We want every child and young person to have the greatest possible opportunity to be the best they can be, to be happy, and have choice and control over their life.

Somerset’s Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy for Children and Young People aged 0-25

2016-19
Foreword

Our vision, the vision of all partners and services, is for every one of the 110,000 children and young people in Somerset to be safe, healthy, happy, ambitious for their future, and develop skills for life. This is a vision for all children, including those with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). We want them all to have the opportunity to be the best they can be, to be happy, and to have choice and control over their support.

We know that generally Somerset children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities don’t achieve the same educational, health and social outcomes as other children across the country. All partners accept that it is time for a change. We need to transform our services and work together to make sure that the child or young person is at the centre of everything that we do. That way young people, their families, supported by all partners, can raise their aspirations and improve their outcomes.

Leaders in health and care, schools, nurseries and colleges must work together with young people and their parent carers to ensure we know:

- what our children, young people, children and their parents want us to achieve and the ambitions they hold for themselves – aspirations and outcomes
- what the child or young person needs, as early as possible – identification
- the best way to meet those needs – intervention
- the difference we are making – impact

With recent changes in legislation and ambitions for people with SEND we have a golden opportunity to improve all our services. This strategy is the partnership response to the challenge to all of us. This is the way we will work with children and young people, and their parent carers, so they are in control and we provide the right help at the right time to support them to be the best they can be.

I commend it to you.

Frances Nicholson
Cabinet Member for Children and Families
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Executive Summary

We are publishing our new SEND Strategy following some of the biggest reforms in national policy for health, special educational needs and disability in over 30 years. The Children and Families Act 2014, clearly sets out roles and responsibilities for the Local Authority and partners, in ensuring that children and young people with SEND receive the support and advice that they need to achieve their full potential.

Together, all Somerset partners agreed the guiding principles for developing a successful SEND system and defined our overarching vision as enabling Somerset’s children and young people to have better education, health and emotional wellbeing outcomes.

Key challenges and drivers

- the new legislation requires that we implement significant changes to our processes and to the way we work and provide services
- we are required to deliver these services by knowing our children and young people well, by targeting services better and using our resources efficiently
- we are experiencing significant financial pressures on budgets in education (Dedicated schools grant DSG) and across the health service and County Council
- although Somerset is relatively affluent, children and young people live in families and communities where there are many complex influences on vulnerability, for example there are 10 neighbourhoods within the most deprived 10%, and 19 within the most deprived 20%, in England. All are urban, whilst children in need living within rural areas face particularly difficult issues with less contact with existing services
- there are some indicators which show an unusual pattern of identification of special educational needs (SEN) in Somerset (eg very high Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs)
- the rate of exclusions of children with special educational needs and disability (SEND) is high, and attendance is too low
- there is a historical hybrid system of allocation of resources (statutory and non-statutory) which means that Somerset has one of the lowest percentage of statements or EHCPs in the country but a high level of identification of children and young people through the high needs funding system
- we have experienced some challenges in the implementation of the reforms especially in lower rates of compliance with statutory deadlines than expected
- parent-carers and young people have engaged well, providing support and challenge, and they are very clear about what they want services to achieve
- we have high aspirations for all our children and young people and want to ensure that we deliver the best outcomes for those with SEND within a framework of “Think Individuals, Think Families, Think Communities”

1 Somersetintelligence.org.uk [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment summary 2016]
Our Vision

We want every child and young person to have the greatest possible opportunity to be the best they can be, to be happy, and have choice and control over their life.

Our Outcomes

This policy set out a clear direction for the future. In partnership with parent-carers, young people and partners across education, care and health we have identified five key outcomes for the next three years.

Outcome 1 – our families, children and young people report a positive experience of our SEND systems and support, feel empowered and confident to engage and to make decisions.

Outcome 2 – timely and accurate assessment and identification of SEND across education, health and care services.

Outcome 3 – inclusive and equitable access to good quality local education.

Outcome 4 – smooth and effective transitions happen at key points for the child and young person.

Outcome 5 – creative partnership working delivers effective, fair and transparent systems and services.

How are we going to deliver on our outcomes?

The Local Authority and its partners will deliver on these outcomes by keeping a watchful eye on the progress and outcomes of every child and young person to ensure they do their best and achieve well. We will find better ways to understand:

- What the child or young person wants to achieve – aspirations
- What the child or young person needs, as early as possible – identification
- The best way to meet those needs – intervention
- The difference we are making – impact
1. Introduction

1.1 Who are children and young people with SEND?

Special Educational Needs

A child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she:

a) Has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age; or
b) Has a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream school or mainstream post-16 institutions

A child under compulsory school age has special educational needs if they fall within the definition at (a) or (b) above or would do so if special educational provision was not made for them.

Clause 20 Children and Families Act (2014)

Disability

A child is disabled if he or she is blind, deaf or dumb or suffers from a mental disorder of any kind or is substantially and permanently handicapped by illness, injury or congenital deformity or such other disability as may be prescribed.

Section 17 (11) - Children Act (1989)

A person has a disability for the purposes of this Act if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Section 6 - Equality Act (2010)

1.2 National context

1.2.1 The new Children and Families Act 2014 introduced a set of significant reforms across education, care and health services.
The new vision for children and young people with SEN and disabilities is the same as that for all children and young people; that they achieve well in their early years, at school and in college and that they find employment, lead happy and fulfilled lives and experience choice and control.

The SEND reforms placed a responsibility on local authorities and its partners to integrate services, to deliver support from birth to 25, to offer this support as early as possible and make decisions with the full involvement of parent-carers, children and young people so that services deliver to outcomes which are shaped by the aspirations of the individual children/young people and their families.

The new code has also introduced new duties on early years, schools, academies, colleges, health and social care partners to work together on shaping the Local Offer through joint assessment, planning and commissioning of services.

Successful preparation for adult life is the overarching goal for all children and young people with SEND.

1.2.2 The new school funding regulations implemented in 2013 changed the way in which all early years setting, schools, including academies and colleges are funded to deliver SEN provision.

The aim of this change, specifically the introduction of the financial threshold of £10K for funding children with high needs, has meant increased delegation of funding to educational settings which accounts for the majority of total available funding through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

The national funding arrangements for early years and high needs are currently under further national review with an aim to achieve fairer funding distribution across the country.

1.2.3 The Government’s strategy to manage the national debt has serious implications for public sector funding which remains under significant financial pressure across education, health and care. As never before, the financial constraints require new creative and effective solutions to ensure that provision targets children and young people well.

1.2.4 We are also in the process of significant changes in the way schools are organised and governed. The White Paper, Educational Excellence Everywhere, published in March 2016, sets out a new national vision for much greater autonomy for schools which will align funding, control, responsibility and accountability in one place.

The White Paper also sets out a new vision for the future role of local authorities which will focus on three areas: ensuring that every child has a school place, ensuring the needs of vulnerable pupils are met and acting as champions for all parents and families.

Subsequently, in September 2016 the government has released its green paper outlining plans to allow new grammar schools to open along with other major school reforms.
1.3 **Somerset strategic links**

The SEND Strategy is closely aligned to the overall vision for all children and young people to be safe, healthy, and happy and it is ambitious for their future and the development of skills for life.

1.3.1 **Children and Young Peoples Plan (2016-19)** aims for children and young people to:

- be treated fairly and have a voice in what matters to them
- achieve economic independence and contribute to their community
- learn well and develop skills for life
- make healthy choices and develop resilience
- be confident, ambitious and achieve success

**Somerset’s Early Help Strategy** (2016-2019) is designed to support children, families, communities and agencies to work together so that families are assisted to help themselves and are supported as soon as a need arises, thereby improving the overall wellbeing and quality of life of all Somerset’s children, young people and their families.

1.3.2 **The Somerset Education Strategy 'Achieving Excellence for All'** and the underpinning document 'Improving outcomes for children with SEND' recognised that this SEND strategy is also dependent on:

- good SEN practice in every setting
- a stronger commitment to inclusion in education settings
- a closer partnership between early years, schools, special schools, Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and colleges
- investment in more mainstream schools becoming centres of specialist expertise
- more effective commissioning of educational placements that creatively meet the needs of children and young people as close to home as possible

1.3.3 Within Somerset there are many NHS Provider organisations involved in implementing the SEND reforms. Leadership for this agenda has been provided by the Director of Quality Safety and Governance at Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and a strong clinical leadership provided in each NHS Trust by identified lead consultant paediatricians. They work in partnership to deliver positive outcomes relating to **The NHS Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group Strategy** (2014-2019). It has four strategic themes:

1. **encouraging communities and individuals to take more control of and responsibility for their own health and wellbeing** so that people of all ages in Somerset understand the need and feel able to take responsibility for their own and their communities health and wellbeing

2. **developing joined up person centred care** so that the people in Somerset experience care in a way that is meaningful to them, and in a way that puts their needs at the very heart of those around them who are supporting them
3. **transform the effectiveness and efficiency of urgent and acute care across all services** so that when people need to access urgent and emergency care they should be seen by the right health/social care professional, in the right setting and at the right time, right quality and cost

4. **sustain and continually improve the quality of all service so that the people in Somerset will be healthier with access to high quality care that is affordable and sustainable; they will receive the very best care that is delivered by staff with the right clinical skills and the time to provide care with compassion every day; all NHS staff have pride in what they do and are respected by patients and the public**

1.3.4 The key features of all our partnership plans:

- **child, young person and family centred** – keeping children, young people and their families at the heart of everything we do
- **prevention** – addressing issues early and effectively
- **collaboration** – working with others to effectively use our resources in commissioning and delivery of services
- **integration** – providing joined up care and support that is not hindered by organisational, service or professional boundaries

This means challenging the historical way we have worked, becoming more flexible and creative in finding solutions that meet individual needs, giving families and young people control over what affects them, and working across organisational and service boundaries.

1.4 **Somerset context**

1.4.1 Somerset is the 12th largest geographical county in England. According to the Office of National Statistics (ONS) 48% of Somerset’s population is classified as living in a rural area, making it one of the ten most rural local authorities in England.

There are approximately 110,000 children and young people under the age of 18 living in Somerset (20% of the total population) and 30,000 of those are aged 0-4 years (JSNA summary 2016), 68,700 children and young people attend state-funded schools in Somerset (January 2016 school census).

1.4.2 **Future demand**

The overall demographic growth over the life time of the strategy and through to 2026 can be described as moderate, although there are significant differences between the four geographical areas of the county, for example there will be more medium to long-term population growth in Bridgwater, Taunton and Yeovil compared to Mendip.

The rise in pupil numbers (primary age range) has generally followed the national trend. There has been a 9.5% (3501) increase in primary pupils since 2009. The fall in secondary pupil numbers is now effectively at an end. The DfE forecast national trend is for a slowing in the rate of increase towards the end of the decade, whereas in Somerset that slowing is forecast to occur slightly earlier and become a slight decline by 2010.
Nonetheless the 2015 reception year at 5952 is the largest numbers of pupils starting school since Somerset has existed in its current boundaries. Primary school numbers are forecast to increase in the early years of the forecast and then level out with an increase in secondary schools from 2016 as the primary sector works its way into the secondary sector. The forecast rise from 2015 to 2016 is the largest rise in the forecast period. Sufficiency and planning of provision for special educational needs will need to take account of this increase, for example in the number of special school placements and anticipated requests for statutory assessment.

1.4.3 Special Educational Needs, current demand

Somerset has 15.6% of children with special educational needs (SEN Support and Education and Health and Care Plans/Statements of SEN). This compares with a national figure of 14.8%. This figure includes all types of schools including free schools and independent schools (school census 2016 as reported in Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT). Somerset has a range of independent schools, including a number of specialist SEN independent schools which include pupils placed from outside Somerset.

The figures for state-funded schools only shows 9,607 pupils with all special educational needs (based on where the pupil attends school) from a total of 68,794 (14%). This figure does not include pupils placed outside the state funded sector, for example in independent schools. This compares to 14.9% regionally and 14.3 nationally (Statistical First Release (SFR29 2016 based on school census data)).

Nationally the number of pupils with special educational needs continues to decline due to the reduction in numbers of pupils with special educational needs without a statement or Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan (11.6%). The percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or EHC Plan has increased but remains 2.8% of the total pupil population. In Somerset the percentage is 1.6% which has remained fairly constant over the past 5 years. The overall numbers for special educational needs in Somerset have been static for the past two years (since the introduction of the reforms which have changed the way data is recorded and presented therefore preventing longer term trend analysis).

The SEND legislation covers the age range 0-25 years. The total number with EHC Plans/Statements and/or high needs funding 0-25 years is 4207 (3.8% – calculated as a percentage of the 0-18 population approximation). 1403 with either an EHCP or Statement of Education Need, and 2804 receive High Needs Funding (with and without statement of SEN/EHCP) (source: Somerset SEND data dashboard)

Special educational needs remains more prevalent in boys (14.7%) than in girls (8.2%) with 4.2% of boys and 1.5% girls with statement or EHC Plan (state funded schools; SFR 2016). In Somerset the gender difference is greater than the national picture with 18.8% boys and 9.3% girls identified with SEN (all types of SEN).

Pupils with special educational needs remain more likely to be eligible for free schools meals (27.2% compared to 12.1% for pupils without SEN). In Somerset 23% of pupils with special educational needs are eligible for free school meals compared to 8.3% of the pupil without special educational needs that are eligible for free schools meals.
1.4.4 SEN Needs

Primary need is collected for those pupils on SEN support or with a statement or Education, Health and Care Need.

The bar charts below enable comparison between Somerset figures and the national average for types of SEN need (all types of SEN, source SFR/school census).

![Bar chart showing percentage of primary pupils by primary special educational need in state funded primary schools (source SFR 2016 (school census))](image1)

![Bar chart showing percentage of secondary pupils by primary special educational need in state funded schools (source SFR 2016 (school census))](image2)
Figure 3. Percentage of pupils by primary special educational need in special schools (source SFR 2016 (school census))

Moderate learning difficulty remains the most common type of need overall across England as a whole, and has increased from 23.8% to 24.2% in the last year. Autistic Spectrum Disorder remains the most common need for pupils with a statement or EHC Plan. This has increased from 24.5% in 2016 to 25.9% in 2016.

The graph below provides an overview of needs types for Somerset over the last 8 years for pupils with high needs (statements/EHCP and high needs funding without a statement/EEHC Plan; source Somerset dashboard).

Figure 4. Overview of needs type for children and young people with special educational needs (high needs funded with and without statement/Education Health and Care Plans) 2009-2016
The key areas where Somerset’s data is different from the picture elsewhere is with regard to:

- social, emotional and mental health where Somerset shows a higher level of need than south west authorities and in England
- speech, language and communication needs rising in the high needs group
- a lower level of identified need for autistic spectrum disorder and moderate learning difficulties
- lower statement/EHC Plan rate with a high number of children/young people receiving high needs funding without a statement/EHC Plan

In line with the national picture, in recent years there has been an increasing trend for parental requests for placements in special schools. We also know that in Somerset too many children are educated out of area: in independent and out-of-county schools. This means that too many children are educated at some distance from their home community and spend too much time travelling. This also means that we are spending money on transport that should be invested in other services that directly benefit children and young people and we are not sufficiently utilising local skills and expertise so that parents can gain more confidence in a good quality local provision.

Parents have specifically asked us to ensure that this strategy increases support in mainstream schools, colleges and special schools to ensure children can be educated nearer to home. Families tell us that services lack coordination and they have to struggle to access the support they need (source SCC Satisfaction survey 2015). Surveys consistently highlight that many children are unable to access social activities in their local community because some universal services feel unable to include them (source; Positive Outcomes Evaluation Tool (POET) 2015).

At age 16, many young people with special educational needs and those who are disabled, do not have the same opportunities as other young people to progress to further learning and training and to access employment and independent living as they move into early adulthood. The percentage of young people in Somerset with special educational needs aged 16-17 years remaining in education and training has decreased by 5.4% to 79.26% from 2014-15. The percentage of 19 years olds qualified at level 3 has decreased for all pupils with SEN; for those without a statement of SEN this decrease has been year on year from 2012 to 2015, for those with a statement/EHC Plan there has been a decrease from 16.3% in 2013, to 6.6% in 2015.

Whilst qualification at level 2 has increased for 19 year old young people without special educational needs and also for young people without a statement/EHCP at above the national rate, for young people with a statement/EHC Plan, the percentage achieving level 2 has shown a reduction in 2015 of 7% (15% in 2012, 11.1% in 2013, 15.3% in 2014, 8.3% in 2015) (LAIT 2016). In line with national figures, paid employment for adults with learning difficulties has decreased (CIPFA local SEND report 2016).
1.5 Financial context

In the current economic climate, the financial pressure on public sector services is acute. In Somerset, we are required to set reduced budgets for many of our services over the next four years.

Nevertheless, we recognise that within these financial constraints there is a genuine opportunity to be more efficient and increase effectiveness. To achieve this we must ensure that our provision targets the right children and young people at the right time.

Somerset's spend on SEND is higher compared to statistical neighbour authorities and is growing as seen in the graph and table below (S251 Budget based on spend per DSG funded pupils).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average High Needs Block spend per every DSG funded pupil</th>
<th>LA Spend 2014/15</th>
<th>LA Spend 2015/16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Somerset</td>
<td>£507</td>
<td>£533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistical neighbours (excl Somerset)</td>
<td>£401</td>
<td>£408</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Comparative spend (High Needs Block) 2014-16

Somerset allocates more than £72m annually (21% of the Dedicated Schools Grant) in supporting the needs of children and young people with SEN and those who are disabled; this amount of funding is above average.

The above figure includes £29m in the mainstream school budget, with the remainder being the High Needs Block of £43m. High needs budget is spent on commissioning places in special schools, top up funding in mainstream schools, colleges and early years the cost of SEN support service and alternative provision for children and young people of all ages.
In the case of children and young people who cannot be supported in a local mainstream school or college, the local authority procures placements in a range of Somerset special schools, resource bases, schools and colleges in other local authorities and in the independent and non-maintained sector. Somerset placements in this sector have increased by 25% over the last year alone.

There is a clear expectation that local authorities make best use of the funding available, especially as there is increasing demand and pressure in meeting needs. We are working to review our use of all types of placements.

In addition to the funding for in school/college pupil support, spend for SEND transport is approximately £3.6m per year and the demand is likely to grow. If we can increase the number of children who are supported in their local schools, we will be able to improve on more targeted funding for children and young people.

In addition Somerset spends £5.9m annually on disabled children’s services which includes £1.2m on overnight residential short breaks.

2. **Looking Back – Developing this Strategy**

2.1 Partnership working strongly supported by our Parent Carer Forum has been a constant feature since we started to work on the SEND reforms. In particular, our Parent Carer Forum and our Young People’s Champions have worked closely with us to co-produce our new SEND Strategy.

2.2 Our Young People’s Champions have helped us set up a Young Person’s Forum comprising young people with SEND aged 13-25 who have named themselves ‘The Unstoppables’. They are now actively involved in all aspects of planning, policy and decision making, training and awareness raising.

2.3 In March 2015 we established a multi-agency SEND Strategy Board reporting to the Children’s Trust Board. The Board and its new governance arrangements with 4 sub groups leading on:

- information, choice, participation and partnership
- identification and assessment
- intervention and commissioning
- impact

These have attracted considerable support from across education, health and care, are well attended and very well supported by our parent carer forum and young people’s champions on behalf of the Unstoppables. The Board has carried out a comprehensive self-evaluation of the local area’s effectiveness in meeting SEND requirements and local needs and in so doing, identified our key areas of focus for this strategy.

2.4 The Authority undertook two customer satisfaction surveys in the Autumn of 2015 which highlighted two key areas of improvement which were communication, and community inclusion which have also been fed into this strategy.
3. **Somerset’s Vision for Children and Young People**

We want **every** child and young person to have the greatest possible opportunity to be the best they can be, to be happy, and have choice and control over their life.

3.1 Somerset’s commitment to inclusion and equal opportunity for ALL children and young people is key to the overall success of the SEND strategy.

3.2 All children and young people in Somerset have the right to an inclusive education where they feel they belong. An inclusive education encourages all children and young people to be the best they can be, whilst making learning enjoyable and fulfilling; socially, emotionally and academically.

3.3 We want to develop a well-planned continuum of provision from birth to age 25 that meets the needs of children and young people with SEND and their families. This means integrated services across education, health and social care, work closely with parent carers and young people so that individual needs are appropriately identified and met. It also means a strong commitment to early intervention and prevention so that children’s and young people’s needs do not increase as a result of late response and the right service is available at the right time. They should be offered high quality provision which ensures good outcomes.

3.4 We aim to ensure children and young people with special educational needs and/or a disability and their parents carers fully participate in co-producing the services that will best ensure good outcomes and a positive transition to adulthood.

3.5 **A Graduated Approach**

The SEND (0-25) Code of Practice (2014) sets out that all types of educational settings should follow a Graduated Approach – a cycle of assessment, planning, providing and reviewing as the best way of obtaining good progress for ALL children/young people.
**Assessment of Need** is about accurate and timely understanding of needs which is achieved by listening to the views of children, young people, their parents and carers, working together, ensuring good quality practitioner assessments and good communication which will empower families to fully participate as equal partners.

**Plan** is about ensuring that needs are well understood and where progress gives cause for concern practitioners work in partnership with parents/carers to develop a plan to ensure that children/young people with SEND receive the right levels of support for their future learning and development.

**Do** is about taking action which is relevant to the originally assessed needs, delivered or supported by appropriately trained and supported staff. Agreed outcomes should be the focus of the additional support.

**Review** is about checking regularly on the effectiveness of the support and the impact on the children/young person’s progress so that changes can be put in place appropriately and understanding what works well, improves planning for the future.

A graduated approach with the right service, at the right time, for the right children and young people, provided timely and effectively will achieve the best possible outcomes.
Levels of Need:

**Universal** – children and young people whose needs are met by universal services and are making good progress

**Additional** – children and young people who may have specific unmet need(s) and who may require targeted early support. Where a child or young person continues to make little or no progress, or if a child/young person is not developing as expected or is not responding to action being taken, educational settings should consult external professionals from across education, health and care to advise and assist.

**Complex** – Children and young people who despite targeted intervention and application of the graduated response continue to experience significant difficulties which require a more personalised and intensive response.

**Acute** – Children and young people who continue to have multiple, unmet, significant needs and the lack of progress causes serious concerns across most areas of development.
4. How we are making it happen

Outcome 1

Our families, children and young people report a positive experience of our SEND systems and support, feel empowered and confident to engage and to make decisions.

This means we will deliver an aspirational, outcomes driven, system which is about people, not organisations.

Somerset Parent Carer Forum

What we have done so far?

We have a strong Parent Carer Forum (SPCF) whose membership has grown from 123 in 2014 to 500 in 2016. SPCF have been proactive in engaging with all partners to ensure that parent and carers voices are heard. Some of the success stories include:

- setting up a pilot scheme of ‘Educarer’ groups in schools and a network of Finding Your Way support groups
- co-production of a range of strategies
- providing support in operational and strategic implementation of the reforms
- development of consultation routes
- chair of a strategy sub-group (information, choice, participation)
- leading and co-delivery for the development of materials, training and communication events

The difference this has made…

- better understanding of the national SEND reforms amongst parents, increased parental participation, increased feeling of being listened to, increased realisation of the benefits of coproduction and partnership such as increased access to regional and national networks and increased capacity to deliver workforce support and training
- timely responses on a range of local and national developments including the short breaks consultation and the Autism strategy.
- early identification of issues raised by parents
- open and honest discussions are now much easier and so joint working is more effective.
What we need to do next?

Build on this work and:

- extend membership and representation, particularly encouraging participation of fathers, and parents of children across all types of SEND
- develop a sustainable solution to secure the future of the forum so that SPCF can continue to support members’ skills, knowledge and resilience.
- develop closer relationships with CCG and Adults’ Social Care
- support education settings, the local authority and strategic partners to better capture “customer” feedback and measure/communicate the impact of changes made in response

Children and young people

What we have done so far?

We set up a new SEND Engagement and Participation Team and from the beginning two Young People Champions were appointed to build a network of young people in order to establish practical ways that really brings their viewpoint to the planning table.

The Young People’s Champions have worked in partnership with Somerset Parent Carer Forum to establish joint ventures and key messages.

The Young People’s Champions have met with the senior leaders across education, health and care team to promote the work that they do. They are members of the SEND Board and over time gained more knowledge and confidence to be active participants and promoters of the SEND agenda:

- take part in service user and best practice research such as moderation of EHCPs
- established new communication routes, coproduced easy read materials, videos such as Outcomes and Aspirations, a day in the life of a Young Person’s Champion and the Golden Thread (aspirations – need – outcomes – provision)
- co-planned and delivered workshops, online and paper training resources and conferences

The difference this has made…

- young people are participating in decision making; their voices are being heard and acted upon for example young people are now an important group of presenters and attendees at the annual SEND conference
- there is improved coordination and a variety of methods for how children and young people’s views’ can be heard, for example easy read guides and use of social media are better embedded in thinking
- there is an involvement from senior leaders to embed participation and ensure it becomes ‘expected practice’ across services for children and young people
What do we need to do next?

- work closer with local schools and colleges to seek links with student groups
- extend core membership of the forum and local representation
- develop the skills and knowledge of the forum members
- develop further the formal consultation role of the young people’s forum

Somerset’s Local Offer

The Local Offer should set out information about all provision which Somerset Local Authority expects to be available across education, health and care and how to access it. This must be developed in partnership with the families and young people and give them an opportunity to feed back on how well we are doing.

What we have done so far?

- Somerset published the original Local Offer in September 2014. Following feedback we collected over the first few months it became clear our Local Offer was not doing the job it needed to do. The local authority was already developing ‘Somerset Choices’ for adults and it was agreed that this is a good opportunity to reconsider this as an IT solutions for our Local Offer
- the Children’s Somerset Choices went live in September 2016 with content co-developed and tested by families and young people.
- we publish annual information about the effectiveness of the information, advice and services provided, including customer satisfaction survey results.

The difference this has made

- working with parent-carers and young people has made the Local Offer much more user friendly
- our feedback so far tells us it is doing a much improved job; it works for professionals too
- commissioners can use feedback from parents and young people to improve planning of services, for example we are focusing on preparation for adulthood from the earliest point at the 2016 conference because the feedback from the transitions working group was that this was an important area to develop better joined up skills and knowledge

What do we need to do next?

- increase accessibility of the Local Offer for those without a computer or the internet
- improve the search function
- ensure continuous review of the quality of the information
- make progress towards the Local Offer becoming a commissioning tool
Information, Advice and Support

Local Authorities must arrange information, advice and support through a dedicated and easily identifiable service to make sure that children and their parents and young people with SEND have the information and support they need to participate in decisions. In Somerset this is provided by SENDIAS.

What we have done so far?

SENDIAS work alongside the Somerset Parent Carer Forum and Young People's Participation Team in supporting families and young people with SEND.

The difference this has made...

- SENDIAS staff and volunteers have the skills, knowledge and confidence in supporting service users and raising awareness of the SEND Reforms
- Integrated working with the Choice Advisor has resulted in young people with SEND receiving a 'wrap around' service in response to requests for support
- SENDIAS are now working with other Somerset information, advice and support services to find ways of working together for example by looking at patterns of take up across Somerset and gaps in provision

Next Steps

- Increase levels of awareness of the service amongst young people and thus take up of the service
- Improve engagement with health and social care practitioners
- Increase recruitment of and opportunities for volunteers in order to increase capacity and extend volunteering options for those with experience and knowledge of SEND
- Work with IAS network to identify gaps and issues to commissioners and service providers

Outcome 2

Timely and accurate assessment and identification of SEND across education, health and care services.

This means as early as possible so that the right support is in the right place at the right time.

Work with Early Years Providers, Schools and Colleges

Integrated, accurate and timely identification of children and young people with SEND is key to better use of resources, meeting needs, access to preventative services and better transitions which will enable children and young people with more complex needs to participate in their community, achieve better outcomes and prepare for a positive adulthood.
What we have done so far?

To help providers to have the right arrangements in place we have:

- provided a range of training opportunities and materials about the reforms including online modules
- continued to offer an Early Years multi-agency process (MAISEY) to support collaboration and early intervention in supporting children with SEND and their families
- promoted a whole school approach to SEND via joint SENCO and SEND governors’ events throughout the county
- since April 2015 the SEN Review across universal, targeted and specialist levels has been considering how identification and support for SEND is currently configured in Somerset
- during the autumn of 2015, provided a series of workshops with a wide range of partners to identify key outcomes, outcomes and actions to achieve better educational outcomes for our children and young people across all types of early years setting, schools and colleges

The difference this has made…

- positive evaluations received from settings have demonstrated an increased understanding and confidence about the SEND reforms including over 1000 recorded completions of the online modules since April 2016
- good level of engagement across the education sector supporting the implementation of the SEN review for example developing core standards in education
- a SEND specific educational improvement strategy has been agreed as part of the overall school improvement strategy. The SEND Improving Outcomes action plan has identified 5 key priority actions:
  1. improving the quality of teaching and learning
  2. value and empower the family around the child and in particular respect parents/carers as central to children and young people’s development
  3. development of leadership, including governance
  4. development of the self-improving education system
  5. development of effective quality assurance mechanisms at educational setting, partnership and local authority level

What do we need to do next?

- improve our communication strategy
- provide better support and challenge specifically around narrowing the attainment gaps, exclusions and attendance for all SEND groups
- develop a consistent mechanism for school leaders and governing bodies to evaluate the effectiveness of the provision made for the pupils with SEND
- finalise and launch Somerset Core Standards for SEND and new guidance for decision making on statutory SEND assessments
- finalise a review of the commissioning arrangements for support and outreach services
promote and facilitate positive, seamless transitions between all key stages so that they achieve better outcomes in preparing for adulthood including employment, independent living, community inclusion and health

**Disabled Children’s Team**

The SEND reforms re-emphasised the importance of working together to safeguard, assess and meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.

**What we have done so far?**

In April 2014 the Disabled Children's resources were brought together with the social work teams for disabled children to establish an integrated service, designed to remove barriers and to provide a more coordinated service, including joint management of the short breaks, Children’s Autism Outreach and Somerset Supporters Teams (resource teams).

- short break core offer delivered to over 2,500 families
- working on ensuring that the protocols for assessments and reviews for SEND, children looked after and children in need are joined up

**The difference this has made...**

- Early Help Assessment is now integrated into the continuum of support available to children and their families
- families are receiving an assessment promptly and services are being identified quickly
- strengthened relationships with partners, in particular Health and especially with the Somerset Parent Carer Forum; this has helped us to carry out genuine co-production and plan how to improve our work with families
- improved independence, well-being and prosperity for children and young people with disabilities and their families for example at 14+ through joint individual transition planning and more apprenticeships and supported internships

**What do we need to do next?**

- explore further opportunities for integrated assessments
- progress the commitment to establish a transition service
- improve information, choice and involvement, including good use of personal budgets
- improve on commissioning a range of providers to meet the increasing demand
- progress with professional development for staff so that we can better support the aspirations of children and young people, particularly developing independence and supporting successful transition to adulthood
Children and young people with social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH)

Children and young people may experience and reflect through their behaviour underlying mental health difficulties and/or disorders. These social, emotional and mental health difficulties need early identification and good quality, effective support.

What we have done so far?

In 2015 Somerset launched its five-year Transformation Plan for Children and Young People’s Mental Health and Wellbeing.

It was recognised that although there are many examples of good practice, a review of the overall system of support and provision would support a more integrated and preventative approach and improve outcomes for children and young people. This includes a whole school or setting approach and clearer pathways and models for support and specialist services to work alongside and with families and settings.

Work is also underway to extend CAMH services up to the age of 25.

The difference this has made...

• we have identified key areas to focus on and ways to develop this work
• we have developed an inclusion statement for Somerset
• we have introduced team around the school meetings which support cross agency working for local issues as part of the early help strategy. This is complimented by termly area transition panels which review and jointly plan individual transition pans for school leavers including mentors and pre transition visits to college and additional opportunities in the summer break

What do we need to do next?

• improve the awareness, identification and understanding of SEMH needs
• develop greater coordination and clarity of support pathways
• improve on evidenced based practice

Education, Health and Care Plans

An important part of SEND reforms was the introduction of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). EHC Plans ensure that needs are assessed and met in a coherent and coordinated way across education, health and social care.
What we have done so far?

- we keep our parents informed by publishing the overall transition plan for transition from statements to EHCP and joint information sessions held around the county and delivered with Parent Carer Forum and SENDIAS
- our framework for Somerset EHC Plans and the statutory assessment process was developed and co-produced with partners, parent carers, and children and young people
- we co-produced a report writing guidance for practitioners and a framework for EHCP moderation to ensure that quality assurance processes are in place
- we developed opportunities for joint assessment processes across social care and education
- all statutory timelines are regularly monitored by senior managers
- we formed a joint agency panel to co-ordinate planning and decision making for children and young people with the most complex needs across education health and care

The difference this has made...

- improved partnership working means less need for children and young people and parent carers to have to re-tell their stories
- better understanding of the graduated approach resulted in a decrease in parental requests for statutory assessment from 90% to 65% with more requests now received from settings as a result of a team around the learner meetings
- improving statutory timescales

What do we need to do next?

- improve the quality of plans and reports, including how well individual plans are shaped by children and young people and how well we listen and communicate
- improve on statutory timescales across all indicators
- improve the decision making process
- develop consistent systems to monitor compliance with legal requirements and parental experience of the new system
- reduce the number of complaints and appeals
- ensure that there are robust systems in place to ensure that all provision commissioned for children and young people with SEND is of a high quality, achieving desired outcomes and providing value for money

Outcome 3

Inclusive and equitable access to good quality local education

This means that there is a sufficient and appropriate range of provision for children and young people with SEND and education happens as close as possible to their home.
We want to ensure that all setting leaders understand and fulfil these responsibilities and have high expectations of all children and young people in their establishments and local area.

**What we have done so far?**

In 2015, Somerset local authority, in consultation with parent carers, young people and all other stakeholders, decided to carry out a thematic review of the SEND provision. It includes a review of universal and targeted SEND support (theme 1), review of support and outreach services (theme 2) and a review of specialist SEND provision (theme 3). The work related to all 3 reviews is directed and overseen by the SEND Board and Schools Forum. Progress is regularly monitored by the SEND Reference Group:

- clear governance arrangements are in place for monitoring and decision making for the review
- data profiles including SEND information is being made available for all maintained schools
- theme 1 has delivered on co-produced core standards for mainstream schools, early years settings and colleges. Decision making guidance and review of top up allocation systems is under way.
- theme 2 is in the process of consulting on the commissioning models for support and outreach services
- theme 3 has developed and implemented a new process for commissioning places in special schools and resource bases and a new peer moderation process using new descriptors for allocation of top ups funding
- placements in the independent sector are monitored and concerns or issues responded to quickly

**The difference this has made**

- increased awareness of SEND amongst the key strategic groups
- full and active engagement of special schools and resource bases; as a result significant progress against all recommendations made by the review
- peer moderation has delivered increased transparency and accountability
- a revised contract is in place for new independent placements
- improved monitoring systems for sufficiency planning of places and services

**What do we need to do next?**

- complete work on decision making guidance
- further develop data systems to better inform future planning
- improve communication with educational settings
- continue to promote and encourage a whole school/setting approach to SEND and high aspiration for the achievement and progression of all children and young people
Outcome 4

Smooth and effective transitions happen at key points for the child and young person.

This means all agencies working together with the young person, the child and their family so that there is effective person centred preparation for adulthood

Preparation for Adulthood and Transitions

The reforms placed increased emphasis on supporting children and young people with SEND to make a positive transition to adulthood, including pathways to employment, good adult health, independent living and participating in society.

What we have done so far?

- a multi-agency task group has been formed and it brought together education, health, children and adult social care and agencies such as housing to address the concerns raised by young people and their families
- we have produced a “Transitions – Our Vision” document which sets out key standards for effective transition to adulthood
- we are working on strengthening local education, housing and social opportunities

The difference this has made...

- better knowledge and understanding of the issues
- positive working relationships between schools and their partner further education (FE) colleges and work–based providers
- developing and sharing of examples of good practice for example Project Search at Yeovil District Hospital has been commended for a 66.7% success rate and Musgrove Park for 67%

What do we need to do next?

- new Transitions Strategy to be fully implemented
- clarify how services will work together to deliver smooth transition processes and support
- support and strengthen person-centred approach to assessment and planning
- work with FE colleges, training providers and employers to improve options for post 19 pathways with a particular focus on young people with EHC Plans
Outcome 5

Creative partnership working delivers effective, fair and transparent systems and services.

This means that commissioners, providers and service users work together to ensure that fair and transparent systems promote joint, and effective partnerships, and deliver value for money.

Joint Commissioning

The Act places a duty on the local area (the local authority, health commissioners and providers, educational settings) to identify and meet the needs of children with SEND aged 0-25.

What we have done so far?

- senior leaders from across education, health and care engaged with parent, carers and young people in a series of workshops which led to the creation of an intervention and Joint Commissioning sub group of the SEND Strategy Board as the main strategic forum to lead on this agenda
- SEN review under way and providing good evidence to inform future commissioning intentions
- undertaken a review of the SEND information published by all maintained schools and put in place a programme of activity to improve the quality and consistency of information
- joint work across health, education and care to understand and better deliver services for children and young people with needs relating to mental health including challenging behaviour
- developed the information sharing protocols between health and education to support health care plans in education settings
• commenced review of the impact of the jointly produced engagement and participation strategy
• improved the information on our JSNA with information from our SEND data profile
• identified the need for joint agency decision making for our children and young people with the most complex needs

The difference this has made…

• a multi agency Children’s Complex Needs Panel has been established to maximise efforts to support children and young people with the most complex needs who require a coordinated multi-agency approach to meeting social, educational and health needs
• data dashboard developed to ensure better informed commissioning decisions
• joint education and health community equipment commissioning in place delivering effectively to children and young people across Somerset
• joint working between public health, health and education to provide training on medical needs to schools

What do we need to do next?

• joint decision making processes for adult social care and health and education to be developed
• further development of data and information sharing systems supporting commissioning and performance management

Personalisation of support

The Children and Families Act 2014 enabled greater personalisation of support through the use of a personal budget to provide children and young people with real choice and control over the design of their care and education package.

What we have done so far

A multi-agency steering group, which included parents/carers and young people, was set up to plan and co-produce the guidance, policy and processes relating to Personal Budgets and direct payments.

Arrangements are in place to award and administer Indicative and Personal Budgets.

In partnership with Adults and Health services, we have commissioned a joint Direct Payments, Information, Advice and Support tendering system for providing indicative information about what funding may be available for an individual child or young person. This will help the family/young person to think about how it can be used and whether they want to formally request a Personal Budget.
The difference this has made

There is now a clear policy and guidance available for practitioners and parents/carers concerning the scope of personal budgets, how and when they are awarded and how they can be administered.

Next Steps

- ensure parents, carer and young people receive the relevant information so that they can make well informed choices
- review regularly the personal budget offer

Building capacity and infrastructure to sustain progress

In order to support successful delivery of the outcomes set out in the strategy the following areas have been identified as requiring additional action:

- training and support for staff especially working at the universal and targeted level (for example school staff, GPs) building on the work of the 1800 events and fully utilising the 6 on-line modules
- review of internal systems such as case recording, financial operations, data management so processes can be streamlined and resources are deployed effectively and efficiently
- further integration of services is considered to ensure that support is organised around the child, young person and the family and not driven by internal structures and systems, eg team around the school, and team around the child and young person meetings
- progress joint commissioning opportunities to ensure clarity of pathways between education, health and care

5. Quality Assurance (QA) Framework

5.1 The QA Framework underpins our strategy by providing the means to continually seek evidence-based answers to the following questions as we go about our work:

- Are we all doing the right things? (evaluating compliance)
- How well are we doing them (evaluating quality)
- What difference are we making? (evaluating impact)
- What needs to improve? (analysis of the evaluations)
- How do we secure identified improvements? (use the findings to identify actions; plan improvements; inform commissioning)

5.2 Strategic overview of the QA framework is monitored by the Impact Subgroup of the SEND Board.

5.3 Operational guidance for managers has been published to guide and support good practice.

5.4 Strategic governance for the whole SEND Strategy 2016-19 is placed within the structure of the SEND Board. The Board consists of a range of stakeholders including commissioners and providers from across education, health and care, parents, carers and young people.
A Self Assessment Framework (SEF) has been developed to aid the monitoring functions of the relevant subgroups of the Board.

5.5 Any future amendments to the Strategy will be considered and agreed by the SEND Board.

Overview of Quality Assurance Framework

- analysis of collated findings inform strategic, service and commissioning plans, co-produced with parents, carers, children and young people
- good practice and improvements needed are incorporated in individuals’, teams’ and strategic training and development plans
- learning and actions being taken are shared with all stakeholders

Acting on QA findings

- routinely seek service user feedback about a process or intervention, eg feedback cards
- compliments and complaints
- understand and use management information (SEND dashboard)
- reflective supervision
- practice observation
- managers ‘dip sample’ audits
- outcomes based contract management of commissioned services and provision

Day-to-day QA Activity

- strategic collection of service user feedback, eg online; surveys; SPCF and YP forum
- staff and partner surveys, eg impact of training
- partners’ performance, eg early years, schools, health
- invite external scrutiny, eg peer challenge
- case file audit programme including themed and multi-agency audits
- EHCP moderation

Accountability and Transparency

- staff, team and service management oversight;
- at EY/school level via School Improvement; SPG; SEP
- annually publish service user feedback about the Local Offer
- annually publish complaints report
- local area scrutiny and challenge, eg SEND and CYPP Boards; elected members

Supervisors evaluate findings relating to individuals’ performance and use in supervision.

Service managers evaluate findings about teams and services: identify good practice and areas for development and provide text for reports for internal and external scrutiny.

Cyclical and Strategic QA Activity

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Appendix 1

Relevant legislation

It may be helpful to consider the following related legislation and guidance:

- Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations (2014) [www.ipsea.org.uk](http://www.ipsea.org.uk) and [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk)
- Equality Act 2010: Advice for schools: Non-statutory advice from the Department for Education, produced to help schools understand how the Equality Act affects them and how to fulfil their duties under the Act [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) and [www.sec-ed.co.uk.best-practice](http://www.sec-ed.co.uk.best-practice)