Surrey Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Partnership Strategy 2019-2022
Introduction

Surrey’s community vision for people by 2030 is clear in its ambition for all people in Surrey. We recognise that some children, young people and their families may need additional support for these ambitions to be achieved. The Surrey Special Needs and Disability Partnership Strategy outlines our ambition for the children and young people in Surrey who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Surrey County Council on behalf of the wider partnership consulted on how to strengthen support for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and their families. The feedback from this consultation has enabled us to understand where we need to improve, prioritise and strengthen practice. We have also learnt that we need to change how we are, not just what we do, and we explore this in the Building the Foundations section.

The voices of children & young people and their families were powerful and clear. They want Surrey, as a community, to be welcoming and inclusive, where support and advice can be accessed easily when it is needed and where schools support children to be part of their wider communities. This is captured in the ‘Our Ambition’ and ‘Our Vision’ sections of the strategy.

We recognise that these ambitions will take some time to achieve and can only be done effectively with the Partnership working together, adopting a whole system approach that remains focused on the child. We will ensure a continued focus on making sure actions are taken to drive the change that is needed. You have our commitment that the voices of children, young people and their families will continue to shape what we do in individual decision making as well as influencing the wider systems changes.

We hope you will work with us to make this strategy a reality, changing the lives of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities and that of their families.

We will keep you updated of our progress through a dedicated page on our Local Offer website.
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Experiences of Children and Young people

Listening to and acting on children and young people’s lived experiences is a central theme of our strategy. As a system we must be ambitious for all children in Surrey. Accounts such as Emma’s demonstrate the challenges children can face and how with appropriate support at the right time, children and young people can flourish and achieve their ambitions.

‘My name is Emma and I’m 17yrs old

I am diagnosed with ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder) and suffer from anxiety and low mood. Due to my needs I received an EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan) in year 10 of school. Some of the things I struggle with are: social emotional communication especially with peers my own age which means that I have an immensely difficult time trying to make friends. I also struggle to understand and regulate my emotions.

School is an extremely anxiety provoking place for me but some things that have helped are having a safe quiet space to go when I became too overwhelmed, scheduled time with my SENco to discuss things and try and help things that were causing excess stress and having a choice about the way I could learn. The main thing that has restricted my progress is not being able to understand what is written in my EHCP because of how complex it is. I am unable to identify or correct what they believe my needs are or the provisions they say would benefit me.

In the future, I hope services can work on having better communication, resources and information for families and young people about EHCPs and maybe even a child friendly /easy read copy so the young person can participate fully in creating their EHCP. I would like to go to university and study psychology and pursue a career in supporting young people with mental health issues’.

This is one of the many experiences of children and young people across Surrey. Our partnership strategy details our ambitions, vision and the ways jointly we intend to significantly improve experiences for all children and young people, their families and carers.
Our Ambition

Surrey’s community vision for people by 2030 is;
• Children and young people are safe and feel safe and confident.
• Everyone benefits from education, skills and employment opportunities that help them succeed in life.
• Everyone lives healthy, active and fulfilling lives, and makes good choices about their wellbeing.
• Everyone gets the health and social care support and information they need at the right time and place.
• Communities are welcoming and supportive, especially of those most in need, and people feel able to contribute to community life.

Our ambition is to work in partnership across the system to transform the experiences of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) so that:

- Our communities are inclusive
- Families are offered support when they need help
- Families know how and where to access support
- Families receive local, coordinated and high quality support
- Schools and Early Years Settings have the skills, training and confidence to support children
- Children thrive in their community, attending local early years settings, school or colleges
- Children are supported to be independent as they approach adulthood
- We make strong and fair decisions together
Our Vision

The Surrey SEND Systems Partnership works together to enable all children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Surrey to thrive and achieve their full potential.

The Partnership comprises:

- Surrey County Council
- Health Providers, Commissioners and the Integrated Care System
- Early years settings, schools and colleges
- Services in the private, voluntary and independent sector
- Parents and carers represented by Family Voice Surrey (Parent/Carer forum)

Our shared vision for all children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability and their families is that;

- Children and young people are at the centre of our thinking and we work with families as partners in meeting their children’s needs and planning how we will deliver support in the future.
- Health, Education and the Local Authority share responsibility for making sure that high quality support is in place for children and families when and where they need it.
- All places, settings and organisations that provide education and/or support to children and their families are welcoming of children with SEND and have a better understanding of their needs.
- Children with SEND can access the help and support they need to thrive and achieve within their local communities. They can go to a school that meets their needs, access services and play an active role in the community close to where they live.
- Families have easy access to information which helps them understand how best to meet their child’s needs and access the help that is offered. They can easily find out about activities and support available to them in their local communities. They help us identify gaps in services and areas for improvement.
- Children’s additional needs are identified as soon as possible and there is a quick response. Decisions about support are based on achieving the best outcomes for the child, including helping them develop more resilience and independence as they move towards adulthood.
- Children and families have access to the same level of high quality support wherever they live in Surrey. We have a good shared understanding of our children with SEND in Surrey and our support offer matches their needs.
- Children, and families are supported and enabled to achieve healthier lives.
Context

Legislation:

Surrey County Council and its partners work within the statutory requirements of Part 3 of the Children and Families Act, 2014 and have regard to the guidance within the associated SEND Code of Practice.

Key aspects of the SEND Code of Practice include;

- The duties of all partners in the education, health and care system to “ensure that all children and young people are able to access the right support and provision to meet their needs.”
- Stronger principles regarding the involvement of children and parent/carers in both individual and strategic decision making.
- Guidance regarding the publication of a local offer, which details support, services and provision, how to access them and ways to get involved in shaping future services.
- Guidance regarding health and the local authority, joint planning and commissioning services.
- The information, advice and support that local authorities must provide children and parent/carers.

Best Practice:

The Local Government Association recently commissioned the Isos Partnership to produce a report that would provide a practical summary of good practice in developing and sustaining an effective local SEND system. The six key themes of which were;

1. Partnership working and co-production with parents and carers, and with young people.
2. Strategic partnership working and joint commissioning across education, health and care.
3. Identifying and assessing young people’s needs, ensuring they can access the support that they need.
4. Building inclusive capacity in mainstream schools and setting.
5. Developing responsive, flexible and effective local specialist provision.
6. Preparation for adulthood.
Where we are now

Findings from Inspections:

- In March 2019, OFSTED and the Care Quality Commission carried out a joint review of Surrey’s progress in addressing weaknesses that were highlighted in a previous inspection in 2016. The inspectors found progress had been made in all but one of the five areas identified in our written statement of action.

- Improvements were found in the timeliness and quality of statutory assessments and plans, the involvement of children, parents and carers in the planning and evaluation of service, the promotion of the local offer, the local area’s management information and administration processes. Improvements were also noted in the early identification of special educational needs by schools which was supported through the draft SEND Profiles of Need in Early Years, Schools and Post 16.

- However, inspectors identified increased school absence for pupils with SEND, often linked to mental health concerns. They found that actions taken since the last inspection to reduce absences from school have not had enough impact\(^\text{i}\).

- As Local Area partners, we recognise that families have concerns about the quality and consistency of advice and support available and are committed to improving their experience.

Surrey SEND Facts:

- In January 2019, there were 196,697 pupils in Surrey’s maintained schools, academies and independent schools. 23,000 of these children are receiving special educational needs (SEN) support\(^\text{ii}\).

- As of July 2019 there are 386 maintained schools and academies in Surrey of which 24 are special schools\(^\text{iii}\).
• Many of our pupils with SEND are achieving well, but a higher than average number are missing school.
  
  o In Surrey a lower percentage of pupils with an EHCP attend Local Authority mainstream schools, academies or free schools than the averages nationally or of our statistical neighbours. Our average is however higher than the South Eastiv.
  
  o For pupils with an EHCP in Surrey their educational outcomes have remained above national averages for all measures in the early years, Key Stage 1 and for the majority for measures in Key Stage 2 and 4. The exceptions were Key Stage 2 writing progress and Key Stage 4 EBacc where performance fell below national averages this year.
  
  o In the last four years Surrey has remained below the absence averages nationally for children and young people with a Statement or EHCP. However absence levels for those receiving SEN Support are above the national figures.

![Comparison of overall percentage absence in Surrey and Nationally](chart.png)

We have a higher than average number of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).
Surrey has ranked consistently as having the 4th highest number of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) nationally every year since 2015. In January 2019 there were 8732 children and young people with an EHCP in Surrey. As of July 2019, this has risen to 9,345. We rank the highest for the number of plans in our statistical neighbour group.

In 2018 the percentage of the school population in Surrey with an EHCP was higher than the averages of our statistical neighbours, the South East of England and nationally. Additionally Surrey ranks 4th amongst statistical neighbours for the percentage of school population who receive SEN support in 2019.

- We receive a higher than average number of requests for EHCPs and accept more than average, however a below average number of these lead to an assessment.

- Surrey receives a higher than average number of requests for EHCPs in comparison to our statistical neighbours, the South East of England and nationally. We ranked 2nd
against all Local Authorities in England for the number of initial requests for an EHCP assessment in 2018\textsuperscript{vii}.

- A request is accepted where it is identified that a child’s needs can only be met through an EHCP. Surrey County Council accept a higher percentage than the averages of our statistical neighbours, the South East of England and nationally\textsuperscript{viii}.

- Surrey ranked 2\textsuperscript{nd} lowest amongst statistical neighbours for the conversion rate between assessments to issuing of an EHCP in 2018.

- In Surrey the number of EHCPs being maintained has increased 55% since 2015, this is a greater rate of increase than that seen nationally, in the South East and in comparison with our statistical neighbours\textsuperscript{ix}.

- Surrey’s use of Non Maintained and Independent Schools (NMIs) is almost double the national average. Surrey ranks 9\textsuperscript{th} nationally for NMI use in 2019\textsuperscript{x}.

\begin{figure}
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{chart.png}
\caption{Percentage of initial requests for assessment for an EHC plan agreed during the 2018 calendar year}
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What have you told us?

We asked: SEND Strategy Consultation

To inform our development of this strategy we requested feedback regarding our proposed principles and areas of transformation. A summary of the consultation analysis is available through this link.

You said:

- There is a lack of trust that Surrey County Council would follow the principles and deliver the proposals. Concerns were expressed that our plans would need additional funding and this may have an adverse impact on services and our workforce.

Examples of these comments included;

  ‘Nothing wrong with the principles. They sound expensive though’.

  ‘Available resources and funding for the development of these (physical and human) are the main inhibiting factors in applying these principals, at every level of service’.

  ‘Wouldn’t it be great if these things actually happened?’

- Respondents also shared negative personal experiences highlighting an immediate need for improvements. They suggested a need for better working together across education, health and social care. Concerns were raised regarding disparate support and services across areas and types of need. The importance was stressed that the SEND strategy should address the wide range of different needs of children and young people with SEND and the varying approaches and levels of support needed.
During our SEND Strategy consultation period, Family Voice Surrey ran a complementary consultation of parents and carers. One question asked how they felt Surrey County Council’s plans in the SEND strategy would affect them and their children.

Examples of comments included:

‘If there is a lowering of thresholds to services that would be good. And some/more integration of health/school etc’

‘Commissioning of services in the past has negatively affected my child and therefore I have no faith in future commissioning. I would like the council to truly recognise the role of early intervention and flexibility in respecting and meeting children’s needs not just ticking boxes’

‘My concern is that the focus will switch to the early support, i.e. younger children, and my son who is 13 will be left with less funding and smaller organisations to take care of his needs. Also I am concerned that the plans are very vague, and we don’t fully understand the impact of these changes’

Responses to the question also suggested that over half didn’t know’ how the plans would affect them and nearly a quarter felt that the plans would affect them badly. A total of 3% felt that the plans would either affect them ‘well’ or ‘very well’.

We did:

Following the responses to the SEND strategy, and particularly in response to the lack of trust expressed in the County Council, we commissioned ThePublicOffice to engage with families. This engagement including in-depth ethnographic studies, focus groups and interviews, in
order to build relationships and help us better understand the lived experience of children and young people and those that care for them. ThePublicOffice has also engaged with staff across the system (health, education, local government) to understand the difficulties they perceive in getting children and young people the support they need.

- This engagement work along with feedback received from Family Voice Surrey, SEND Youth Advisors Surrey (SYAS) and other user groups has helped us understand the many ways in which different parts of the system are not working smoothly together, and where trust and relationships need to be actively built. ThePublicOffice has helped us not just to listen to and understand these insights, but to use them to create change. We have begun to work together in new ways, learning how to lead differently, to collaborate across organisational boundaries, and to shift our culture and behaviour to always be empathic and child and family-centred. We have started a shared learning journey that is honest, open, and focused on child and young people’s outcomes as the only success criteria that matters. Our learning will involve close working with existing parent and young people’s representative groups.

**We asked: The POET Survey**

- For the last four years Surrey County Council has used the Personal Outcomes Evaluation Tool (POET) to ask for feedback from young people, parents/carers and practitioners regarding Education, Health and Care Plans.

**You said:**

- The responses received in 2018 highlighted that we should improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND, involve families throughout the process, make accessing support less difficult and ensure that the quality of support improved and becomes more consistent.
We did:

• Past feedback from POET has led to the creation of SYAS, the group meets on a monthly basis in two locations and supports young people to make a difference to SEND services. The work SYAS has already carried out has included working with hospitals on ways to make them a more friendly environment for children and young people with Autism and more recently assisting the Public Office in capturing young people’s day to day experiences through videos comprising photos and audios.

We anticipate that engagement with SYAS, Family Voice Surrey and other groups in the wider SEND community will be an important part of delivering our strategy.

We asked: Our vision

• In May 2019 young people at SYAS offered a number of comments regarding our vision.

Young people said:

‘I want people to be identified earlier so they can get the support they need’

‘It’s important for young people to have a say in the support they receive’

‘I feel like my parents and I have to fight to get the support and services I need’

We did:

• Our measurements for success now include listening to the voices of children and young people as well as hearing from families.
Our principles of transformation

Our five key principles

1. Children with special educational needs are identified earlier and supported in a timely and effective way in order to improve their outcomes and wellbeing.

2. There is an increased focus on earlier intervention and prevention to offer help and meet needs at the earliest opportunity, reducing the demand on high cost, high need interventions.

3. Children and young people are helped to become resilient and independent so that they can lead independent and fulfilling lives in their own communities.

4. The voices of our children, young people and families are heard so they can shape and inform how we work together to get the best results.

5. Surrey’s early years settings, schools, colleges and other providers are able to support children to live, learn and grow up locally and achieve their full potential.
Improving our SEND System

Building the foundations:

The Surrey SEND Systems Partnership Board will be working together, on the plans highlighted below which we believe will bring about change and improvement to services, provision and experiences for children and young people. To work effectively these plans require effective, ‘whole system partnership working’.

It will not be enough to just improve all the separate parts of the SEND system. Families have to navigate the whole system, and the gaps and shifts between the different parts can make this experience exhausting and difficult. We have to build a whole system that feels coherent and seamless.

This means we need to change cultures and behaviours. We will need to invest energy to learn new ways of working and being, across the Council, education, health and wider partners in the voluntary and community sector. This will take time. We need to build our shared identity: the ‘we’ that is committed to doing whatever it takes to bring radical improvement to the experiences of children, young people and families in Surrey.

We need to invest in our relationships, in order to grow trust and commitment to taking and action together. And we need to explore information: to make sense together of what is really happening in the whole system, not just in our own organisations, in order to work together for change. This work has already begun in summer 2019 and will continue and be further informed by the outputs of ThePublicOffice's work during the Autumn.

In practice this means:

• We will work together across the boundaries of our organisations, driven by shared values and a common commitment to enable our children and young people to learn, thrive and live as independently as possible.

• We will talk honestly with one another about difficulties, which may include differences between the aims of our own organisations and those of this partnership strategy.

• We will reflect together on what is working and what needs improvement.

Our plans are captured in the following work streams:

- Improving experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND
- Improving our SEND Offer
- Improving the quality of what we do
Improving experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND

What we want to achieve?
- Surrey is an inclusive county where we are welcoming of children with SEND.
- Children are at the centre of our thinking and we work with families as partners, to develop our understanding and improve our services.
- Families have easy access to information which helps them understand how best to meet their child’s needs and access the help that is offered.
- A timely and joint decision making process involving all partners.

What will be different?
- Children and young people with SEND and their families will tell us that the support they receive is improving their outcomes.
- Children and young people will access the right support at the right time.
- Children with SEND will have increased educational progress and attainment.
- More children with SEND will engage in further education and/or employment.
- Fewer children with SEND will be excluded from school or miss out on education for another reason.

How will we do this?
- Develop a Surrey-wide Autism Strategy to achieve an autism friendly approach in all services and educational and community settings across the county.
- Deliver an Early Years SEND Strategy to achieve a joined up SEND system for children aged 0-5.
- Improve the way in which we make decisions around children with SEND, including how we involve families in the decision-making.
- Promote an inclusive approach across all educational settings.
- Broaden the range of children, young people and families we hear from about how we can make our services and settings better, and improve how we use this information in our decision-making.
- Review and improve our Local Offer website and enquiry service.
Improving our SEND Offer

**What we want to achieve?**
- We enable children with SEND to thrive and achieve in their local communities, attend a school and access services that meet their needs close to where they live.
- Children's needs are identified as early as possible with a quick response, and decisions based on achieving the best outcomes for the child.

**What will be different?**
- More children with SEND will be supported to remain and achieve in schools that meet their needs appropriately.
- More children will receive the support they need at an earlier stage and without the need for an EHCP.
- More children, young people and families will tell us they are happier with the support their child is receiving, with fewer families experiencing the need to appeal a decision.
- More children will be educated closer to where they live and build links in their local community.

**How will we do this?**
- Re-shape our delivery of the SEND support offer into local area teams, with an increased focus on early intervention.
- Empower clusters of schools to develop and deliver a SEND support offer which provides an early response to the SEND needs of children in their schools.
- Establish a pilot to improve pathways and practice for helping children with both SEND and mental health needs.
- Broaden school designations so that special schools can accommodate children with a wider range of SEND needs.
- Review the funding bands associated with SEND so that planning around children’s needs can be more creative, flexible and tailored to their individual needs and circumstances.
- Create additional school places for children with SEND and more flexible and comprehensive alternative provision.
- Adopt an invest to save attitude to promote resilience and independence as children approach adulthood.
## Improving the quality of what we do

### What we want to achieve?
- Health, Education and the Local Authority share responsibility for making sure that high quality support is in place for children when and where they need it.
- Children and families have access to the same level of high quality support wherever they live in Surrey.
- A smooth transition into adult services for those that require it.

### What will be different?
- Children will have quicker and improved access to therapeutic support at an earlier stage.
- Where a child has both SEND and complex health needs they will experience swifter decision-making.
- Staff across the SEND system will receive appropriate training and supervision so they feel confident and skilled in identifying and responding to the needs of children with SEND.
- More children, young people and families will tell us they are happy with the quality of the SEND support available.

### How will we do this?
- Develop a Joint Commissioning Strategy and Arrangements between CCGs and the Local Authority to establish clear accountability and commissioning principles.
- Establish a culture of continuous learning and improvement, including improved quality assurance processes which involve families.
- Improve our use of data in understanding the needs of children with SEND in Surrey and the effectiveness of our support.
- Revise our quality standards for our work with children with SEND and involve children and young people in this.
- Deliver a workforce development programme across staff working with children with SEND.
- Work with employers, providers of further and higher education and Adult social care to support smooth transition to adult life.
Measuring our success

We will be measuring the impact of these changes to ensure we are making a difference to the lives of children with SEND and their families through:

Hearing from children and young people and families:
- Working with Family Voice Surrey to understand whether and how families are seeing the difference.
- Working with youth engagement teams such as SYAS to hear directly from young people.
- Learning from feedback, complaints and appeals directed at services across health, education and Local Authority.
- The annual POET survey for children receiving SEND support, which is available [here](#).

Quality Assurance activity:
- Audits and case reviews into the quality of our work.
- Learning from our performance data.
- Sharing findings with service users and inviting their participation as experts by experience in monitoring services.

External Reviews:
- Recommendations from Ofsted and CQC.
- Learning from peer reviews.

Keeping you informed:
- We intend for our Strategy to be regularly reviewed and updated in response to feedback from young people and their families. We have therefore created a page dedicated to the strategy on the Local Offer website: [www.surreylocaloffer.org.uk/sendstrategy](http://www.surreylocaloffer.org.uk/sendstrategy). This will provide progress updates, key documents and an opportunity to feedback, ask questions or make suggestions.
References

i Surrey Local Area SEND Inspection- https://files.api.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50076796

ii GOV.UK- Statistics: school and pupil numbers: Schools, Pupils and their characteristics (Table 1c)- https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2019


