

Draft East Sussex Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy 2022-25

October 2022

[Space reserved for a Graphic & Vision statement being finalised with young people]

Our East Sussex Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy has been developed by representatives from across the local authority, health services and education providers, in co-production with parent/carer organisations.

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Introduction and vision

We are delighted to introduce our new 2022-25 East Sussex Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) strategy.

Our ambition is that every child and young person with Special Educational Needs and Disability in East Sussex receives an inclusive education, and accesses opportunities and support that enables them to achieve their full potential at home, in school, and in their communities. This includes being well-prepared for adult life.

Our aspiration is to develop a culture of collaboration that brings together all relevant partners and stakeholders to deliver this ambition. This approach has been reflected in our strategy development process. Our five priorities are our shared outcomes with our partners, articulated from the perspective of children and young people. These outcomes are ambitious, and we want to achieve these for each child and young person in East Sussex.

- My voice is heard and acted upon (participation)*
- My optimum health and well-being are supported (physical and mental health)*
- I feel confident and secure (safety and security)*
- I belong and feel valued for who I am (inclusion and belonging)*
- I am supported to develop and achieve my goals (progress and achievement).*

The strategy reflects the views shared by partners across a ten-month consultation process. It incorporates the recommendations that were made following the 2021 SEND Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. This in-depth review identified challenges and strengths in our East Sussex SEND system and, because of the significant contributions made to this from parents and carers, provides a strong foundation for improvement.

We launched our last East Sussex SEND Strategy in 2019. That strategy had a key focus on how we spend SEND funding and allocate resources and on developing specialist placements and provision. It identified four key areas for improvement: building capacity for inclusion within educational settings, developing high quality provision outcomes and aspirations, effective planning for transition, and the journey of a pupil and communications and engagement with families and pupils.

There have been many changes since 2019; the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted education routines, compounded existing problems and new national policy directives including the Education White Paper have been published. The work that has been done in delivering our last strategy has laid important foundations that this strategy will build on. These are detailed in each section.

However, there is still much more to be achieved. Our new strategy keeps the same high level of ambition for children and young people with SEND and their families in East Sussex and responds to feedback on the last strategy about how we can be more effective. This means there are some changes to our approach this time around:

- This strategy has been co-produced with children and young people and families and embeds the views and perspectives of young people at its very heart. This includes the vision that young people have developed to headline our strategy. We set out how we will listen and respond more effectively and met and how we will include young people in planning and delivery.
- This strategy is shorter and more focused than our last. We want to convey our strategic vision clearly, to make it easy for our partners and stakeholders to understand and engage with it.
- Through a strategy steering group, partners, including East Sussex Parent Carer Forum and health colleagues have worked together on every aspect of this strategy. Although we are in the early stages of our co-production journey, the process to develop the strategy reflects the need for shared leadership on these priorities, and for co-production to become business as usual.
- Schools and educational settings are key partners. This strategy builds on the priorities and the work of the East Sussex Primary and Secondary Boards.
- A new, invigorated SEND Strategy Governance Board, will oversee delivery of the Strategy, and assess impact.

To succeed, all partners must work together to strengthen our SEND system. This requires a renewed commitment from those in leadership positions across our county. We must invest in, and strengthen our relationships, and be clear about our respective roles and responsibilities. This will help us to get better at supporting and challenging each other, as well as communicating more effectively to children and young people and families. We will also then be well-placed to respond to and implement new Government guidance and policies. Genuine and meaningful co-production with children and young people and families will underpin this approach.

Over the lifetime of this Strategy, we will embed a joint approach to service provision and commissioning across our partners in education, health, and social care. This approach will put children and young people, and their families at the centre of our decision-making.

Over the next year several potentially significant changes to the SEND system will be brought about following the conclusion of consultation through the SEND Green Paper and any legislative or policy changes that follow. This Strategy sets out our ambitions in East Sussex for children and young people, We may need to adapt

how we deliver these in the context of national policy changes which come into effect as a result of the national [SEND Green Paper](#).

We look forward to working with you all in the months and years ahead to deliver our ambitions for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Alison Jeffery

Partners TBC

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What the Strategy means to children and young people

[Space reserved for a letter from Young People to Children and Young People on what Strategy means to them]

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How we have developed this Strategy.

The [Joint Strategic Needs and Assets Assessment \(JSNA\) of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability \(SEND\)](#) was undertaken in summer 2021. This provided a comprehensive overview of provision for children and young people with SEND in East Sussex. These recommendations have been crucial to informing the development of our SEND Strategy. They have helped us identify key areas for improvement.

A multi-agency Steering Group including health, social care, parents and carers, and the local authority has driven the development of the Strategy. This includes representation from East Sussex Parent and Carer Forum. The views and voices of children and young people at the heart of our Strategy have been informed via an engagement programme with young people. A series of engagement sessions were held with parents and carers of children and young people with SEND. Feedback from a series of briefings for senior leaders and governors in schools helped shape our priorities and identify how we can work together to deliver improvements.

The Strategy is structured around five outcomes for children and young people. Facilitated by the Council for Disabled Children, these were coproduced by stakeholders from across the county. These outcomes are aspirational. They reflect the outcomes that we would want children and young people to have for themselves to feel part of a successful SEND system.

The priorities span education, health, and social care, and all strategic partners are signed up to these as core principles.

[Space reserved for an infographic of the five priorities]

- Participation - My voice is heard and acted on.
- Physical and mental health - My optimum health and well-being are supported.
- Safety and security - I feel confident and secure.
- Inclusion and belonging - I belong and feel valued for who I am.
- Progress and achievement - I am supported to develop and achieve my goals

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Key success measures

This is the way we will measure success, by monitoring progress against the following key measures.

Priority 1: Participation - My voice is heard and acted on

- Clear processes for involving children and young people in decision-making, both at an individual and strategic level.
- Through these processes, children and young people become increasingly confident that their participation informs the review and design of services.
- Increasing numbers of parents and carers and young people report they feel listened to and feedback is acted on, including through service feedback, surveys and through representative groups of families and young people
- Clear feedback channels for children and young people which drive service change and improvement. Mechanisms are in place to communicate changes back to children and young people, and to explain if a change has not been possible, why not.
- Feedback is more positive about how easy it is to access information about services, and the East Sussex Local Offer.
- Children and young people and their families report that their voices have been heard and acted upon when accessing education, health and care services in East Sussex.

Priority 2: Physical and mental health - My optimum health and well-being are supported

- Reduced waiting times across different health and wellbeing services.
- Children and young people and families report better integration of services and reduced barriers to access of health and wellbeing services. This includes more children and young people and their families report that their plans and support provision are better coordinated, and that all providers and services involved have a better shared understanding of the child or young person's support needs.

Priority 3: Safety and security - I feel confident and secure

- Reduced waiting lists for respite services.
- Increased availability and take-up of short break offers, and school and holiday clubs for young people with SEND across the range of needs, with appropriate support within each club.
- Improved parental feedback about availability of existing holiday clubs and programmes.
- Improved school attendance levels for children and young people with SEND.
- Reduction in number of permanent exclusions and suspensions of young people with SEND.

Priority 4: I belong and feel valued for who I am - Inclusion and Belonging

- Increase in earlier and timely identification of needs.
- Referrals are made to other services and agencies are made in a timely manner, where needed.

Priority 5: Progress and achievement - I am supported to develop and achieve my goals

- Improvement in outcomes at all key stages for children and young with SEND.
- Increase in the number of children and young with SEND who are in education, employment, or training between 16-25 years old.
- More children and young people feedback that they are better supported before and during transition periods, including when they are no longer eligible for a service.
- Increase in number of supported employment opportunities available post 16 and post 19.

Local context

[Space reserved (2 pages) for a data snapshot (including infographic and narrative) of East Sussex SEND landscape, including where East Sussex differs from the national picture and statistical neighbours]

Data snapshot will include:

- Pupils in ESCC - reception to year 13.
- No of pupils in primary and secondary education
- Those with SEN (Special Educational Need) support
- Those with EHCP (Education Health and Care Plans)
- Total number of EHCP 0-25
- SEND students in educational settings (post 16, mainstream, awaiting provision, educated at home, special school, alternative provision)
- SEND students in educational settings
- EHCPs (Education Health and Care Plans) issues within 20 weeks including exceptional cases
- PEX rate
- Attendance
- Educational Outcomes
- Primary needs breakdown
- Post 16 section

Priorities overview

Priority 1- My voice is heard and acted upon (Participation)

It is essential that children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) contribute to decisions about their own lives. This includes shaping the planning, commissioning, delivery, and improvement of SEND services.

However, efforts so far have not yet resulted in the level of service co-production that we all want to see.

On participation, the JSNA (Joint Strategic Needs Assessment) review in 2021 found that:

- The voices of young people and their families are not being heard effectively and are not informing practice as much as they could be.
- Access to services can be difficult.

Summary of young people voice on participation

- When young people feedback on SEN issues, there is often inconsistency in responses from professionals. Sometimes there is no feedback loop.
- Some young people want to have their views heard more in their own right, independently from their parents and carers.

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Summary of parents and carers voice on participation

- Professionals should recognise parents and carers as equal partners in decision making about their young person's SEND support.
- Parents and carers should be included in decision making and kept informed from the very start of discussions about their young person's SEND support.

What is already happening?

Partnership building with young people and families is already a key focus in East Sussex and following our last strategy, engagement has increased.

- Professionals across education, health, and care, are committed to engaging more with young people and families to understand their experiences and

views. This includes increased collaboration with East Sussex Parent and Carer Forum and more frequent engagement sessions with young people, and parents and carers.

- Continuation of supporting voluntary, community, and social enterprise (VCSE)s to work with parents and carers of SEND children and young people to support them to share their views, and on individual matters.
- Engagement of young people with SEND in strategic decisions. This includes our Young SEND Ambassadors, a group of young people who represent and advocate for young people with SEND. For example, we are exploring with young people how they can best engage in the commissioning of specialist provision.
- Improvements to make information and access to services for children and young people and families more accessible and simpler. For example, using feedback from young people and families, we launched our new East Sussex SEND Local Offer and 1Space directory in January 2022.
- Working with schools and the ESPCF, we are developing a Parent's Charter to set out what parents and carers and pupils can expect from their education experience in East Sussex.

What else needs to happen?

- Young people and their families will be involved in strategic level conversations about their SEND support more consistently, and at the earliest possible stage.
- In consultation with young people and parents and carers, we will make changes so that feedback processes are more effective and consistent. This includes making it easier for parents and carers and young people to feedback and ensuring professionals report back to young people on the impact of their feedback.
- We will develop and diversify our representation and outreach, and work with young people with SEND across our communities in East Sussex.
- Schools, the local authority, ESPCF, health, social care will work together more collaboratively and communicate better with children and young people and their families.
- Processes and support will be made clearer, communications will be reviewed to ensure transparency, and that everyone involved has and shares the same information. This includes around e.g., applying for Education health and Care (EHC) plans, and pathways of support.
- There are more opportunities for children and young people to engage in diverse ways with services and professionals, including face-to-face sessions.

Outcomes- we know the Strategy is working when

Access to SEND services, including the Local Offer is simple, clear, accessible, and more consistent

- All partners are confident in their remit and roles, with strong partnerships and joint working in place.
- Children and young people and families are placed at the heart of decisions on SEND.
- Children and young people with SEND are supported to be involved and are more confident that their voices are feeding into decisions about their own support and informing strategic decisions
- Multi-agency working is co-ordinated to reduce the need for children, young people and families to repeat information to services and professionals
- Children and, young people and their families engage effectively in services.

Priority 1: Key success measures

- Clear processes for involving children and young people in decision-making, both at an individual and strategic level.
- Through these processes, children and young people become increasingly confident that their participation informs the review and design of services.
- Increasing numbers of parents and carers and young people report they feel listened to and feedback is acted on, including through service feedback, surveys and through representative groups of families and young people
- Clear feedback channels for children and young people which drive service change and improvement. Mechanisms are in place to communicate changes back to children and young people, and to explain if a change has not been possible, why not.
- Feedback is more positive about how easy it is to access information about services, and the East Sussex Local Offer.
- Children and young people and their families report that their voices have been heard and acted upon when accessing education, health and care services in East Sussex.

Priority 2- My optimum health and well-being are supported (physical and mental health)

All children and young people, including those with SEND, should be empowered to lead a healthy life. Being fit and healthy (physically and mentally) helps children and young people access education, employment, have active social lives, and go on to lead independent adult lives, wherever possible.

Accessing the right health services at the right time is key for good physical and mental health. However, good health and wellbeing relies on much more than accessing health services. Social, environmental, and cultural factors also affect our health and wellbeing. All parts of our system must work together to support the best health and wellbeing of every child and young person in our county, including reducing health inequalities.

The JSNA (Joint Strategic Needs Assessment) reported some positives on this area, including some service users reporting improved support for mental health and emotional wellbeing. The efforts of many health practitioners to stay in touch with families during COVID and working with them to find ways to provide support, was also mentioned.

However, our system is not working together as well as it should to deliver for children and young people on health and wellbeing. COVID has also had a negative impact on some of these areas. Existing challenges, including long waiting times to access some health services, have intensified.

On health and wellbeing, the JSNA review in 2021 found that:

- There is not enough capacity within the current system to meet need.
- Inconsistent joint-working means holistic support for all a child's needs is not always provided.
- There are significant waiting times for many health services which impacts on severity of need.
- High referral thresholds and criteria for health and respite services limit available support.

Summary of young person voice on health and wellbeing:

- Mental health support in schools can be patchy. In some schools it is great, in others, it is hard to access. Support needs to be the same across the county, in whatever school we attend.

Summary of parent and carer voice on health and wellbeing:

- The broader SEND system often has a significant impact not just on the young person, but on the wider family. This includes parent and carer mental health including significant stress, exhaustion, and isolation.
- A whole school and whole community approach needs to be adopted on health.

- Leadership on health and wellbeing needs to be more joined up.

What is already happening?

Our last strategy set out how we would improve access to mental health support for young people and parents and carers. Delivery in this area has included:

- Establishment of Mental Health Support Teams in over 50% of schools across East Sussex providing direct access for pupils to mental health support.
- Implementation of whole school approaches to mental health in all schools, resources and training provided to schools.
- Improved coordination of mental health and wellbeing services in Sussex as part of a broader Sussex wide strategy.
- Creation of a new Children's Board within the governance of the Sussex Integrated Care System (ICS), which will bring together work on both the mental and physical health of children and young people in the county, including children and young people with SEND

However, we know more progress is needed to improve service delivery

What else needs to happen on each of the JSNA recommendations?

- More capacity needs to be built in system to meet need.
 - Partners to work in an integrated fashion to better address need
 - Gaps in SEND provision for specific needs need to be addressed, i.e., Mental Health support for autistic children and young people
 - Investment in mental health support be prioritised, to support earlier intervention and diagnosis of conditions associated with mental health.
 - Roll out the newer Mental Health and Support Teams across schools and continue the whole school approach with improved early awareness of mental health issues and co-ordination and referrals between service providers.
 - Implementation of strategies and transformation plans which promote the physical health of children and young people with SEND.
 - Better implementation of existing initiatives (such as Annual Health Checks for children and young people with learning disabilities older than 14 years) and design of new services as required (such as the introduction of multidisciplinary health assessments).
 - Implementation of the SEND focused priorities in the Foundations for our Future Strategy which promotes the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children and young people.

- More consistent joint-working so holistic support for all a child's needs is provided
 - Increased shared leadership, improved process and coordination between different service providers, including the local authority, schools, GPs, and specialist and commissioned health services.
 - Children and young people and their families to receive consistent adequate and timely advice and assessment on physical and mental health from all services to ensure the early identification, and support of SEND.
- Waiting times need to be addressed
 - Commissioning of more effective and agile community-based health services to meet the health needs for children and young people with SEND. This will allow for
 - better utilisation of secondary care resources.
 - Address the fact that high levels of need are required before referrals can be made to health services, including access to mental health support for children and young people diagnosed with social emotional and mental health needs. The East Sussex delivery plan for the Sussex Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Strategy is one example to address these issues.
 - Close monitoring of the projects already underway to address waiting times and to improve access to mental health services for autistic children and young people.
 - Clear information on the support available whilst referrals or assessments.

We know the Strategy is working when

- Children and young people are supported to understand and independently manage, as much as possible, their health and wellbeing.
- Children and young people are supported wherever they live in county and whatever education they are receiving
- Children and young people are well supported before, after or without a diagnosis.
- Parents and carers experience a health and mental health system which is working better together and having a supportive impact on them, their young person, and broader family.

- Pathways will be clear, accessible, equitable and linked up across education, health and care for families and children and young people

Key success measures

- Reduced waiting times across different health and wellbeing services.
- Children, young people and families report better integration of services and reduced barriers to access of health and wellbeing services. This includes more children and young people and their families reporting that their plans and support provision are better coordinated, and that all providers and services involved have a better shared understanding of the child and young person's support needs.

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Priority 3 - I feel confident and secure (safety and security)

All children and young people should feel safe, secure, and nurtured. This includes at home, at school, and in their communities.

Feeling safe and secure is about more than feeling physically safe. Children and young people should feel understood and supported emotionally. Feeling safe and secure also means young people are confident to speak out to shape decisions about their own lives.

Yet, young people with SEND can experience additional challenges, at home and school.

Young people and their families report that the system is sometimes not supporting them as it should. The COVID-19 pandemic has made existing problems worse.

On safety and security, the JSNA review in 2021 found that:

- High referral thresholds and criteria for health and respite services limit available support

This section explores the issues identified with respite provision (priority 2 explored the health part of this finding).

Challenges across the social care system means that respite opportunities have not consistently been available, particularly for young people with the most complex needs.

- Parents and carers feel that high thresholds are a barrier to accessing respite services. Sometimes there is not enough support for children and young people whose needs do not meet criteria.
- The JSNA reported that respite was the most cited service that people did not know how to access.
- Other challenges around accessing respite include limited capacity in social care, and the lack of provision available, particularly for those with higher medical, physical or learning difficulty needs.
- Long waiting lists and high eligibility criteria are also affecting access to support, particularly around direct payments for respite.
- Reductions or ceasing of school and holiday provision has affected social opportunities for some young people, alongside parent carer respite. Lack of holiday provision can also have a negative impact on the broader family, including parents and carers, and sibling carers.

Summary of young person voice on inclusion and belonging

Clubs, including holiday and some school clubs across the county have been fantastic, but some have closed in the last year.

Summary of parent carer voice on inclusion and belonging

- Professionals must understand the impact of lack of resources and support. The alternative to no respite can end up being long term residential care for a young person.
- Support is needed not just for the young person but for the whole family who often become exhausted. The impact of lack of support and resources on family including other siblings huge. Families have or are at risk of breaking down.

What is already happening?

On respite

- Review the reach of Short Breaks, including overnight respite.
- Work between the local authority with parents and carers, and young people is underway to explore how to expand our short breaks offer.
- Information on the Local Offer is being improved to make clearer what respite or short break services are currently available.

In schools

As identified in the last strategy, various initiatives are underway to focus on improving these areas.

- Many schools in East Sussex have embraced [Therapeutic Thinking](#) which introduces a set of values for schools to embed support for young people, particularly in terms of their emotional wellbeing and mental health. Schools are working with the local authority to ensure a consistent understanding and implementation of approaches around inclusion, trauma-informed and restorative practice.
- The local authority is supporting the resourcing of nurture provision within schools and some schools are using innovative approaches to provision to meet the needs of children and young people.
- There are ongoing initiatives to reduce permanent exclusions within East Sussex schools. For example, the reducing Exclusions project is working with clusters of schools to set up a shared understanding of graduated support, and to give pupils alternative placements to avoid permanent exclusions.
- Schools are working closely with the local authority and other partners to prioritise improving attendance, including for young people with SEND. This includes understanding the differentiation of approaches required, including

the need to practice reasonable adjustments depending on the specific SEND needs. Additional funding has been allocated to schools to provide extra support for pupils who struggle with attending school regularly.

- We are also developing a pro-active and targeted response to attendance as we plan for implementation of the new DfE attendance guidance and will engage with partners in this work.

What else needs to happen?

- Depending on the outcomes of the social care led initiatives to review the reach of Short Breaks, including overnight respite, form a multi-agency action plan to address this.
- Planning to revive and sustain school and holiday clubs and access to existing Holiday Programmes for SEND children and young people.
- Children, young people and families involved in joint commissioning of services from the beginning.
- Collaboration between children, young people, their families and schools to better understand the issues around attendance and exclusions and agree new ways of working.

We know the Strategy is working when

- All schools feel confident to follow a Therapeutic Thinking approach to behaviour to ensure pupils feel safe and secure and families report positive outcomes from this.
- Children and young people with SEND receive the support they need to maintain a positive and healthy life, parents and carers trust that their children and young people are receiving safe and enjoyable respite care, and siblings and carers receive the support they need.
- More opportunities for respite or short breaks are available. Ultimately, we want all young people with complex needs who require accommodation in local provision to access it at the level and frequency needed. Parent and carers know how to access respite care to meet their families' needs and the criteria for these are clear and publicly available.

Key success measures

- Reduced waiting lists for respite services.
- Increased availability and take-up of short break offers, and school and holiday clubs for young people with SEND across the range of needs, with appropriate support within each club.
- Improved parental feedback about availability to existing holiday clubs and programmes.
- Improved school attendance levels for children and young people with SEND.
- Reduction in number of permanent exclusions and suspensions of young people with SEND.

Priority 4: I belong and feel valued for who I am - Inclusion and Belonging

All children and young people have a right to have their needs met and to access an appropriate curriculum to progress, achieve and thrive. This includes those who experience barriers to learning. Effective inclusive education provides all children and young people with access to education and support so that they can, wherever possible, attend a local school with their peers, to the benefit of all.

Being in an inclusive environment also helps young people to be confident in who they are and what they aspire to in the future. This includes making it more likely that a young person goes on to higher education or training after secondary school, and into employment.

There is some excellent inclusive practice evident across all types of schools and settings in East Sussex. However, young people and parents and carers have told us that inclusive practice is not yet consistent. We also acknowledge that different young people in the same school have different experiences, as approaches to, and knowledge of inclusive practice may vary. Fewer children and young people with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan in East Sussex attend their local mainstream school compared with nationally. Schools are committed to providing the best education to all children and young people but can face challenges with resourcing, capacity and expertise of staff.

Inclusion in education also about ensuring that children and young people with SEND who are not currently accessing education are able to reintegrate back into education, this includes those accessing hospital education provision, young people in custodial settings and those educated at home because their needs are not being met in school'.

Issues with provision in education

- The JSNA highlighted higher levels of pupils with SEND missing school.
- Children and young people with SEND have more unauthorised absences from school than those without additional needs. Young people with SEND are also more likely to be suspended or permanently excluded than those without SEND.
- This is concerning as children and young people with SEND who are excluded are more likely to have difficulties with learning and attention than their peers.
- This means that some children and young people with SEND do not feel well supported, or that they belong in in school.

On the area of inclusion and belonging, the JSNA review in 2021 found that:

- Early identification and intervention systems are not sufficient to pick up all needs for all children.

Early identification and intervention help to ensure young children and young people are best supported from the earliest opportunity. When this happens, early years and school staff know how to best support young children, and to provide inclusive education; this also gives parents and carers confidence that their child and young person's needs can be met within a mainstream setting.

Therefore, the fact that early identification and intervention systems are not picking up all needs for all children is a key barrier to some children and young people accessing mainstream education. This can result in a reduction in engagement and attendance. We also know that some children and young people are receiving suspensions relating to communicating their needs through challenging behaviour, which can lead to further disengagement in learning,

Summary of young people voice on inclusion and belonging:

- More consistency and understanding around inclusion from school staff needed. This includes within the same school.
- All school staff need to have a basic understanding of key SEN needs and behaviours. If there are knowledge and practice gaps for core staff (e.g., SENCOs (Special Educational Needs Coordinators), these gaps may be shared more widely.
- More social and leisure events and opportunities for young people with SEND needed across the county- some areas are under-represented.

Summary of parent carer voice on inclusion and belonging:

- Whilst inclusion is working very well for some young people in some schools this is often not consistent within and across schools.
- More focus on early intervention and prevention to address numbers of young people with lower level behavioural needs. But this needs to be balanced with support needed at all levels.

What is already happening?

Our last Strategy set out how we would work with educational settings to build capacity for inclusion. This remains a priority.

- The development of more specialist facilities in mainstream schools is promoting inclusion and sharing of best practice in meeting children and young people's SEND needs across the whole school.
- The East Sussex Quality Mark for Inclusion provides a structured way for schools to review and assess their provision for support for SEN pupils
- Schools Forum have allocated funding from the High Needs Block to support inclusion in mainstream schools recognising the vital role that schools play in securing positive life outcomes for young people with SEND.

- Special schools across the county support inclusion in tailored ways in response to the needs of the children and young people attending.

What else needs to happen?

- The local authority to work with early years settings and schools to create more training opportunities for the school workforce, harnessing knowledge and expertise from special schools to help promote consistently inclusive practice in mainstream education.
- All professionals involved with a child or young person to have a good understanding of SEN needs, identify gaps, and clarity on how to ask for support, and from whom.
- Involve parents and carers and children and young people in the further development of the East Sussex Quality Mark for Inclusion so that it provides reassurance of inclusion standards being met or worked towards, and there being effective scrutiny and support in place for schools
- School leaders and the local authority develop a shared understanding of how limited resources can be best utilised to support inclusion.
- Work with post-16 providers to review pathways and develop new provision that meet the needs of children and young people with SEND

We know the Strategy is working when

- Children and young people report experiencing more inclusive experience within schools.
- Professionals within EYFS settings and schools are consistently well supported by the local authority and have more consistent knowledge.
- Children and young people with SEND are accessing the inclusion support required earlier, more promptly and more consistently.
- Criteria for SEND needs assessments is clear and understood by all involved, there is greater transparency in decision-making and improved confidence in the processes from families, children and young people
- Schools and EYFS providers report higher confidence in meeting the needs of children and young people.
- There is a shared understanding of inclusion expectations from both parents and carers and schools.

Key success measures

- Increase in earlier and timely identification of needs.
- Referrals are made to other services and agencies are made in a timely manner, where needed.

Priority 5- I am supported to develop and achieve my goals (progress and achievement)

Priority 4 set out how we will ensure that all children and young people are seen, understood and have a sense of belonging so that their educational needs can be met. Priority 5 builds on this, and focusses on our ambition for young people with SEND to be supported in the best ways to help them achieve the best possible educational progress. This includes going onto achieving their goals as adults.

To achieve this, consistency in terms of educational access and outcomes, is key. Young people should receive an appropriate offer of SEND support whatever school they attend, wherever in our county they live. A more consistent high-quality offer will help ensure improved educational outcomes for children and young people.

On progress and achievement, the JSNA review in 2021 found that:

- Provision for pupils with SEND is inconsistent across schools.
- There is a view amongst some parents and carers that the EHCP process of assessment and allocation is not working effectively or fairly.

Data shows us that there are inconsistent outcomes and progress for children and young people with SEND in schools in East Sussex. Parents and carers, and children and young people also tell us that the quality of provision and support available is inconsistent. The National Green Paper on SEND identified this as a national problem and sets out a proposal for national standards for SEN provision.

Summary of young people voice on progress and achievement

- EHCPs are important for some but should not be the only thing talked about. Consistency across different types of schools needs to be talked about more.
- More focus on post 16s pathways is needed. This includes more structured pathways, a more consistent Post 16 offer, and wider range of employment, education, or training opportunities.

Summary of parent carer voice on progress and achievement

- The quality of SEND provision available across schools is inconsistent.
- The EHCP process is overly complex and negative system, full of delays and where important info does not always get transferred.
- View from many that the EHCP decision-making flawed - demonstrated by refusal to assess & tribunal rulings.
- Some parents and carers feel so frustrated by the lack of support in the early stages that they apply for an EHCP to get some support in place. If SEND provision was better from the outset, some might not need to apply for an EHCP.

What is already happening.

Priority four set out actions already underway to improve early intervention and identification systems. The implementation of actions from the last strategy is building capacity and SEN expertise in schools to further increase knowledge and confidence amongst staff.

- Schools, colleges, and educational settings have a strong commitment to delivering improved outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The Primary and Secondary Boards have focused activity and funding to support improvements.
- Peer to peer support is providing a range of opportunities for key school staff to share knowledge and good practice
- Quality assurance framework in place for specialist facilities, network for specialist facilities shares good practice and supports provision development.
- A new framework for quality assuring all special school provision has been developed with other local authorities regionally.
- A range of supported employment and internships opportunities are available in East Sussex through our post-16 providers.

On the EHCP process

- Families and schools have reported very clearly that referral for EHCPs is difficult, and if referred it is a high likelihood that they will be refused. In line with national views, the EHCP assessment and application processes are perceived to be too lengthy and complex, lacking honesty and transparency, and a huge struggle for those trying to navigate them.
- Senior Local Authority managers are working with ESPCF to further understand these issues and make recommendations for improving systems and communication with parent and carers.

What else needs to happen

- Children and young people with SEND receive appropriate educational provision regardless of where they live in the county.
- Improved partnership working between all relevant professionals, including schools, and parents and carers, around key transitional phases: Reception to Year 1; Year 2 to Year 3, Year 6 to Year 7; and Year 11 to post-16 and into employment.
- More options and clearer pathways for preparing for adulthood so individuals feel supported up to and when they reach age 25 and increase their independence.

- More opportunities for young people with SEND around long-term goals and careers.
- Improvements are made to improve the EHCP process for referrals and assessments, building on the work to better understand the issues

We will know the Strategy is working when

- Attainment gap between CYP with SEND and their peers without SEND reduces, and they progress and achieve in line with or above peers with SEND nationally.
- Mainstream schools consistently provide the support needed to enable YP to attend and achieve.
- Young people feel like they are being supported to make their own decisions about their future.
- There is a consistently good offer of SEND provision in East Sussex schools, education settings, and colleges, and private early years settings.
- Children and young people with SEND have a wider range of employment, education, or training opportunities that enables them to develop life skills and start options for independent learning and living

Key success measures

- Improvement in outcomes at all key stages for children and young with SEND.
- Increase in the number of children and young with SEND who are in education, employment, or training between 16-25 years old.
- More children and young people feedback that they are better supported before and during transition periods, including when they are no longer eligible for a service.
- Increase in number of supported employment opportunities available post 16 and post 19.

Implementation, Leadership, and Governance of the SEND Strategy

Good oversight and governance are key to ensuring that our Strategy is on track, and that different parts of our Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) system work well together. All partners working in our SEND system must pull together to make things better. This includes everyone being clear about what they are responsible for. Everyone must also be clear of the implications if something they have committed to cannot or does not happen.

Strong leadership from across statutory partners is essential to us achieving our shared priorities. Responsibility for SEND must be shared among leaders across local government, education, health and social care.

Our Strategy priorities must be undertaken in partnership by stakeholders. Strong collaborative leadership between school leaders, local authority, health, and social care professionals is essential to this. Leaders must create an environment for effective practice and multi-agency working to flourish. This includes making the right decisions, at the right time, and in the right way. Leaders are responsible for commissioning provision to meet the needs and aspirations of young people, evaluating services and making improvements

For this to be effective, children and young people and families must be involved at every stage. The new OFSTED inspection framework outlines these clear expectations. East Sussex Parent Carer Forum has a key role in ensuring every parent carer in East Sussex feels that their voice, their views and their experiences matter and contribute towards developing and improving services. ESPCF achieves this by reaching out to parents and carers to hear their views, representing parents and carers' experience and expertise to decision-makers, and working with statutory partners to achieve service improvement.

Our new East Sussex SEND Strategy Governance Board will bring together leaders across the SEND landscape in East Sussex. This group will oversee work on SEND in our county, and drive progress. It will monitor delivery of the Strategy and hold organisations to account. Parent and carers will have a voice in the Board through the ESPCF, and children and young people will have their voice represented by young people from the Youth SEND Ambassador group supported by an Engagement Officer.

We have recruited an independent Chair to this Board to work with key stakeholders. This is to ensure that the best placed people are in the group, so that it is as effective as possible. Members will provide strong strategic leadership, provide challenge and support to each other. This group will drive improvement and effect change where necessary. Members have the seniority and mandate to help move things along if there are challenges.

Through representatives on the East Sussex SEND Strategy Governance Board, priorities for children and young people with SEND, and of parents and carers, will

be reflected in sector-specific strategic groups (e.g., Headteacher Boards). Priorities across the SEND landscape will be aligned.

Our action plan will be delivered through our East Sussex SEND Inclusion Plan working group, and partners' own delivery plans. Each partner will be charged with delivery. This working group is formed of partners from across our SEND community. This includes from education, health, social care, the voluntary sector, and parents and carers. This group will report to the SEND Governance Board.

We will also commit to regular engagement with children and young people and parents and carers. This includes regular, ongoing engagement sessions bringing together parents and carers, young people, and professionals. In these sessions, we will discuss progress against our Strategy, including against our success measures.

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Further Information

[This space is reserved for contact and engagement details]

Please find details here of our engagement to date.

- SEND Strategy Governance Board page [\[link to follow\]](#)
- Overview of our engagement with young people- which groups we have engaged in, how we plan to develop this. [\[link to follow\]](#)
- Link to more information about the Young SEND Ambassadors: [Have Your Say | East Sussex Local Offer website](#)
- [East Sussex Parent Carer Forum \(ESPCF\) Website](#)
- [Amaze Special Educational Needs and Disability Support Service](#) (SENDIASS)