



## Developing the draft Suffolk SEND Strategy 2024-2028

### Proposed Vision

**'We will work together to build strong relationships, create opportunities and remove barriers to enable our children and young people to feel included, fulfilled and supported to live their best lives.'**

This proposed vision statement was co-produced with a number of different groups of people, including parent carers, school staff, SEND partnership leaders, stakeholders from the voluntary and community sector and teams across education, health and social care. **Most importantly, young people with SEND told us what was most important to them.**

From this a word cloud was formulated that highlighted the things identified by all who want to get it right for children, young people and families in Suffolk. We looked at all the words used to see the themes, and these guided us when drafting this vision statement and strategy.



Key outcomes for children and young people of feeling **included, fulfilled,** and **supported** to live their best lives are included in the logo we co-designed.



## Context

The previous Suffolk SEND Strategy covered the period 2021-23. [You can read about the previous SEND strategy here.](#)

In the Autumn of 2023, we began to gather feedback from families, young people, schools and other teams as to what they felt the new SEND Strategy should contain, and the feedback they gave us has formed much of the basis of this new draft strategy. Over 900 families and professionals engaged with us in this work, and we are grateful to each of these people for taking the time to share their experiences and views with us. Each one has been read and remains at the centre of our work in developing this draft strategy.

In addition to this, in November 2023 Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission completed a Local Area Inspection of SEND Services in Suffolk. [You can read more about the inspection here.](#) We have also incorporated the findings from this inspection into this draft new strategy.

The inspectors found weaknesses in our provision in the following areas:

- Assessments for support take too long and are not always accurate enough.
- The quality of our Education, Health and Care Plans is variable.
- Unidentified and unmet needs sometimes manifest in behaviours which too frequently result in many not accessing mainstream settings, because of exclusion or absence.
- The weaknesses in statutory EHC plan processes lead to widespread and systemic gaps in service provision.
- Annual reviews do not happen often enough.
- Preparing for Adulthood is not good enough. Too many children and young people with SEND become NEET.
- Transitions between settings and services is not consistently good.
- Academic outcomes for those with SEND limit opportunities.
- Families are not aware of what to do outside of school.
- Families need more access to some services, such as early intervention for mental health.
- Communication is poor and coproduction is not embedded enough.
- Waiting times are too long.
- There is not enough specialist provision to prevent out of authority placements
- Multi-agency working is not consistently embedded

They also found some strengths for us to further build on:

- The Inspection also identified areas of effective practice:
- There are many individual practitioners who build up a careful picture of children and young people's needs.
- Many children and young people receive helpful support at the point of crisis.
- There are effective programmes to help pupils with low attendance or at risk of exclusion.

- Parents praise some aspects of community support, for example Activities Unlimited.
- In some areas, the LAP has worked successfully to improve services –redesign of therapy services.
- New Local Offer website, and the new portal intended to improve the EHC plan process.
- Valuing SEND is showing early signs of impact.
- SEND training schools receive is helpful. Helpful early intervention to support schools.
- High needs funding to schools to support children and young people with SEND without the need for an EHC plan
- Several health teams support families sensitively and successfully- meaning families receive strong support at a very difficult time.
- Dynamic Support Register transitions.
- Many providers, i.e. schools and colleges, praise their relationship with the Local Area Partnership.
- If children and young people meet thresholds, they get very strong social care support

The inspection identified two priority areas and 3 areas for improvement for us to work on:

### Priority Action 1

The LAP should work more collaboratively and effectively to improve strategic planning. This needs to deliver systems with measurable impact that will create better experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND. In particular they should urgently improve:

- the robustness and impact of governance
- the rigour of quality assurance approaches, so that these give the information leaders require to address weaknesses effectively
- the frequency and quality of multi-agency working
- the management of transitions and planning for adulthood for children and young people, starting in the earliest years, and across services in education, health and care, including putting steps in place to reduce NEET, so that they are better supported to lead fulfilling lives.

### Priority Action 2

Local area partnership leaders should cooperate to take urgent action to improve the timeliness and quality of the statutory EHC plan processes, EHC plan needs assessments, and EHC plans and annual reviews, particularly using annual reviews to amend the quality of existing EHC plans where required. This should ensure that plans meaningfully capture the views and aspirations of children and young people with SEND and their families, so that they get the right support at the right time.

#### Areas for improvement:

- Leaders across the partnership should use performance data and information effectively to inform their evaluation, sufficiency planning and joint commissioning of SEND services.
- The local area partnership should engage effectively and widely with children and young people and their families, developing effective communications systems, and acting to

address parents' and carers' concerns at an early stage, to reduce dissatisfaction and reduce the need for parents and carers to have to follow formal routes.

- Leaders across the local area partnership should ensure that providers of services for children with social and emotional well-being, mental health and neurodiverse conditions work jointly to meet the needs of and improve outcomes in these areas for children with SEND.

We accept and are committed to improving in all these areas and have taken these into account when suggesting the four draft priorities in this strategy document.

## Our Proposed Priorities for 2024-2028

1. **Communication & Information** – Everyone receives or is able to access timely and accurate information. Services are responsive to queries from families.
2. **Right Support, Right Time** – Children and young people can access the right support at the right time from education, health & care services.
3. **Timeliness & Quality** – The quality and timeliness of all our services and statutory processes.
4. **Preparing for Change** – Children, young people and their families receive support at all points of change through their education, health, and care journeys, including proactive support to help them prepare for adulthood.

These priorities are all equal in terms of importance and are listed in the order in which families might encounter a service. Our expectation is that **all** services, providers, schools and settings will be involved in assessing and developing their effectiveness in each of these priority areas over the next five years, both in their individual service area and in developing our effectiveness at working together across the whole SEND Partnership.

Over the pages that follow, you can see some of the feedback that has led to these priorities being proposed, some suggested actions and some ideas as to the impact they would have once achieved.

## Priority One: Communication & Information

### **This is a priority for us because:**

- Families and practitioners report that it is difficult to contact services
- Families report that they do not always know what services are available to them
- Delays in communication lead to less joint working and poorer outcomes for children and young people with SEND
- As well as the Suffolk Parent Carer Forum there are other parent and carer groups in Suffolk who want to be heard and be included in strategic and service co-production

### **To improve this, we will work together across the Partnership to:**

- Improve our telephone and email-based communication arrangements so that families receive a better service; including the publishing of a partnership-wide communications charter, with an agreed response times to phone calls, letters and emails
- Publish a summary for each service, so that families know what support is on offer
- Further develop the resources on our websites, newsletters and social media to make it easier for families to find information
- Improve use of the online Education Health and Care (EHC) portal for families and practitioners so that families are kept informed about their child's assessment and plan
- Maintain and develop opportunities for families to share their experiences and use this to inform improvements.

### **If we do this well...**

- Families will report that they feel communication has improved
- Families will feedback that they are able to access resources and information
- Usage of the portal as a communication and joint working tool will increase
- Telephone and email enquiries will be answered more quickly and without the need for families to contact us repeatedly
- Services will receive appropriate referrals.

## Priority Two: Right Support, Right Time

### **This is a priority for us because:**

- There are more requests for specialist placements than there are places available
- Families continue to report delays in accessing services and provision
- Schools report not feeling confident or able to meet the needs of all their pupils
- We are still overly reliant on private sector provision, particularly in specialist education placements, Educational Psychology reports and the delivery of therapies.
- Inclusive practice is not always consistent across all settings and areas
- Families have told us they are not getting support early enough, leading to crises and children's needs escalating

### **To improve this, we will work together across the Partnership to:**

- Continue to deliver the increase in specialist places through our capital investment programme
- Continue to embed early intervention to better identify and meet children and young people's needs and prevent them from escalating
- Support the use of Valuing SEND (VSEND) as part of the Graduated Response in schools, to help identify the needs of their children and match these with the support available
- Implement the Delivering Better Value (DBV) programme to support schools to deliver evidence-based interventions for children with SEND to improve their skills and confidence at an early stage and, in turn, prevent needs escalating
- Update the SEND Sufficiency Plan to make best use of available resources and commission new resources to meet the changing needs of children and young people.
- Continue to develop the Neurodevelopmental Pathway for Autism & Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and emotional wellbeing support services to improve timely access to support and support while waiting
- Develop whole school approaches to supporting emotional wellbeing and mental health  
Strengthen support for children and young people attending A&E in crisis by the introduction of Acute Mental Health Practitioners

### **If we do this well...**

- Mainstream schools will feel increasingly able to meet the needs of children on their rolls
- School will feel confident in the delivery of evidence-based interventions
- Waiting times for diagnoses and therapies will decrease
- More children will be supported closer to home
- Fewer children and families will need crisis support
- When crisis support is still needed, it will better meet needs
- Fewer children with SEND will be suspended or excluded

## Priority Three: Timeliness & Quality

### **This is a priority for us because:**

- Too many children and young people with SEND and their families are not having their assessments completed and plans issued within the statutory timescales
- Too many children and young people with SEND and their families do not have their plans reviewed every year to make sure the provision set out in their plan is meeting their needs
- Families report that waiting times across the partnership are too long
- Our current Quality Assurance and Audit processes are not robust enough in all areas
- Delays in children accessing the right support cause frustration and a lack of confidence for families and providers

### **To improve this, we will work together across the Partnership to:**

- Improve service capacity and ways of working to achieve statutory compliance and service targets, to meet EHC needs assessment and annual review timescales as well as waiting times across health, and social care, ensuring the child is at the heart of the process and quality is maintained.
- Use performance data and information effectively to rigorously track and improve our systems and processes across the partnership
- Review and develop the induction and training arrangements for new and existing staff in all areas of the partnership.
- Strengthen audit processes across the partnership to assure the quality and impact of EHC plans, annual reviews and services for children and young people with SEND.

### **If we do this well...**

- Children and young people with SEND and their families will get their assessments, plans and reviews on time
- Children and young people with EHC Plans will get the support and provision they need to meet their needs without delay
- The attainment of children with an EHC Plan will improve because their educational needs are identified and met more quickly
- We will see a reduction in families unhappy with the quality of their plans or service
- Audits will evidence the voices and ambition of children and young people and evidence the progress they are making.



## Priority Four: Preparing for Change

### **This is a priority for us because:**

- Families report that transition planning (at all stages) is often rushed or inconsistent, and that information is not always shared between settings
- There are too many young people with SEND who are not in education, employment or training
- Children and young people are not sufficiently involved in preparing for adulthood in terms of their education, independent living skills, involvement in their communities and having good health

### **To improve this, we will work together across the Partnership to:**

- Work in a multiagency way to ensure planning starts early to support successful transitions points across children and young people's lives
- Better prepare young people for adulthood including support for employment, independent living, community inclusion, and good health
- Work with post-16 providers, young people and families to review post 16 education and training opportunities enable young people to remain in education, training or to achieve employment
- Increase the number of Supported Internships for young people with SEND
- Develop a multi-agency Suffolk-wide "Preparing for Change Charter", outlining how we will work with families to prepare young people for times of change

### **If we do this well...**

- Families will be better supported at times of transition – including important decisions being made in good time to allow for multi-agency planning and preparation with the young person involved
- Families will report that they were informed of and understand the options open to them at each point of change
- The number of young people with SEND not in education, employment or training will drop
- The number of young people with SEND in post 16 education (including apprenticeships and supported internships) will rise
- Young people with SEND will have friends or social networks; and be involved in community or group activities;

### **What do you think of this draft strategy?**

**Have your say before 1<sup>st</sup> March 2024 by [filling out our online form here](#).**