

Dorset Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Communications Strategy

Final version – agreed at SEND Delivery Board on 8 January

1. Background

Dorset County Council and NHS Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group are working in partnership with educational settings, other partners and families to develop a joint strategy to improve the outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in Dorset.

This Communications Strategy supports the Dorset SEND Strategy. It sets out our strategic approach to communicating and engaging with our audiences about the improvement of SEND services in Dorset. An activity plan setting out specific communication and engagement actions to be delivered is included as Appendix 1.

This strategy is an action under Priority 3 of the Dorset SEND Strategy: ‘Talking to, listening to and involving children, young people and parents and carers’. Delivery of the strategy will be led by Dorset County Council’s communications team in collaboration with the Family Information Service, SEND Participation and Engagement Manager, and the CCG and partner communications teams and progress will be reported to the Dorset SEND Delivery Group.

2. Objectives

We will use effective communications and engagement to support the vision and objectives of the Dorset SEND Strategy. Our communications objectives are as follows:

What we want to achieve	How we will measure it
Stakeholders are appropriately engaged and informed about work to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of regular updates • Attendance at meetings and events • Media coverage • Social media engagement
Stakeholders’ understand the challenges we face, what we are doing to improve, and why	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback, including survey responses • Social media engagement
Children and young people with SEND and their parents and carers feel informed, listened to and that they have a say	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback, including survey responses • Social media engagement
Partners share information and are able to work well together to a shared plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback, including survey responses • Intranet visits
The Dorset SEND Local Offer is known and well-used by parents, carers and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web visits • Social media engagement • Feedback, including survey responses

3. Audiences and stakeholders

The people and groups with whom we will communicate are detailed below:

Internal	External
Programme governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dorset SEND Delivery Group • Dorset Health and Wellbeing Board 	Families and support networks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people with SEND • Parents and carers

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dorset Transforming Care Partnership • Accountability Alliance • Dorset Schools' Forum • Dorset Health Forum <p>Local authority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dorset County Council <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Children's Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SEND services ○ Adult and Community Services ○ Environment and Economy Services (including Dorset Travel) ○ Councillors, including Cabinet, champions and local councillors ○ Forward Together Board • Other local authorities (including districts and boroughs, parish and towns, and neighbouring authorities) <p>Healthcare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NHS Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Governing body (?) • Dorset HealthCare University Foundation Trust • Other healthcare providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Dorset Parent Carer Council (DPCC) • Other support groups <p>Education settings and professionals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dorset mainstream schools, including academies and free schools • Dorset special schools • Further education colleges • Early years settings • Independent schools • Out of county settings • Headteachers • School governors and academy/multi-academy trust directors • SENCos • Teaching staff <p>Government and national</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Department for Education (DfE) ○ Department of Health • Ofsted • Care Quality Commission (CQC) <p>Media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National media • Local media • Specialist media <p>Public and communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and voluntary sector organisations • Dorset residents • Employers
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4. Key messages

The key messages that we will communicate with our audiences are as follows:

- We know what we need to improve and are acting to improve it as quickly as possible
- We are working together to develop a single strategy and system to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND and their families
- We will be accountable for doing what we say we will and for letting people know how well we are doing
- We will support families to provide help early
- We will complete assessments and plans on time
- We will involve and listen to children and young people with SEND and their families
- We will make it clear to families what information, advice and support is available, how to find it and how to give feedback

- We will improve families' experience of getting support with SEND from birth to adulthood
- We want to give children and young people with SEND in Dorset the best chance to succeed in life
- We want children and young people with SEND to enjoy family life and to go to school as near to their home as possible
- We will work together across children's and adult's services to support children and young people with SEND to prepare well for adulthood, to participate in their community and to live as independently as possible

5. Implementation – channels and tactics

Type	Channel	Audience(s)	Frequency
Web	Dorset SEND Local Offer website (www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/local-offer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents and carers (SEND) • Children and young people • Professionals 	On-going
	Dorset CCG website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public/all 	On-going
	The Xchange website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/carers of children with a disability 	On-going
Media	News releases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media • Dorset residents • Parents and carers 	Ad hoc (at major milestones)
	Media briefings/interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local media 	Ad hoc
Social media	Family Information Service Facebook page	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents and carers (general) • Professionals 	On-going
	Dorset County Council Twitter and Facebook accounts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public/all 	On-going
	Dorset CCG Twitter and Facebook accounts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public/all 	On-going
Internal	Intranets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff • Councillors 	On-going
	Staff e-newsletters (e.g. DCC Children's Services News)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff 	Monthly/ad hoc
E-newsletters	Family Information Service e-newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/carers (general and SEND) 	Monthly/ad hoc
	Dorset Schools News (DCC – new)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools (head teachers, governors, SENCOs, etc) 	
	The Xchange newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/carers of children with a disability 	Monthly
Meetings	Dorset SEND Improvement Delivery Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group members 	Monthly

Events	Dorset Parent Carer Council events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents and carers • Children and young people • Professionals 	Twice yearly
Letter/email	Briefings and updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MPs/Ministers • Councillors • Staff • Partners 	Monthly/ad hoc

5.1. The Local Offer

The Government requires all local authorities are required to publish their 'Local Offer' for children and young people with SEND. This is the 'one-stop shop' for people to find out information and get support with anything to do with SEND. In Dorset, the SEND Local Offer (to distinguish it from other potential 'local offers' for various different services) consists primarily of the Local Offer web pages, now hosted on the Dorset councils' DorsetForYou website at www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/local-offer. There has been extensive and on-going development of the Local Offer content led by the Dorset Family Information Service and based on evidence from engagement with children and young people, parents/carers and professionals. The SEND Local Offer also includes all communications and information materials and channels produced about SEND in Dorset, including leaflets, brochures, social media channels, videos and e-newsletters.

5.2. Branding

For the Local Offer and this communications strategy to be successful, it is vitally important that our key stakeholders, particularly children and young people and their parents are aware of it, feel ownership and recognise it as theirs. To enable this, we will develop a distinct brand for the Dorset SEND Local Offer that will be used to identify to children and young people, parents and carers, and professionals where SEND information and support is available. The brand will include:

- a brand name (Dorset SEND and Dorset SEND Local Offer)
- a logo
- a colour scheme
- a tone of voice and style of language

Any branding must meet nationally recognised accessibility standards for people with disabilities. For the Local Offer we will follow the GOV.UK design principles, including writing for a reading age of nine years old.

The branding will be developed and agreed through participation and engagement with children and young people and parents and carers to make sure that it is appropriate and relevant to their needs and preference (while recognising that views are subjective).

The new branding will be launched to coincide with DorsetForYou's move to a new web platform, provisionally in early 2018.

6. Measurement and evaluation

We will use the following metrics and methods to monitor, measure and report the effectiveness of our communications and engagement:

Type	Outputs (What we did)	Outtakes (What people took from it)	Outcomes (What impact it had)
Web	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of web visits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link clicks User feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More users accessed information or services online Positive feedback about customer experience
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of news releases Number of media briefings/journalists attending 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media coverage (volume and sentiment) Use of key messages Web visits/link clicks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audiences more aware of and understand key messages
Social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post reach (how many people saw it) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement (likes, shares, comments, video views) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audiences more aware of and understand key messages Audiences positively engaged Unnecessary customer demand reduces
E-newsletters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of e-newsletters Number of recipients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of emails opened Link clicks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audiences more aware of and understand key messages Audiences positively engaged Unnecessary customer demand reduces
Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of attendees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendee feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders are informed, involved and engaged
Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of attendees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendee feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders are informed, involved and engaged
Letter/email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of recipients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of responses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders are informed, involved and engaged

Appendix 1: Activity plan

Date	Activity/Milestone	Audiences	Channels	Owner
Nov 2017	Project stakeholder updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal and partner stakeholders • Parents and carers • Young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Offer web pages • Email 	Comms officer
Ongoing	Deliver Local Offer marketing plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/carers • Children and young people • Professionals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Offer web pages • Social media • E-newsletters • Advertising • Your Dorset • Media 	Family Information Service
TBC	Promote public consultation on draft Dorset SEND Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/carers • Professionals • Media • Public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Offer web pages • News release • Social media posts 	Participation and Engagement manager
Feb 2018	Launch Dorset SEND Local Offer branding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/carers • Professionals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Offer web pages • Social media (paid and organic) • E-newsletters 	FIS/Comms
TBC	Publish Dorset SEND Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public/all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Offer web pages • News release • Media briefing • Stakeholder briefings • Internal comms 	Project leads
TBC	Produce child/young person-friendly version of strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children/young people • Parents/carers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Offer web pages • Leaflet/brochure 	FIS/Comms
TBC	Promote an annual SEND conference (TBC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children/young people • Parents/carers • Professionals 		Participation and Engagement manager

