in the right interventions.
- ...to enable families to become resilient and self-sufficient so that they only need universal services in order to thrive. All our support is designed to motivate and empower families so that they can achieve this goal. Following a review, the early help aspects of this support will be increasingly targeted on family keywork as we know that this both helps families and helps the Council manage demand for more expensive services. As part of the plan to deliver the outcomes of the Early Help review, 16 children's and youth centres have been retained in areas of highest need.
- We are developing a coordinated strategy of support for schools and colleges to meet the mental health and emotional wellbeing needs of pupils, ensuring that advice for schools across ISEND and partners is consistent and evidence-based. The county has been successful in its bid for the provision of three Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) as part of the government's trailblazer scheme, working across 60 schools and providing early mental health support for a population of 24,000 pupils.

East Sussex is determined to ensure that all children and young people achieve the very best they can. Excellence for All is a collective ambition from all those who lead, staff and support our settings, schools and colleges

Achievements to date to increase access to the curriculum:

- As at November 2021 schools judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding:
 - 92.6% of primary schools against the national average of 88.2%
 - 100% of Special schools against the national average 91.1%
 - 88.5% of secondary schools against a national average of 77.5%.
- The percentage of children achieving a good level of development in East Sussex in 2019 was 76% which is 4.2 percentage points higher than the national average (71.8%).
- The percentage of children eligible for FSM achieving a good level of development in East Sussex in 2019 was 62.0%, higher than the national average for 2019 (56.5%).
- The percentage of children at SEN Support achieving a good level of development in East Sussex in 2019 was 38.1%. This is 6.1 percentage points higher than in 2017 and the 2019 national average was 28.9%.
- Children at SEN Support in KS1 Reaching Expected Standard:
 - Reading improved from 34.4% in 2017 to 37.7% in 2019; up by 3.3% (2019 national was 33.3%)
 - Writing improved from 23.0% 2017 to 29.3% in 2019; up by 6.3% (2019 national was 24.9%)
 - Maths improved from 37.6% 2017 to 40.3% in 2019; up by 2.7% (2019 national was 36.5%).
- Pupils with SEN Support in KS2:
 - SEN pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths combined increased from 15.5% in 2017 to 21.1% in 2019; the 2019 national average was 25.4%
 - Reading improved from 35.3% in 2017 to 36.7% in 2019; up by 1.4% (2019 national was 41%)
 - Writing improved from 28.7% 2017 to 35.5% in 2019; up by 6.8% (2019 national was 38.9%)
 - Maths improved from 32.7% 2017 to 38.5% in 2019; up by 5.8% (2019 national was 46.3%).

Local Area Inspection of SEND:

In December 2016, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) conducted a joint inspection of the East Sussex Local Area, to assess how effectively the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) reforms in the 2014 Children & Families Act had been implemented. The findings were largely positive and highlights included:

- swift early identification of needs as a result of close partnerships between early years settings and schools
- strong special educational needs (SEN) provision in local mainstream and special schools, supported well by specialist staff
- better academic outcomes achieved by pupils with SEN compared with similar pupils nationally
- higher numbers of young people in education, employment or training after age 19 than the national average.

Since that inspection, the Local Authority has

- Commissioned a SEND prospectus to promote the specialist support offered to, and positive outcomes achieved by, children and young people in state-funded schools. The prospectus details the provision available to every student who has additional needs and highlights the high level of academic achievement by East Sussex students with SEND. This SEND prospectus is shared online, at school open days and in meetings with parents/carers.
- Set up the ISEND Placement Support Service (ISEND PSS) to support the successful placement of learners with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in their local mainstream school through information sharing, pre-placement planning and integration support. This team also provides advice and support to prevent placement breakdown for learners at risk of permanent exclusion in mainstream schools.
- Trained, supported and encouraged schools to use an Additional Needs Plan (ANP) or similar SEN planning tool to support children with SEN who do not require an Education, Health and Care Plan. These documents detail a child's interests, achievements and progress, as well as the additional support that is put in place to support their needs. The majority of children with SEN will be successfully supported with an ANP or similar SEN plan, without the need for an EHCP.
- Supported the development of the Sussex Discovery College, which offers mental health recovery-focused educational courses to East and West Sussex students for free.
- Expanded the Mental Health and Emotional Well-being (MHEW) in Education team for the county, who provide advice, support and training to schools. This team develop and deliver CPD programmes for schools to help them identify children and young people with mental health concerns and put in place appropriate, sustainable support. The team work closely with key partners including: Mental Health Support Teams (MHST), Hastings Opportunity Area

(HOA), School Health Service, Public Health, Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust (SPFT), Standards and Learning Effectiveness Service (ISEND) and ISEND teams.

- Supported the MHEW in Education team to work jointly with their counterparts across Sussex Local Authorities and Public Health to commission a pan-Sussex Self Harm Learning Network Programme.
- Commissioned an online counselling service for young people. E-motion offers free, weekly email counselling sessions to anyone aged 12-18 and in need of support, providing them with a confidential, safe space to talk about their problems and feelings.
- Implemented an initiative to combat waiting times for mental health treatment and assessment for development disorders, such as autism.

ISEND Services have:

- continued to build capacity in Early Years settings, schools and colleges through specialist support core offers, advice and guidance, and support and challenge around inclusive practice
- offered increased accessibility to the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme for Early Years Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) in East Sussex via an online training programme developed in conjunction with other services
- enabled staff in all mainstream schools to understand how to support learners with additional needs relating to communication and learning through a core offer of universal whole school training in autism, dyslexia and Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)
- provided training courses for school and local authority staff: in the 2020/21 academic year just under 600 courses were provided and attended by almost 13,000 delegates (NB this is delegates not individuals so may involve duplication of attendees)
- delivered 'Baby Signing' courses for parents and children under five to support the development of early communication skills
- delivered training in Speech, Language and Communication for the Strategic School Improvement Fund (SSIF) project 'Improving Literacy in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)', run by The Hastings Academy Trust
- developed a comprehensive primary to secondary transition programme for students with SEND in order to ensure a successful start to secondary education

- introduced the 'Amazing Me!' initiative to mainstream schools, giving staff practical ideas around adaptations to their teaching and learning and school environments, to ensure learners with autism are meaningfully included and the strengths of neurodiversity are recognised and celebrated
- the MHEW in Education Team hold a termly schools and colleges mental health network meeting where schools can share practice and increase their skills, knowledge and understanding, as well as regular networking for Mental Health Leads in the 4 Education Improvement Partnership (EIP) areas
- implemented a local programme of training for Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs)
- the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) have supported the Local Authority to develop local guidance, training and pathways to support schools and families of children and young people with Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)
- created guidance documents such as [Universally Available Provision](#) and [When to Intervene](#) to support schools to identify additional needs and barriers to learning, in order for them to intervene early and overcome those barriers.

Focus on Attendance and Exclusion:

Across East Sussex, children and young people have lower rates of attendance and higher exclusion than their peers nationally. Children and young people with SEND are an over-represented group in attendance and exclusion data; meaning they are more likely to be missing out on education than pupils who do not have SEND. The Standards and Learning Effectiveness Service (SLES) and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability (ISEND) teams have worked closely together with schools through Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships (BAPs) and Education Improvement Partnerships (EIPs) to support them to identify ways in which they can develop best practice and secure improvement. The focus continues to be improving the quality of teaching and provision of support to ensure that children stay in school and are engaged and supporting families so that they understand the importance of full time education and ensure their children are in school.

The local authority recognises the power of partnership working and to this end has established collaborative and increasingly robust relationships with individual teaching schools (TS) and the collective East Sussex Teaching School Alliance (TSA). The Local Authority actively promotes and supports the establishment and capacity building of teaching schools to enable schools to access high quality CPD, Initial Teacher Training (ITT) and school to school support. The Educational Psychology Service has designed an annual programme of training on high quality inclusive teaching and learning as part of the Initial Teacher Training course at the University of Brighton and for the Newly Qualified Teacher programme in East Sussex.

In addition

- At strategic level we have a range of mechanisms to enable pupil voice and participation of children and young people, from the Children in Care Council, the Young Ambassadors Group of disabled young people, and the elected Youth Cabinet.
- There are well-established networks which work together to improve inclusion and permanent exclusion rates for the schools involved, for example the Hastings Primary Placement Panel (HPPP). Prior to the establishment of the HPPP, those schools were responsible for 40% (15 children) of all primary permanent exclusions in East Sussex. In the academic year 2018-19 this had fallen to 26% (7 children), in the academic year 2019-20 this had fallen to 21% (4 children) and there were 5 permanent exclusions from HPPP schools in the 2020-21 academic year.
- The Secondary Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships (BAPs) continue to work collaboratively to improve attendance and reduce exclusions across their schools. Of particular note is the work carried out by the Area Group 2 schools (Eastbourne and Hailsham), supported by SLES, who only issued one permanent exclusion during the academic year 2019-20. This work is now being rolled out to the other partnerships with a desire that similar results will be achieved.
- ISEND services are currently working to embed the Therapeutic Thinking philosophy in all schools and services. Therapeutic Thinking will lead to:
 - a common language and a joint approach that is followed by all professionals in East Sussex
 - schools and settings that provide a safe and welcoming environment for all parties, where mutual respect and dignity are deep-rooted
 - an improvement in attendance and behaviours for learning
 - an understanding of the inseparable link between teaching, learning and behaviour
 - improved staff confidence in meeting the needs of the children and young people
 - a reduction in the need to positively handle or restrain
 - the inclusion of children with difficult or concerning behaviours
 - a reduction in the number of suspensions and Permanent Exclusions.
- In September 2020, the Education Support, Behaviour and Attendance Service (ESBAS) delivered an Attendance Recovery Programme to support school attendance during the full opening of schools after Covid-related closures. This involved supporting schools to prioritise their most vulnerable pupils and put in steps to improve their attendance and resulted in a 75% reduction in children not in school over a period of 5 weeks.

Priorities to increase access to the curriculum:

- SEND provision continues to be a key area of focus for all Education Improvement Partnerships (EIPs). Headteachers, SENCOs and other senior school staff meet with colleagues from neighbouring schools each term to discuss concerns or challenges surrounding provision for SEND students and plan projects and activities together to meet the needs of their schools.
- School SENCOs are invited to regular local network meetings, where resources and best practice are circulated. This not only strengthens the quality of education offered to children and young people with SEND, but also provides an opportunity for staff to forge professional relationships with neighbouring schools, meaning the transition process between local primary and secondary schools is stronger. Good practice, effective managing of provision and resources are all priority issues at SENCO network meetings. The ISEND SEN Practice and Standards team support the various SENCO networks.
- The Local Authority runs an online network and resource hub for SENCOs and teaching staff so that those unable to attend network meetings can still engage with colleagues in neighbouring schools.
- The Local Authority is reviewing the web information for schools and our electronic communication system (Virtual School Bag) to ensure schools find what they need when they need it, and any new solution is effective and efficient in ensuring shared access to the most up-to-date information, policies and directives.
- The East Sussex Quality Mark for Inclusion (ESQMI) was developed to maintain an inclusion standard threshold in our local area. It acknowledged the inclusive practice already embedded in East Sussex schools as identified in our Local Area SEND Inspection and made a commitment to continuing to improve inclusive practice across our schools. The submission process for ESQMI has been further developed and the new format enables SENCOs, SLT and governors to see, immediately, areas of strength and areas for development. It is hoped that schools will find it an extremely useful tool as it contains links to guidance/resources and allows an effective action plan to be generated with specific targets. Therefore, rather than being a separate task for SENCOs it should support their SEND action planning and will:
 - support schools to identify priorities for the school development plan through immediate analysis of strengths and areas for development
 - provide SENCOs with information to support their role
 - provide schools with an efficient tool for evidencing impact and best practice
 - enable the LA to quality assure the ESQMI process so that parent/carers can feel confident that where a school has the ESQMI it represents inclusive practice and a commitment by the school to improve outcomes for pupils with SEND

- enable the LA to collate and aggregate data to identify schools with best practice and provide a foundation for providing support from the LA as well as school to school collaboration.

ISEND Services will:

- work transparently and collaboratively with partners, including East Sussex Parent Carer Forum, through the self-evaluation framework working group to ensure we are improving inclusion in East Sussex and increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the schools' curriculums
- continue to build capacity in Early Years settings, schools and colleges through specialist support core offers, advice and guidance, and support and challenge around inclusive practice
- deliver Public Health Bid groups ('Small beginnings') for pre-school children identified by various professionals to support the development of early communication and learning skills
- implement and evaluate a pilot programme rolling out the nationally recognised Autism Education Trust's training programme
- work to support mainstream schools with building their capacity to meet the needs of individual children and young people with autism, dyslexia and speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) through the core Communication, Learning and Autism Support Service (CLASS) offer and newly developed Dyslexia Toolkit
- launch a newly developed Gypsy, Roma and Traveller website to specifically support members of the GRT community to access education across East Sussex
- provide schools with additional 'Post Pandemic' support focused on supporting school-specific needs directly linked to the pandemic and making CPD available online wherever possible and appropriate
- continue to support the Mental Health Support Teams; by 2024 over 50% of East Sussex schools will have a MHST
- deliver training for a cohort of East Sussex primary school teachers in Quality First Teaching for SEN utilising a lesson study model
- Hold a pan-Sussex self-harm conference in November 2022, with the project being evaluated at the end of 2022 by Professor Ellen Townsend and Nottingham University.

Achievements to date to increase access to activities within and beyond the school day:

The i-go additional needs register provides a countywide scheme improving access to leisure activities for children and young people with disabilities and special educational needs age 0-25 in East Sussex. We have over 3000 card holders and 103 providers offering a wide variety of services and discounts. Moving the coordination into the ISEND team has meant that ISEND staff can promote the offer to families more readily and the i-go development officers can link great providers to our short break grants and 1space directory, making accessing appropriate service easier for our families and young people.

Defiant Sports held their first SEN sport event in Eastbourne over the August Bank Holiday 2021 with over 50 providers contributing to the games and sporting events.

The Outdoor Education Adviser has worked with the Equality and Participation team to produce guidance and support for schools so that all children can be included on visits. Approximately 500 visits have taken place specifically by Special Educational Needs schools, including ISEND and the short breaks team since 2016. These visits include anything from swimming, day trips to adventure activities and residential visits.

Buzz Active Eastbourne/ Buzz Active Cuckmere (formerly Spray Water Sports and the Seven Sisters Canoe Centre) work with the whole community which includes mainstream and special schools across the county and beyond, and any minority user group who wishes to engage with them. Buzz are open and transparent about any needs and always have a conversation with a user group and explain the limitations to what they can offer and whether the centres offer is right for them. Children and young people from special schools across the county have attended a number of 4-6 week programmes at the Centre – all the children and young people have a variety of additional needs but are able to enjoy this great facility alongside their peers.

“Life More Ordinary”: LMO Grants are for groups (3 or more) of young people who are disabled and aged 8 - 19 years organised by the Early Help Keywork Service (ESCC). Amounts from £500 up to £1,000 can be applied for (funding is available for up to 90% of the total cost of a project). These grants are available to help young people aged from 8 to 19 to make new friends, enjoy social and leisure-time activities, take part in experiences and lead a 'life more ordinary'. This grant scheme encourages organisations and projects to include young people who are disabled in their activities. Applications from non-specialist groups are also welcomed, as well as those that already include young disabled people in their activities.

The new and much improved Local Offer website⁴ including the 1Space directory pages is not only visually appealing but is much easier to navigate and was developed with members of East Sussex Parent Carer Forum as well as colleagues in Health, the Standards Learning and Effectiveness Service and Adult Services.

⁴ [ISEND \(eastsussex.gov.uk\)](https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk)

Short Breaks:

The short breaks grant scheme is open to organisations offering short break activities to children and young people with disabilities in East Sussex.

The grant scheme allows the Children Disability Service (CDS) of ESCC to work with a range of providers and to pilot projects and target any identified or potential gaps in provision in a swift and cost-effective manner to better support the community. Since 2018/19, £170k of grant funding annually has supported 24 projects, attracting over £200k of external partnership funding.

Inclusive projects supported include:

- Arts break workshops, provided by Project Art Works
- Music workshops, provided by Rhythmix
- Theatre experiences and workshops, provided by Head2Head Theatre Co
- Residential activity holidays, for groups such as those from the after school provision, Autism Sussex and SIBS (Sibling Service)
- Holiday activities and clubs, provided by organisations such as ASPENS and, Sensory Soft Play
- Outdoor day activities with Forest School providers
- Social Groups focusing on social interaction and building independence provided through ASPENS
- Martial Arts and homework club provided through Upgrade Training
- Young People's Mentoring training and developing independence clubs provided through Amazing Futures

Priorities to increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the curriculum:

- we will continue to work with partners to identify new opportunities for children and young people with SEND to access positive experiences in their community outside school hours through Short Breaks and the 1space directory
- we will continue to strive to increase our iGO membership so that our additional needs register fully represents the SEND community in East Sussex

B: Increasing access to the physical environment of the schools for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the schools

'An accessibility strategy is a strategy for improving the physical environment of schools for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and associated services offered by schools.' (Disability Discrimination Act section 28D (2) b)

East Sussex County Council recognises the need to continually respond to the following:

- increasing incidence of children and young people with severe and complex SEN and disabilities, especially those on the autistic spectrum
- a commitment to increasing the inclusion of children and young people with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (LDD) within mainstream schools.

East Sussex County Council believes that providing access to children and young people with LDD should be central to its building and refurbishment projects.

School Duties:

Schools are required by Law (Equality Act 2010) to have in place an Accessibility Plan that identifies the difficulties pupils with access needs and young people face in their buildings including actions to make any improvements and timescales for implementation. All schools are expected to meet their duties under the Equality Act 2010 and as far as possible anticipate access requirements when any works or improvements to the school's estates are undertaken.

The Equality Act states:

- (1) *The responsible body of a school in England and Wales must prepare-*
 - (a) *an accessibility plan;*
 - (b) *further such plans at such times as may be prescribed.*
- (2) *An accessibility plan is a plan for, over a prescribed period-*
 - (a) *increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school's curriculum,*
 - (b) *improving the physical environment of the school for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the school, and*
 - (c) *improving the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.*
- (3) *The delivery in sub-paragraph (2)(c) must be-*
 - (a) *within a reasonable time*
 - (b) *in ways which are determined after taking account of the pupils' disabilities and any preferences expressed by them or their parents.*
- (4) *An accessibility plan must be in writing.*
- (5) *The responsible body must keep its accessibility plan under review during the period to which it relates and, if necessary, revise it.*
- (6) *The responsible body must implement its accessibility plan.*
- (7) *A relevant inspection may extend to the performance by the responsible body of its functions in relation to the preparation, publication, review, revision and implementation of its accessibility plan.*

In preparing an accessibility plan, the responsible body must have regard to the need to allocate adequate resources for implementing the plan.

All schools are expected to meet their duties under the Equality Act 2010 and as far as possible anticipate access requirements when any works or improvements to the school's estates are undertaken. The Schools' Access Initiative (SAI) is intended to address access issues which are specific to an individual whose needs are complex.

The School Access Initiative enables East Sussex County Council, in partnership with schools and services to:

- meet the planning duties of the Equality Act 2010
- to further develop the accessibility of maintained schools in East Sussex (and Academies where the Local Authority has a responsibility to assist in planning for placing specific pupils)
- support schools and parent/carers in meeting the complex physical and access needs of locally placed children and young people.

Achievements to date to improve the physical environment of schools:

East Sussex local authority has a clear strategy for ensuring that we have sufficient places for the forecast increases in pupils with SEND alongside reducing high cost independent placements. The High Needs Block Funding review demonstrated that to achieve a reduction in the high cost placements we need to shift the continuum of provision, this is being achieved by working to ensure that all our schools are fully inclusive and working with partners to encourage more children to be supported in mainstream schools; the development of more specialist facilities to support the integration of pupils into mainstream, and an increase in special school places to ensure we have sufficient capacity.

As part of our strategy, we have encouraged the submission of Free School applications from current good and outstanding special schools in East Sussex and new providers; the following new special free schools have opened/will open over the coming years:

- **The Flagship School, Hastings area:** 56 places for pupils aged 9-16 who have the capacity to reach age related expectation yet whose neuro-diverse profiles alongside additional social, emotional and mental health result in significant barriers to learning. The school opened in the 2021/22 academic year.
- **The Summerdown School, Eastbourne:** 84 places for pupils aged 5-16 with autism and speech language and communication needs. The school will also include 51 places for pupils with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) including 6 places for nursery age children. The school will open in September 2022.
- **The Workplace Alternative Provision, Bexhill:** 94 places for pupils aged 11-16 with behavioural issues and excluded children. The Alternative Provision opened in September 2020.

- **The Ropemakers School:** A new school for pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health difficulties (SEMH): 80 places for pupils aged 5-16, located in Hailsham. The school opened in September 2020.

As a result of our invitation for expressions of interest from schools for new specialist facilities, which will cater for a broad range of lower level SEND needs where pupil's requirements could be met in a specialist facility that includes appropriate access to mainstream provision, we have opened three new primary facilities and two new secondary specialist facilities. We continue to seek capital funding to open two new secondary facilities in future years.

Since September 2019 the school adaptations panel have supported 9 additional smaller scale projects and 2 large spend projects amounting to in excess of £1million of funding. All the projects featured within the Capital Programme are designed to meet the standards set out in Building Bulletin 103 and Part M of the Building Regulations, covering: access to and use of new buildings, access to extensions to buildings and other dwellings, sanitary conveniences in extensions to buildings, sanitary conveniences in dwellings.

Priorities for improving the physical environment of schools:

- we will continue to respond to requests from schools and families to adapt existing school buildings for our children and young people with SEND
- we will continue to analyse all available data sets to plan future provision needs for our children and young people with SEND, so that they can attend their local mainstream school, or local specialist facility, or special school as appropriate
- we will continue to work with partners on the wider inclusion agenda, so that we make most effective use of High Needs Block funding.

C: Improving the provision to disabled pupils of information that is provided in writing to pupils who are not disabled

*'An accessibility strategy is a strategy for...improving the delivery to disabled pupils – within a reasonable time, and in ways which are determined after taking account of their disabilities and any preferences expressed by them or their parents, of information which is provided in writing for pupils who are not disabled.'*⁵

Disabled children and young people are entitled to receive information that is provided for children and young people who are not disabled, in a format that is accessible to them. This requirement covers all information, not just that relating to the curriculum. Examples of accessible formats include Braille, audio-visual, signs and symbols.

Our Local Offer, i-go and various micro websites currently conform to Level AA Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 (WCAG). We continue to work towards all our digital content, including videos and social media, and linked documents complying with Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility

⁵ DDA Section 28D (9) (c)

Regulations 2018. The development of information technology provides a greatly improved ability to provide information in a variety of formats matched to the needs of the children and young people.

Alternative forms of communication, such as signs and symbols are increasingly common in schools as teachers recognise their potential for improving the learning of all children and young people. No disabled child or young person should need to be in a less favourable position to receive information than anyone else.

Information can be made accessible by:

- Using text that is easy to read and understand
- Using visual and written material in different formats, including large print, symbol text and Braille
- Using ICT, other technological aids and taped materials
- Using alternative and augmentative communication, including signs and symbols
- Using translators, communicators and amanuenses
- Using materials and resources that can be accessed through sight, touch, sound, taste or smell
- Using word descriptions and other stimuli to make up for a lack of first-hand experiences.

All East Sussex schools and support services have access to translation services, including visual and hearing impaired services.

The East Sussex Library Services provides an Equal Access Library service where children and young people can obtain ClearVision books which have Braille and printed text; large text books; talking books; subtitled DVDs etc. Schools are able to seek advice and support from a number of sources:

Sensory Needs Service – 01273 481154 scsn@eastsussex.gov.uk

ISEND Front Door: isendfrontdoor@eastsussex.gov.uk

Achievements to date to improve the provision to disabled pupils of information that is provided in writing to pupils who are not disabled

The Sensory Needs Service is available to make resources and information accessible

- for blind Braille users printed materials can be transcribed into Braille. For online information the children and young people are provided with specialist text to speech software. Some information is provided on CD and this can be processed from text to speech using computer software.
- for partially sighted children and young people, all materials can be provided in large print, following a request from the young person. For downloaded materials, text enlargement programmes (such as 'Zoom text' and 'Supanova') are available to the young person.

- for signing deaf (British Sign Language - BSL) young people, written materials can be presented in BSL sign and provided on a DVD (using an external agency).
- for deaf young people who have poor literacy, as many do, leaflets can be modified and presented in appropriately simplified language (using external agencies).

Priorities for improving the provision to disabled pupils of information that is provided in writing to pupils who are not disabled:

- continue to promote the importance of accessible information and provide services to create accessible information and resources for schools
- continue to review the Local Authority documentation, information and Local Offer with stakeholders to further improve accessibility.

4. Consultation and Participation

East Sussex County Council recognises that an accessibility strategy has to serve the children and young people for whom it is intended and therefore their involvement is crucial. Children's Services aim to ensure that children and young people are empowered to participate in decisions that affect them across health, education and social care.

Please see Appendix 1 at the end of the Strategy for more information about how we have engaged with Children and Young People to inform Accessibility.

Achievements to date to improve consultation and participation:

The Ofsted/CQC report of 2016 made a recommendation for Children's Services to communicate the improvements to provision and services more effectively, in order to bolster relationships and trust through better sign posting to the many resources available. The Local Authority took this recommendation forward as follows:

- a new Parent and Carer Forum, East Sussex Parent Carer Forum (ESPCF), was established and is supported by Amaze
- representatives from East Sussex Parent Carer Forum are involved in strategic planning and consultation and meet regularly with decision makers from education, health and social care
- greater communication and engagement with parents, carers and families has been secured through a coproduction and engagement approach, a social media presence including an ISEND Facebook page, and parent/carers newsletter
- a SEND prospectus promotes the specialist support offered to young people in state-funded schools, exemplifying their positive outcomes and high academic achievement

- a full-time participation and engagement officer has been employed to ensure engagement at a strategic level and to support face to face engagement activities with parent, carers and young people
- a young people's group involving disabled young people has been set up called The Ambassadors Group.

In partnership with the Ambassadors Group, and the Amazing Futures Club, ISEND are building a network of young people's groups to enable timely and effective consultation/co-production with a broad range of young people with SEND, to inform our SEND strategy. The group is represented on recruitment panels, project boards and will participate in the tendering of services.

Joint work is being undertaken with the Youth Cabinet and other youth voice groups not specific to SEND, to enable the voice of young people to be heard.

The Local Authority uses Service User feedback to inform practice across all areas of service provision. In order to gather data and feedback ISEND services carry out feedback evaluations requesting parents and carers of children with young people with additional needs complete a questionnaire, along with the young person themselves and their education setting if they were involved in the intervention.

Use of Social Media:

As of November 2021:

- The ISEND Facebook page currently has 2,175 followers, the CLASS+ Facebook page currently has 2482 followers and i-go has 1,815 followers on their Facebook page
- Along with the development of the new Local Offer micro site, i-go has its own site so parents/carers and young people can more easily access a current list of offers and discounts
- The Teaching and Learning Provision team have developed a website specifically for Gypsy, Roma and the Travelling Community as another tool to enable better access to education for that community
- ISEND recently launched the InspireAble Instagram group for young people with neurodiversity to get involved and contribute to a social media community in a safe and supportive way, as at December 2021 it has 171 followers.

Parent Voice:

As of November 2021

- 6201 people had subscribed to the Parent Voice e-newsletter. This is an increase of 3815 individuals since December 2020. The continued growth of the membership demonstrates a strong interest amongst the local community

Priorities for the development of consultation and participation:

- increase capacity and diversity of The Young Ambassadors
- increase young person participation through developing links with school councils and young people with SEND in schools and colleges, e.g. through SENCOs and the school youth voice leads
- increase awareness of what ISEND and other Local Authority and partner services can offer, and how ISEND have helped children, young people and their families
- to use our social media presence to provide relevant and effective signposting and support for families.
- develop a range of useful digital resources, including:
 - guidance videos relating to the work of each service (e.g. 'Strategies to help with Demand Avoidance' from CLASS)
 - webinars and surgeries for school staff and/or parents and carers where practitioners can deliver 'lessons' on any subject and host a live Question and Answer session afterwards.
- increase the input from ISEND services in future editions of the Parent Voice newsletter, dedicating issues to specific topics, for example Education Support Behaviour and Attendance Service (ESBAS) practitioners can write articles about behaviour and attendance strategies
- train young people and parent/carers, so that more young people and parent/carers can be actively involved in staff recruitment and selection
- improve feedback on our services and impact to young people and parent/carers through a variety of means including infographics, films, newsletters, social networking and video diaries
- ISEND services will be supported to build on good practice around parental and young people's participation in their own plans and also in service evaluation and development
- we will continue to offer information days to families to share information and provide networking opportunities.

5. Data Information

In East Sussex, in comparison to 2009 population estimates, the overall 0 to 25 year old population in East Sussex has increased slightly, reflecting the national trend. Over this period, the number of 5-10 year olds has significantly increased by 13% to 37,360, and this is the largest age group among 0-25 year olds. Conversely, the number of 16-19 year olds currently is 12% less than in 2009, at 25,470.

The East Sussex overall school population continues to show a small year on year

increase. In April 2021, 67,000 children and young people were on the roll of an East Sussex Mainstream or Special School (including academies, special facilities and pupil referral unit) from Reception year up to National Curriculum Year 14, for those schools offering further education provision.

Of those children in East Sussex Mainstream Primary and Secondary Schools, the proportion of children identified with Special Educational Needs no longer shows a downward trend. As at January 2020, 14.3% of all pupils were in receipt of SEN support or had a statement/EHCP. This is lower than the percentage of pupils nationally (15.4%).

In East Sussex, in 2019/20, 11,500 pupils were eligible for free school meals (17% of pupils). This is similar to nationally (17%) but is higher than the South East (13%). Eligibility for Free School Meals has increased in East Sussex, the South East and England over the last few years. Since 2017/18, eligibility has risen from 13% to 17% in East Sussex and from 14% to 17% in England.

Since September 2014 under the new SEND reforms an EHC Plan can now remain in place until the young person reaches the age of 25. As at January 2020 there were 3,510 0-25 year olds in East Sussex with an EHCP Plan maintained by East Sussex County Council. The number of pupils with EHCPs has increased each year, both in number (from 3,279 in January 2018 to 3,510 in January 2020) and as a proportion of the 0-25 population in East Sussex (from 2.2% 0-25 year olds in 2018 to 2.4% in 2020).

Both East Sussex (13%) and the South East (14%) have approximately twice the percentage of pupils on SEN support in Independent Schools (mainstream and special schools) than nationally (7%) East Sussex has a significantly higher proportion of pupils with EHCPs in non-maintained special schools (7%) and independent schools including special schools (11%) than nationally (1% and 6% respectively) or regionally (3% and 8% respectively).

In January 2020, the most common type of need among pupils with an EHC plan was autistic spectrum disorder (30% of all pupils with an EHCP), and among pupils at SEN support was speech, language and communication needs (24% of pupils at SEN support). The second most prevalent primary need was speech, language and communication needs (15%) for those with an EHCP, and moderate learning difficulty (21%) for those at SEN support.

6. Management, coordination and implementation

This revised strategy was co-ordinated by key officers within departments across Children's Services. The continued development, implementation, review and evaluation of this strategy will be overseen by the SEND Strategy Governance Group which has representatives from all stakeholders, including education settings and services, health and parent carers.

Whilst this strategy stands alone as a separate document it is important to recognise that its aims and priorities are incorporated and in line with wider East Sussex County Council strategies, plans and practice including the SEND Strategy and Council Plan.

Making the strategy accessible to residents, parent/carers, children and young people

The strategy will be available through East Sussex County Council's website. Versions of the strategy will be available on request using large print, symbols and/or Braille. Schools will be able to access the strategy through Czone, the Children's Services intranet for schools.

Appendix 1

Consultation with Young people

- **Speak Up Speak Out event – 21/03/2019**

Speak Up, Speak Out was a day for young people with additional needs held on 21 March 2019. 58 young people age 12 to 19 came from 13 East Sussex schools.

The young people told us what is important to them at school, when planning for the future, in their free time and at health appointments. They also said how they like to speak up for themselves and other young people.

Managers from ISEND at East Sussex County Council, health services and community services listened to what the young people said. They used the young peoples' views to improve services and support.

The day helped us to improve communication and engagement with pupils. This is part of priority 4 of the SEND Strategy 2019 to 2021.

- **12/11/2019 – Young People's views about web information and terminology**

12x year 9 students with additional needs at Priory School.

Conclusions reached by students:

1. the websites aimed at young people (C360, school websites, Local Offer, social media) could be improved, but first we should explore further what platforms they are most likely to use
2. further exploration is needed to understand the things they most want information on
3. we now know some important factors to consider when creating web information for young people
4. we have an insight into how young people like to be referred to, but this may not be representative of young people of other ages and needs, and further exploration is needed

- **Specialist Facility Consultation – Dec 2019**

Eastbourne Academy. 7 students year 7,9,10

- **28/02/2020 East Sussex College – Young Peoples Aspirations Consultation event**

The voice arising from all these activities informed the messages in a media campaign to raise aspirations amongst young people, families, schools, colleges, services, employers, wider public.

- **Children and young people's consultation on the new SEND outcomes framework – November 2020.**

43 children and young people across 9 settings, including mainstream and special, from junior age to post 16, took part. A standard online workshop of between 30 minutes and an hour was delivered in each setting or was adapted to be delivered by the setting according to the children's needs. Two secondary schools had to cancel due to Covid.

Setting	Children	Method
Mainstream primary	5 x year 3 and 4	Online workshop
Mainstream primary	5 x year 4 and 5	Workshop in school
Mainstream primary	6 x year 5	Online workshop- shortened
Mainstream primary	7 x year 5	Online workshop- shortened
Mainstream secondary	4 x KS4 mainstream	Online workshop
Special secondary	4 x KS4 special	Online workshop
Special secondary	5x KS4 special	Adapted workshop delivered by school
ISEND Sensory Needs Service (visual impairment)	3 x service users- year 4,5 and 9	Individual activity delivered by service
Additional needs youth group	4 x age 17 to 22	Online interview, 2 groups of 2.

- **16/07/2021 – SEND Strategy work with young people at Robertsbridge**

5 students present 2 male 3 female – 1x year 8 4x Year 7

Consultation for Self Evaluation Framework High Level Action 5.4

- **21/07/2021 - SEND Strategy Work with young people Bexhill Academy**

6 participants 3 male 3 female - Year 7 x2 ,Year 8 x1, Year 9 x1 ,Year 10 x 2

Consultation for Self-Evaluation Framework High Level Action 5.4

- **02/11/2021- Social Media Work with YP from Amazing Futures**

Social Media post created 'how to engage with Young People with SEND'

10 Young People present.

- **04/11/2021 – Social Media Work with YP from Amazing Futures**

Anti – Bullying week Social media post created.

15 Young people present.

- **08/11/2021 – Youth SEND Ambassador Meeting**

10 young people present.

6 female 4 males. Year 7 – 13

Initial meeting – understanding the Ambassador role.

- **18/11/2021 – SEND Strategy with ISEND professionals and young people**

8 young people present from 5 different schools (2 attended virtually) All members of the Ambassador Group.

Consultation with ISEND staff to produce an overall statement for SEND strategy 2022- 2024

- **25/11/2021 – Youth SEND Ambassador Meeting**

9 young people present

- **08/12/2021 – Youth SEND Ambassador Meeting 16+**

5 young people present who discussed the future role of this group

- **13/12/2021 – Youth SEND Ambassador Meeting.**

8 young people were present for this virtual teams meeting where the agenda included consultation on the i-go online form format and wording and preparation for participation the EP interviews

- **20/12/21 and 22/12/21 Participation in Senior and Maingrade Educational Psychologist interviews**, with the children and young people panel scores and feedback included in the appointment decision making process.