



ST HELENS  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

**SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

**AND DISABILITY STRATEGY**

**2024-2027**

**VISIBLE, VALUED AND INCLUDED**



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# FOREWORD

**St Helens VISION for all children - Working together with our children and young people to ensure they all have a positive start in life.**

This is our second SEND Strategy and it has been developed with our stakeholders. It is, above all a partnership plan that aims to make plain the top priorities that we have all agreed will make the biggest improvements to the lives and future of our children, young people and their families.

## “IT’S OUR BOROUGH TOO”

Across St Helens young people have been talking about what matters to them. Their thoughts have been brought together in a youth declaration called It’s Our Borough Too. The six priorities are:

- Make sure no one goes hungry in St Helens.
- Make St Helens safer for young people.
- More help for young people with mental health and wellbeing.
- More places for young people to go that are affordable and accessible.
- Preparing young people for the future and helping them to achieve their ambitions.
- Look after our environment and the climate, and ensure our borough is clean and tidy.

### Visible, Valued and Included

Our children and young people with special educational needs and/ or disabilities (SEND) have told us that they want to feel visible, valued and included. Therefore, as a local partnership, we will support them in this so that is why this strategy emphasises these things. What’s more we believe this is everyone’s business.

### Continuous Improvement

We have looked at the progress we have made and it is right that those many colleagues that have worked so hard should be proud of what they have achieved and we celebrate that here.

However, we also know from children, young people, families and professionals that there is much more that still needs to be done. So we are committed to providing better experiences and outcomes for all our children and young people with SEND and those who attend Alternative Provision.

### Ambitious

This strategy sets out to be ambitious, it makes plain what we aim to do and achieve together over the next three years to improve our work. We commit that we will work with and listen to children, young people and their families. Our actions will also contribute to St Helens’ ambition of becoming recognised by UNICEF as a “Child-Friendly Borough”.

HAPPY, HEALTHY AND FULFILLING LIVES

WE WANT ALL OUR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SEND AND THOSE ATTENDING ALTERNATIVE PROVISION TO BE VALUED, VISIBLE AND INCLUDED WITHIN THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITY, PROVIDING THEM WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO ACHIEVE THE HIGHEST ASPIRATIONS AND OUTCOMES, LEADING TO A HAPPY, HEALTHY AND FULFILLING LIFE.



**Councillor Nova Charlton**  
Cabinet Member -  
Children and Young People



“ WE DREAM OF A ST HELENS THAT CELEBRATES DIVERSITY, WHERE EVERY YOUNG PERSON FEELS VALUED AND PROUD OF WHO THEY ARE. OUR SEND STRATEGY SHOULD BE A BEACON OF HOPE, SHOWING THAT DIFFERENCE IS NOT JUST ACCEPTED BUT EMBRACED.”

- Quote from Big Chat event



# SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY STRATEGY - 2024-2027

*VISIBLE • VALUED • INCLUDED*

## 5 PRIORITIES



1

MANAGING TRANSITION  
FOR LIFE



2

DEVELOPING A CURRICULUM  
FOR SUCCESS



3

BUILDING A  
COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT



4

MEETING MULTIPLE  
AND COMPLEX NEEDS



5

ENSURING TIMELY ASSESSMENT  
AND EFFECTIVE SUPPORT

## 3 WAYS OF WORKING



1

LISTEN TO CHILDREN,  
YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES



2

STRENGTHEN  
COMMUNICATIONS



3

BUILD A GREAT  
WORKFORCE

## 4 OUTCOMES



1 I AM  
HEARD

I KNOW THAT I AM  
LISTENED TO AND  
MY CONTRIBUTION  
IS IMPORTANT



2 I AM SAFE  
AND SECURE

I LIVE FREE FROM  
HARM AND ABUSE  
AND LIVE IN  
A STABLE HOME



3 I AM  
HEALTHY

I AM HAPPY, I AM  
THRIVING, I CHOOSE  
HEALTHIER  
LIFESTYLES



4 I AM ASPIRATIONAL  
AND SUCCESSFUL

I ACHIEVE MY POTENTIAL AND MAKE  
GOOD PROGRESS IN EDUCATION.  
I HAVE HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR  
MY FUTURE AND HAVE SKILLS THAT  
PREPARE ME FOR ADULTHOOD

# CONTEXT

## Legislation

The Department for Education (DfE) leads the SEND system for England and determines the legislative, policy and funding arrangements for children and young people with SEND.

The Special Educational Needs and or Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice came into force on the 1st September 2014. The code covers the 0-25 age and sets out the statutory guidance on duties, policies and procedures for all organisations who work with and support children and young people with special education needs and disabilities.

The Children and Families Act 2014 sets out the responsibility to improve services, life chances and choices for vulnerable children and to support families.

## Key Policy Drivers

In 2023, the DfE published the SEND/AP Improvement Plan, which aims to ensure that children get the right support at the right time. The Improvement Plan outlines the following aims:

- A national system underpinned by national standards.
- Successful transitions and preparation for adulthood.
- A skilled workforce and excellent leadership.
- Strengthened accountabilities and clear routes of redress.
- A financially sustainable system delivering improved outcomes.

The Local Area will engage with national developments to ensure that our system is learning and improving.

## Inspection

The SEND system is inspected by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission which evaluates children's experiences and outcomes across the partnership.

In 2023, the local area participated in the Delivering Better Value in SEND (DBV) support programme which highlighted key opportunities for improvement, and these have informed the priorities in our strategy.

## Local Context

Our borough is situated in Merseyside and is proud to be part of the Liverpool City Region and Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board.

The population of St Helens is 183,248 with approximately 39,109 children living in the borough. It is a place with a strong identity and cultural history, rooted in our world-famous rugby league team and our proud industrial heritage including England's first canal and the world's first passenger railway, as well as pharmaceutical, coal and glass industries.

## Great Potential

It is a place with many strengths and opportunities. Our strategic position at the heart of the North West provides excellent connections to and from our borough. Its semi-rural nature, with over 65% of the area green belt, and with almost 95% of primary schools judged good or outstanding makes for a very attractive place to live, with strong growth in new housing and increasing numbers of people choosing to live here.



OUR GREATEST ASSETS ARE UNDOUBTEDLY OUR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO LIVE, GROW-UP AND LEARN IN OUR CARING AND CLOSE-KNIT COMMUNITY.

The economic problems that the country faces, the COVID-19 pandemic, worries about the climate crisis, some global conflicts and the enormous changes brought about by new technologies have had a profound impact on the everyday lives, ambitions, concerns and hopes of our children and young people. These events have exposed and exacerbated some of the existing health and social inequalities faced by our communities and we know that more of our children and young people are likely to need much more support as a result.

## Optimism

At the same time, we are optimistic for the great potential of positive transformation. Our position within the Liverpool City Region, Cheshire & Merseyside Integrated Care Board, strong education settings, services and partners bring many opportunities to work together to improve our borough and the lives of all who live, learn, play and grow-up here.

## St Helens Providers

- 2 NHS Health Provider Collaboratives
- Wide range of Early Years Provision
- 3 Special Schools, 1 Alternative Provision
- 56 Primary Schools 3 Resourced Provisions
- 9 Secondary Schools, 2 Resourced Provisions
- 2 Post 16 Colleges

CHILDREN AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING WE DO

# ST HELENS BY NUMBERS



**39,109**

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE LIVE IN ST HELENS



**6,000**

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES



**20%**

OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE SEN



**6,594**

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE LIVE IN RELATIVE POVERTY



**795**

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ON THE NEURODEVELOPMENT PATHWAY



**3,657**

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ACCESSED MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT IN 2023



**243%**

INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF EHCPs SINCE 2015



**1,769**

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH AN EHCP



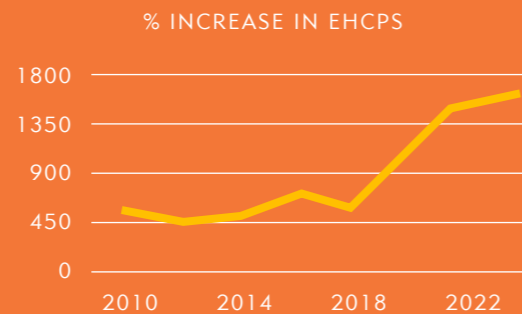
**135**

FAMILIES ACCESS A PERSONAL BUDGET



**660**

PUPILS TRANSPORTED ACROSS 107 ROUTES



# DEVELOPING OUR PLAN TOGETHER

We know that good provision for children and young people with SEND requires a strong and effective culture of inclusion that values the views of local children, young people and their families, so that services are inclusive and supportive, whilst keeping children and young people at the heart of everything that we do.

## Co-production

We wish to create a culture of working together, involving people who use services – children and young people and their parents and carers, sharing information and ideas, listening to each other and recognising the expertise that everyone brings to this partnership. We call this co-production and it will mean that:

- Families and partners are welcomed and feel valued and included.
- Communication is open, clear and honest.
- Children and young people are celebrated for who they are.
- Everyone feels they have a voice.
- Families' lived experiences are understood and cared about.

We recognise that for co-production to work best, our children and young people, parent carers and professionals must play an essential and equal part in the decision-making process so that each partner is fully engaged in shaping, developing, implementing and evaluating services and the St Helens Local Offer.

“INCLUSION MEANS MORE THAN JUST BEING INCLUDED; IT MEANS BEING VALUED. WE WANT A SEND STRATEGY THAT DOESN'T JUST PLACE US IN THE ROOM BUT PUTS OUR IDEAS AT THE CENTRE OF THE CONVERSATION...”

- Quote from Big Chat event



“WORKING TOGETHER WITH SERVICES AS AN EQUAL VOICE FROM THE VERY BEGINNING TO THE END OF ANY PROJECT MAKES A REAL DIFFERENCE IN ENSURING LOCAL SERVICES BEST MEET THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SEND AND THEIR FAMILIES”

- Listen 4 Change Parent, Carer Forum



# WHAT WE ACHIEVED TOGETHER

Through Working Together, we have...

- Delivered a range of improvements in early years through the School.
- Readiness Strategy 2021-23, including:
  - the St Helens 1001 days pathway
  - 'Start Well Wheel'
  - passport for 2s'
- Improved ways for capturing the voice of children and young which is showing impact with increasing examples of improved practice and influence of service and strategic developments.
- Improved the quality of education 0-25 in St Helens as shown in Ofsted inspections and outcomes for children.
- Invested in new educational provisions improving choice and value for money including a new Alternative Provision school and Special School for learners with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs.
- Increased the number of children and young people accessing mainstream provision with an EHCP which means these children and young people have the opportunity to have their needs met in mainstream and educated close to their home, with friends and within their communities.
- Invested in services for children with poor emotional and mental health.
- Introduction of key worker support within the neurodevelopment pathway (NDP) and dynamic support offer.
- Additional investment to the NDP ie parent/ carer advice and support and 'ND & me' offer for

young people.

- Developed a range of community initiatives in co-production with parent carers such as:
  - Family Hubs
  - SEND Friendly Libraries
  - Short Breaks
- Improved quality of practice, planning and provision for children with SEND as evidenced by Ofsted in recent inspections.
- Supported young people to self advocate.
- Delivered an annual Supported Internship Programme.

## Definition of Special Educational Needs

(as written within the SEND Code of Practice 2014)

Children have special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

Children have a learning difficulty if they:

- A. Have a significantly greater difficulty in learning from the majority of children of the same age; or
- B. Have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities of any kind generally provided for children of the same age in schools within the area of the Local Authority;
- C. Are under compulsory school age and fall within the definition at A or B above or would so do if special educational provision was not made for them.



# OUR PRIORITIES

What our children & young People with SEND told us they want

We asked our children and young people what their priorities are and they came up with four key priority areas that they would like us to address.

## Personalisation

Tailoring education and support to fit each individual's unique needs.

## Mental Health

Focusing on emotional well-being and ensuring support is available.

## Empowerment

Giving young people the power to make decisions and influence changes that affect their lives.

## Safety

Creating environments where everyone feels protected and secure from bullying or harm.

THESE FOUR AREAS ARE THEREFORE WOVEN INTO THE HEART OF THIS PLAN

## Our Big Five Priorities:

We are in a hurry to improve life for children and young people with SEND in St Helens.

We all know that resources are limited and we cannot make everything perfect immediately so based on:

- Our Challenges
- Our Vision
- What our Children and Young People told us
- What parents, families and carers told us
- What our professionals (including Ofsted) have said

Our partnership has chosen the following 5 Priorities that we believe will make the biggest difference in the shortest period of time.

1. MANAGING TRANSITIONS FOR LIFE

2. DEVELOPING A CURRICULUM FOR SUCCESS

3. BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT

4. MEETING MULTIPLE AND COMPLEX NEEDS

5. ENSURING TIMELY ASSESSMENT AND EFFECTIVE SUPPORT



# WHAT WE WILL DO

## 1. MANAGING TRANSITIONS FOR LIFE

- Preparing young people for change in their life especially adulthood
- Enabling and supporting young people to cope with life's changes
- Focusing on the Child's journey
- Supporting learners for change between schools, settings and colleges
- Providing meaningful careers, advice and guidance

We want to do this so that transitions between phases of education or changes in support are smooth and supportive across all ages.



### We will:

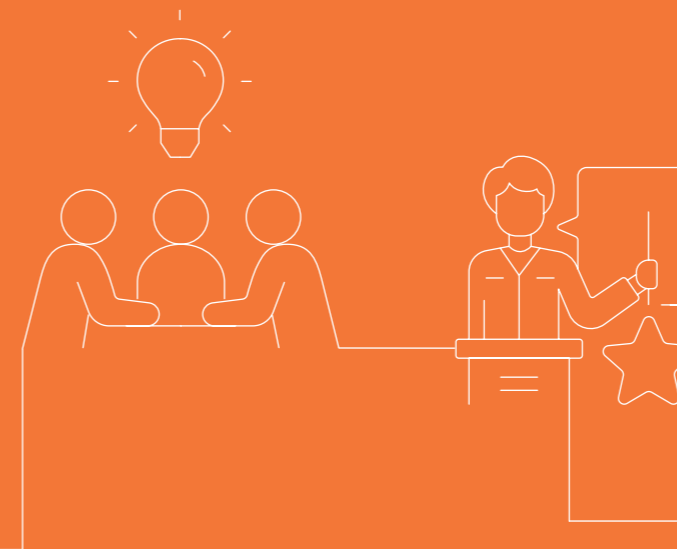
Ensure transitions are well-planned and person-centred for children moving from one phase of education to another.

- Capture children's experiences of transition to celebrate and learn from successes.
- Increase the number of children who can access educational provision closer to their communities.
- Increase employment and training opportunities for young people and adults with SEND.
- Promote the offer of Annual Health checks, and ensuring these reach all young people aged 14-25 with Learning Disabilities.
- Promote independent travel training/curriculums.
- Re design the Local offer so that it is clear, accessible and supports children, young people and their families to make decisions.
- Ensure Education, Health and Care plans reflect Preparation for Adulthood outcomes.

## 2. DEVELOPING A CURRICULUM FOR SUCCESS

- Providing individualised teaching
- Designing personal pathways
- Improving teaching and strengthening learning
- Providing strong additional support
- Ensuring inclusion

We want to do this so that every child can access a positive learning environment where they will do well and where adults have high aspirations



### We will:

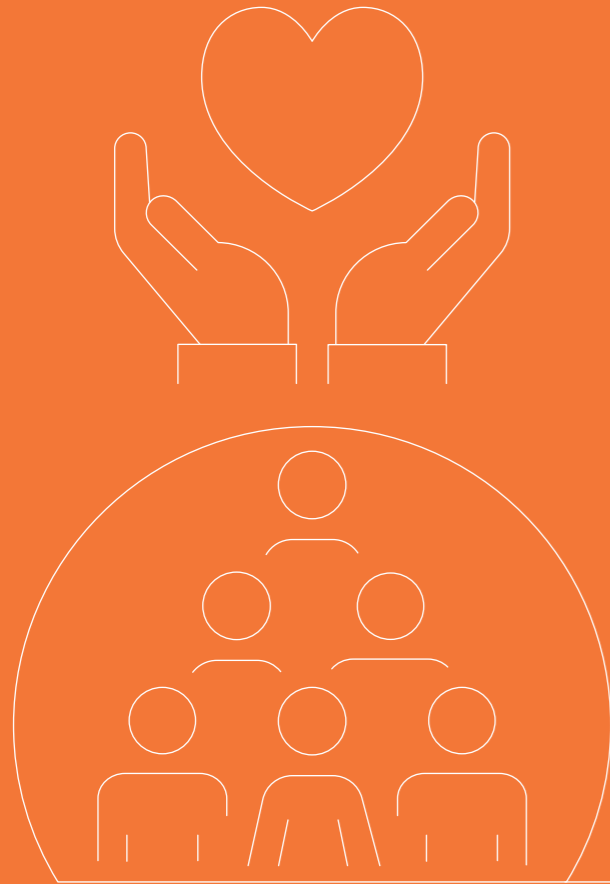
- Focus on our three obsessions - attendance, inclusion and wellbeing.
- Expand the continuum of provision to support young people that will better meet their needs to be successful in their local or setting.
- Ensure that those who are working with children and young people most often understand how best to adapt the curriculum.
- Increase the capacity of mainstream schooling to meet the needs of pupils with neuro-development conditions through the delivery of the Autism in Schools and Partners in Inclusion of Neurodiversity.
- Ensure that pupils have access to a well sequenced, broad and ambitious curriculum, adapted to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Remodel the alternative provision offer to find creative solutions to support pupils to remain in their named provision.
- Ensure that all children accessing alternative provision receive a quality assured offer from a registered provider.

### 3. BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT

- Ensuring accessible inspiring environments
- Access to activities near home with friends
- Proving high quality short breaks
- We want to do this so that we have accessible inspiring environments where children can access to activities near home with friends

#### We will:

- Have an integrated training offer for settings to support a graduated approach to meeting needs.
- Maximise outreach and community services, such as those from special schools or alternative provisions to meet need in local communities.
- Maximise early identification of need and parental support through the St Helens Family Hubs.
- Coproduce our short breaks offer, improving diversity including PAs and short breaks foster carers to meet eligible needs.
- Develop the offer for early help so that Early Help Assessments and the Early Help Support Plan process is used at the right time.
- Ensure that our Local Offer website helps children and their families find the local information and support from across St Helens.
- Promote the St Helens Thrive model so that the right support, at the right time, from the right person.
- Expand the PATHs programme to more schools and more schools are accredited as Therapeutic Schools.



### 4. MEETING MULTIPLE AND COMPLEX NEEDS

- Increase the range of SEND friendly community facilities
- Promoting understanding and support for Neuro-diversity Improving mental health and wellbeing
- Developing support for trauma
- Strengthening support for attachment issues

We want to do this so that we develop positive and authentic relationships between agencies and families with a focus on the individual not the system.

#### We will:

- Promote understanding and support for Neuro-diversity.
- Improve mental health and wellbeing and pathways for children who have experienced trauma.
- Continue to develop and implement training and awareness for SEND and hidden disabilities
- Support schools and settings to meet the medical needs of children young people with identified health conditions, with access to support and training from local health providers.
- Ensure the effective use of the Dynamic Support Database and Care Education Treatment reviews to support children with a Learning Disability or Autism.
- Continue to develop and improve the St Helens Thrive model to meet the needs of children and young people with complex mental health needs.
- Collaborate with safeguarding agencies to ensure SEND children and those in Alternative Provision are appropriately protected from neglect, harm and exploitation.



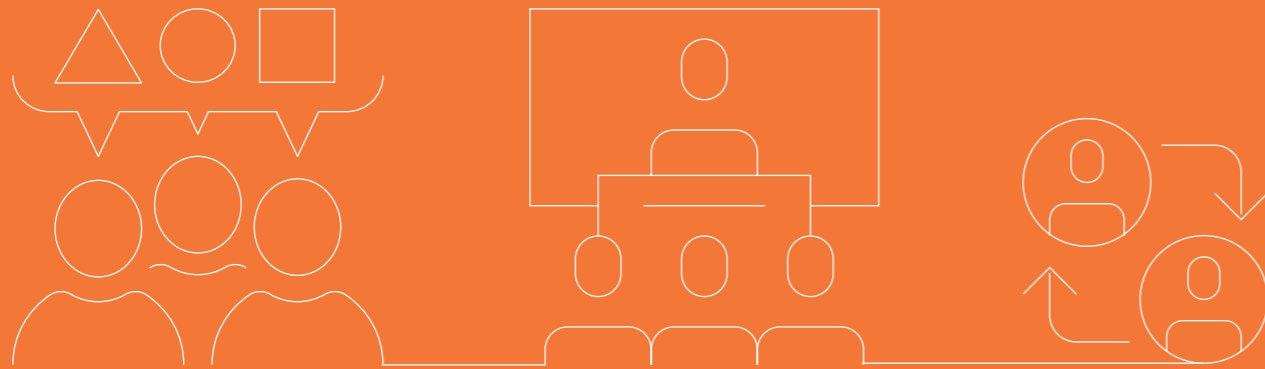
CHILDREN AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING WE DO

## 5. ENSURING TIMELY ASSESSMENT & EFFECTIVE SUPPORT

- Streamline and improve processes
- Speed-up the paperwork
- Ensure rigorous quality assurance
- We want to do this so that children can access the right support at the right time

### We will:

- Ensure that every child has access to a Speech and Language Pathway in the early years.
- Ensure children have access to good quality early education through the expansion of the Free Early Education Entitlements for working parents by September 2025.
- Improve the timeliness of Education Health and Care plans.
- Implement training to improve understanding of SEND to better identify, assess and meet need.
- Continue to develop and refine our developing TESSA model to ensure schools can access timely information, advice, guidance and support.
- Continue to address waiting times for diagnosis through the NDP Steering Group and implement improvements to family's experience including family support workers and family coaching models.



# HOW WE WILL WORK

CONSULTATION WITH CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE, CARERS AND PARENTS INDICATED THAT THE WAY WE DO THINGS ALSO NEEDS TO CHANGE.

WE WILL THEREFORE COMMIT TO THREE PRINCIPLE WAYS OF WORKING.

## 1. LISTEN TO CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

- Ensure every child has a voice
- Make sure children and young people co-create our strategies
- Seek, listen and act upon feedback

We will:

- Embed the SEND Partnership Agreement for coproduction to ensure children, young people and their families are empowered to actively participate in decisions.
- Ensure that Listen 4 Change as the St Helens Parent Carer Forum is represented at strategic groups and workstreams.
- Build on the Voice of the Child work to use innovative approaches to capture and listen to the voice of children and young people.
- Facilitate regular workshops with parents and carers and our children and young people, seeking their views to help us shape services.
- Continue to develop and improve the St Helens Local Offer website, to make it more accessible for children, young people and their families.



CHILDREN AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING WE DO

## 2. STRENGTHEN COMMUNICATIONS

- Engage with parents/carers more frequently and earlier
  - Widen approaches with children and young people
  - Ensure effective systems between agencies
  - Promote communication with and between professionals
  - Strengthen our partnerships
  - Simplify our language
  - Exploit new technologies and social media
- We will:**
- Ensure open communication by publishing regular newsletters for professionals, parents, carers and families.
  - Publish feedback using the 'You Said, we are doing' approach.
  - Treat everyone equally and with respect, actively listen to each other and give equal value to every contribution.
  - Communicate openly, clearly and honestly.



### 3. BUILD A GREAT WORKFORCE

- Support through world class training and development
- Recruit highly qualified, committed and skilled professionals
- Challenge leaders and professionals to continually improve

#### We will:

- Provide opportunities for agencies to embed a culture of collaboration, coproduction and trust.
- Ensure ongoing opportunities for continuous professional development and improvement.
- Promote wider culture of SEND as everybody's business and an understanding of roles and responsibilities.
- Address recruitment, retention and staff wellbeing in all service areas.





# HOW THIS STRATEGY WILL BE MONITORED AND EVALUATED

Partners across St Helens understand that for us to deliver improvements, this strategy needs to be owned by all agencies. To support the delivery of the strategy, there will be a clear action plan in place which will be tracked and monitored by the SEND Partnership and its working groups.

## SEND Partnership Board

The SEND Partnership Board is attended by representatives from education, health, care, young people and parent carers.

The Partnership will ensure that the experiences of children and young people and their families shape further development and will feedback delivery of actions. A progress report will be reported annually through our Local Offer.

## Proving improvement:

We know we have made a difference when we have:

- Improved sustained destinations in adulthood.
- Shorter waiting times for assessments or diagnoses.
- More children's SEND needs will be met within their local schools.
- There is a robust and clear graduated approach, aligned across pathways and this is applied consistently across education, health and social care.
- There is sufficient provision and support across education, health and care for children and young people aged 16-25.
- Children with SEND make good progress in their education.
- Children, and young people and their families have access the information and understand the available help.
- There are more opportunities for families to access short breaks.
- There is an increase in the proportion of young people with SEND can live independently.



## How will we know?

The Partnership will use a range of data, information and insight to measure progress and impact including:

- Children's voice surveys.
- Quality and timeliness of formal assessments or diagnoses.
- Educational attainment, progress and achievement data.
- Numbers of children with SEND accessing good quality early education.
- The % and outcomes from mandated reviews in the early years.
- No.s families accessing early help and Family Hubs.
- No.s families accessing short breaks provision.
- No.s of children & young people with SEND who are in education, employment or training.
- Uptake and impact of whole school approaches such as Autism in Schools, Partners for Inclusion of Neurodiversity and Paths initiatives.



## DEFINITION OF DISABILITY

The Equality Act 2010 states a person has a disability if:

- A. They have a physical or mental impairment; and
- B. The impairment has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

The Government guidance states that the term substantial means more than minor or trivial. The term physical and mental impairment implies that a disability can arise from a wide range of impairments such as:

- Long-term medical conditions such as asthma and diabetes.
- Fluctuating or progressive conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis or motor neurone disease.
- Mental health conditions such as bipolar disorder or depression.
- Learning difficulties such as dyslexia.
- Learning disabilities such as Down's syndrome.
- Autistic spectrum conditions.
- Cancer.
- Multiple sclerosis.
- HIV / AIDS.
- People with severe disfigurement will be protected as disabled without needing to show that it has a substantial adverse effect in day to day activities.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

### LOCAL OFFER FOR SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY

Discover all you need to know about education, health and care services in St Helens.

[WWW.STHELENS.GOV.UK/SEND](http://WWW.STHELENS.GOV.UK/SEND)

On the local offer website you can find information and advice about services, support and activities for children and young people aged 0-25 with special educational needs and disabilities all in one place.

