

SEND Strategy 2024 to 2027

Foreword

We are delighted to share our revised Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy for 2024-2027. This work is overseen by the Dorset SEND and Inclusion Partnership Board for children and young people from birth to 25.

This has been developed in partnership with NHS Dorset Integrated Care Board and the Dorset Parent Carer Council (DPCC) alongside our parents and carers and children and young people. The strategy sets out key things we want to achieve as part of our longer-term [Children, Young People and Families Plan](#).

We want the best for our children and young people and have listened to them as we have revised this plan – we wanted to understand ‘what matters’ to them. We have also taken into account feedback from our parents and carers through the survey in 2023 and from our recent Ofsted and CQC Inspection ([report published May 2024](#)).

Throughout the document we refer to ‘next steps’ rather than transitions. Our young people have told us that the word ‘transition’ can mean different things to them. In the context of our strategy, we are referring to when a child or young person moves from one phase of education to another, or between different services, or on into their adulthood.

The SEND and Inclusion Partnership Board

The Dorset SEND and Inclusion Partnership Board was formed in 2023 to provide robust multi-agency oversight for the delivery of services across the SEND partnership and the programme of change required to provide an outstanding service to children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities across Dorset. The Board provides key governance, ensuring pace, challenge and oversight for all aspects of SEND Improvement, the High Needs Block and the SEND Strategy.

The Board is led by the Director of Children's Services and brings together:

- Dorset Council officers
- NHS Dorset Integrated Care Board officers
- Dorset Parent Carer Council (DPCC)
- Maintained and academy school leaders of all phases from early years to post-16, including special schools
- Dorset SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)

The board will:

- Foster a culture of inclusivity and collaboration through co-production.
- Oversee reforms and improvements to SEND services across Dorset.
- Ensure a clear and shared strategy for improving services is put into action and that improvements make a positive difference to the lives of children and young people with SEND.
- Ensure equitable access to provision.
- Enable and ensure improvement of systems and processes.
- Ensure delivery plans for SEND are ambitious and on track.
- Identify and remove any barriers to improvements for children and young people with SEND.
- Enhance the lived experience of children and young people with SEND by effectively delivering Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs) and providing appropriate SEND support.

Our shared values

Our shared values are:

- always putting children and families at the heart of everything we do – including how we develop and shape services
- no child or family left behind – we strive for equity of outcomes for all
- focus on early intervention and prevention – offering the right help in the right place at the right time
- working restoratively – doing things with families, not to or for them
- thinking family – providing a joined-up approach
- focusing on and building on the strengths with individuals, families, and communities
- being inclusive – challenging discrimination where we see it and promoting a sense of belonging for all our children in communities
- taking a rights-based approach to our work
- delivering best value for money – spending the Dorset £ on the things that get the best outcomes for children and families
- always remaining hopeful and determined to achieve good outcomes for all

Partnership Vision

Our vision is clear and focused:

"We want our children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to be healthy, happy and safe and able to achieve their potential to lead a fulfilling life.

We want them to have, and to expect the same opportunities in life as other children and young people."

Our Partnership has a bold and courageous vision:

- To deliver the best education for all our children and young people,
- To prepare our young people for independence and adulthood, and
- For our children and young people to experience the best possible health and wellbeing.

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Our Priorities

- **Priority 1: Early Identification** – we identify need early and put in plans to support, both early in life and when issues arise
- **Priority 2: Inclusion** – our children and young people feel like they belong at home, at school and in their community. There is a commitment to services and support that is inclusive of children, young people and adults with special educational needs and disabilities
- **Priority 3: SEND Pathway** – everyone understands what services are available and how to access them – we make sure that children and young people with SEND and their families can access the right support from services as early as possible
- **Priority 4: Next Steps and Preparation for Adulthood** – young people move into adulthood successfully with the right support; we make sure that moving between phases of education or changes in what we provide as support are smooth and supportive across all ages
- **Priority 5: Sufficiency and Provision** – we have access to enough resources to meet need – we make sure that wherever possible, we provide education for all children and young people with SEND in Dorset to enable them to thrive in their local communities
- **Priority 6: Managing Money and Resources** – we spend our money sensibly to meet need. We want to ensure we make the best impact and have the best outcomes for our children and young people

Priority 1: Early Identification

We will ensure that children's needs are identified, assessed and supported both early in life and when issues arise. Providing support early should avoid unnecessary assessment and ensure that those who need an Education, Health and Care Plan receive one in a timely way.

Outcomes will be:

- Children and young people's needs are accurately identified and assessed. Workers are able to confidently identify SEND needs when undertaking assessment and direct work.
- We have an effective system to screen the health of school entrants to enable prompt identification of health needs. Robust processes will be in place for health care practitioners to notify the SEND team to let them know that a child may need additional help in an educational setting as per Section 23 notification.
- The Local Offer provides IAA to support families and carers across education, health and care, including clear information on pathways and eligibility
- Children, young people and families report satisfaction on the EHCP process and timescales. Quality Assurance have a robust evidence base of the provision and production of high quality EHCPs. Children and young people receive services that meet their needs.
- We meet the 20-week timescale in all cases. Whilst our performance is better than Southwest, Statistical Neighbours and England, our performance in this area has slipped in recent years
- The Partnership for inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) pilot project will enable schools to provide early interventions at school level, promoting inclusivity to support a wider cohort of neurodiverse children in primary schools
- All leaders across the local area employ a restorative approach to working in partnership
- Identification, assessment and support for mental health and emotional wellbeing needs will be timely and appropriate to the level and type of need
- Children, young people and families with SEND have Annual Reviews that continue to improve outcomes, reflecting the services required to meet their needs.
- Annual Reviews are high quality, evidenced through multi-agency quality assurance audits and dip samples. There is evidence of high levels of attendance of partners at Annual Reviews in audit and dip sampling.
- Feedback from families identifies improved satisfaction of effective and timely services. Families report that EHCPs make a difference to understanding their child's needs and long-term outcomes. Inspection reports identify strong information and data sharing across the partnership.

There will be a consistent offer and range of services and interventions for emotional health and wellbeing.

Priority 2: Inclusion

We will make sure there is a commitment to services and support that is inclusive of children, young people and adults with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

In Dorset, we are committed to inclusion in mainstream settings. We firmly believe every teacher is a teacher of special needs. This means we will:

- build the capabilities of our mainstream schools to support more children and young people with SEND
- make sure more children can attend a local school.

At the core of our strategy we want to strengthen the capacity of our maintained school system to support more children in mainstream schools.

Outcomes of this vision will be:

- We have a skilled early years workforce both internally and externally to improve understanding and implementation of ordinarily available provision.
- EHCPs are co-produced with families and young people
- The majority of schools and settings have accessed training to help all staff understand and provide for children and young people's needs in mainstream settings.
- Children and young people experience a continuum of support which starts in mainstream settings, through a universal entitlement (ordinarily available provision/ graduated approach)
- Children and young people's behaviour and needs are understood, and settings provide an appropriate response.
- Our Learning Centre Head Teachers and Mainstream Head Teachers work together to improve the numbers of children and young people returning to mainstream school.
- Academic outcomes and attainment improve. Improved outcomes that meet, if not exceed national standard at KS2 maths, at KS2 for reading, at KS2 for writing and improved outcomes in English specifically for children with SEND.
- We will deliver our Key Stage 4 (KS4) plans, being progressed through our [Education Strategy 2024-27](#) to improve KS4 attainment. A full curriculum review of KS3 and 4 curriculum will be carried out to quality assure the intent, implementation and impact of each subject. We will focus on specific curriculum areas where attainment is below national average and using both local, regional (hubs) and national support, work with schools to address and influence academic data over time. We will draw upon regional and national best practice around the teaching of young people with SEND to ensure the best adaptive strategies are in place to meet need.
- Staff working in our settings feel confident and are able to effectively support children and young people with SEND.
- There are more enhanced facilities in mainstream schools to ensure that young people with SEND have the best environment and resources to meet their needs, close to home within their local community.
- We have agreed our "local inclusion plan", clearly communicating to providers and parents/carers about the provision that is available in the local area, including within mainstream, specialist and Alternative Provision.

- We will further embed and implement 'Therapeutic Thinking' with the schools that have completed the 3-day tutor training with a specific focus on the settings that have proportionally high numbers of children and young people with EHCPs and suspensions.
- All settings have a shared understanding of inclusion and understand what interventions and strategies improve outcomes for different needs.
- Settings work together and with partners to identify appropriate support and interventions to maintain belonging and inclusion within their setting and across the partnership
- Inclusion in the early years enables all children, including those with additional needs to access their early education entitlements.
- Children and young people's needs are identified and discussed through joint planning meetings and support, and next steps identified

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Priority 3: SEND Pathway

We will make sure that children and young people with SEND and their families can access the right support from services easily and quickly.

Outcomes of this vision will be:

- Children, young people and families will receive timely support at the right time and have access to support across the partnership. Areas to improve process are shared across the partnership with recommendations to improve the pathways.
- We will see decreased waiting times for assessment with a focus on enhancing our support offer, and early and timely identification of health needs
- Children, young people and families will receive timely support at the right time and have access to support across the partnership
- When requesting a Needs Assessment, we respond in a timely way and meet statutory deadlines. Children and young people's needs are identified early and the right support is provided.
- Needs Assessments have input from the right practitioners meaning that a holistic picture of the child/young person is gathered, and their needs correctly identified enabling the right support at the right time.
- Children and young people with an EHCP who are educated at home receive the right support. Where it is appropriate, we will support families to help children back into a formal setting.
- Reporting enables overdue health advice to be shared with Designated Clinical Officer (DCO) to provide support to health services to meet the 6-week statutory timescale.
- The parental and child's voice is strengthened within the Quality Assurance (QA) process. This process encourages children, young people and families to provide feedback on their experiences of participating in decision making of their planning and support.
- The new speech, language and communication needs pathway and approach empowers parents and carers to be effective primary communication partners to their child through access to information, tools and support.
- Leaders take effective action to improve the quality of the EHC plan process. This will include continuously refining a fair and robust decision-making system to decide on a child or young person's education, health and care needs or plan; issuing plans in a timely way; and checking the quality of EHC plans.
- Every child/young person who has an EHCP has their plan reviewed at least annually, so that their needs are accurate and provision is suitable.
- The implementation of the balanced system framework and pathways will ensure that there is a whole system approach to supporting children and young people's speech, language and communication across five strands of environment, family support, wider workforce, identification and intervention, and at universal, targeted and specialist levels.
- We have embedded a new SEND case management system that will improve the efficiency of delivery and bring on board professionals and schools to genuinely coproduce EHCPs in partnership.
- Family feedback will be used to monitor the impact and effectiveness of the Development and Behaviour pathway. Families will report an increase in satisfaction over time.
- Improved visibility and understanding amongst system partners of key data regarding waits for assessment and intervention for the CAMHS pathway. Children, young people and

families are supported earlier where children are at risk of attending accident and emergency or being admitted to a mental health beds.

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Priority 4: Next Steps and Preparation for Adulthood

We will make sure that moving between phases of education or changes in what we provide as support are smooth and supportive across all ages.

Outcomes of this vision will be:

- EHC Plans contain SMART actions so that children and young people's aspirations and needs are captured accurately, leading to the right provision being offered.
- More young people with SEND progress into suitable post-16 provision.
- Statutory timescales are met for phase transfers.
- Our children and young people with SEND achieve positive educational outcomes. A higher proportion of our young people remain in education, training and employment and a higher proportion to go on to achieve paid employment. We reduce the number of suspensions and exclusions and the use of reduced timetables. Attendance rates for children and young people with SEND improve, particularly where there are post Covid challenges, linked to anxiety and social, emotional and mental health issues.
- Families participate in decision making therefore do not feel they need to appeal through the SEND tribunal process
- More young people with SEND have planned next steps to move into education, employment or training beyond 16-years of age.
- Pathways and provision pre and post 16 enable young people to make good progress and achieve their aspirations

Priority 5: Sufficiency and Provision

We will make sure we increase the education we provide for all children and young people with SEND so that our children can stay in Dorset and thrive in their local communities.

This includes access to:

- health services
- early years provision
- post-16 services
- adults with learning disabilities (LD)

Outcomes of this vision will be:

- Health advice will be provided within the 6-week statutory timescale to ensure timely assessment and identification of need to inform EHCNAs.
- We have helped local area partnership stakeholders consider the 'wider determinants' or 'social determinants of health'; the things that affect our health and wellbeing and include parents on young people having a job and income, living somewhere where we feel safe, having social contact with others and our lifestyle choices.
- We are able to realise the additional special school places for young people whose complex learning needs can best be met in special schools.
- We strengthen our business intelligence around Alternative Provision (AP) specifically to ensure we are tracking outcomes.
- Family feedback provides evidence of increased satisfaction of access to short break provision. Families will have access to short break provision that will best support them and particularly for families whose children have more complex needs. There is suitability of short break provision across the 14-25 age group.
- Children, young people and families are supported earlier and especially where children are at risk of admission to a mental health bed.
- All partners know what provision is suitable to meet the range of children's needs. Children and young people will receive appropriate provision at the right time. Family and setting feedback tells us that the provision supports the child to progress in their learning. Provision for children and young people with SEND is commissioned from providers who can evidence positive outcomes and are of good quality.

- Commissioning and delivery of interventions and services will be informed by impact evidence. The partnership will know when and how decisions lead to positive outcomes. The partnership will know what provision is needed and have a plan to implement it.
- We can monitor the realisation of Outcomes from the child or young person's perspective. Further work is required on developing an Outcomes Framework.

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Priority 6: Managing Money and Resources

We will make sure that we manage our SEND funding from the dedicated schools grant (DSG) effectively and efficiently so that we can have the best impact and outcomes for our children and young people with the resources available.

Outcomes of this vision will be:

- We have an agreed highlight report structure for the reporting of progress against all the plans, that ensures key messages are clear within the governance structure.
- The Partnership Agreement principles are understood and shared by all partners, including schools, early years settings, post 16 providers, GP's and commissioned health services.
- Voices of children and families will continue to influence and shape the services as the partnership will be fully sighted on their views. Utilising this data will further provide assurance to the partnership about the satisfaction of effective and timely services to our families. Inspection reports identify strong information and data sharing across the partnership.
- We will have an accurate understanding of the needs of children and young people via shared data and metrics
- We strengthen our work to effectively evaluate and measure impact for children and young people. This includes work currently underway focussed on children and young people receiving progress and inclusion support (Alternative Provision - AP).
- We have completed the roll-out of Inclusion Hubs in schools.

Another outcome will be an increase in multi-agencies overseeing moving on to adulthood, including:

- health
- housing
- education
- community safety
- children's and adults' social care

How we will deliver our SEND Strategy

The progress of this strategy will be reviewed at the Dorset SEND Inclusion Partnership Board.

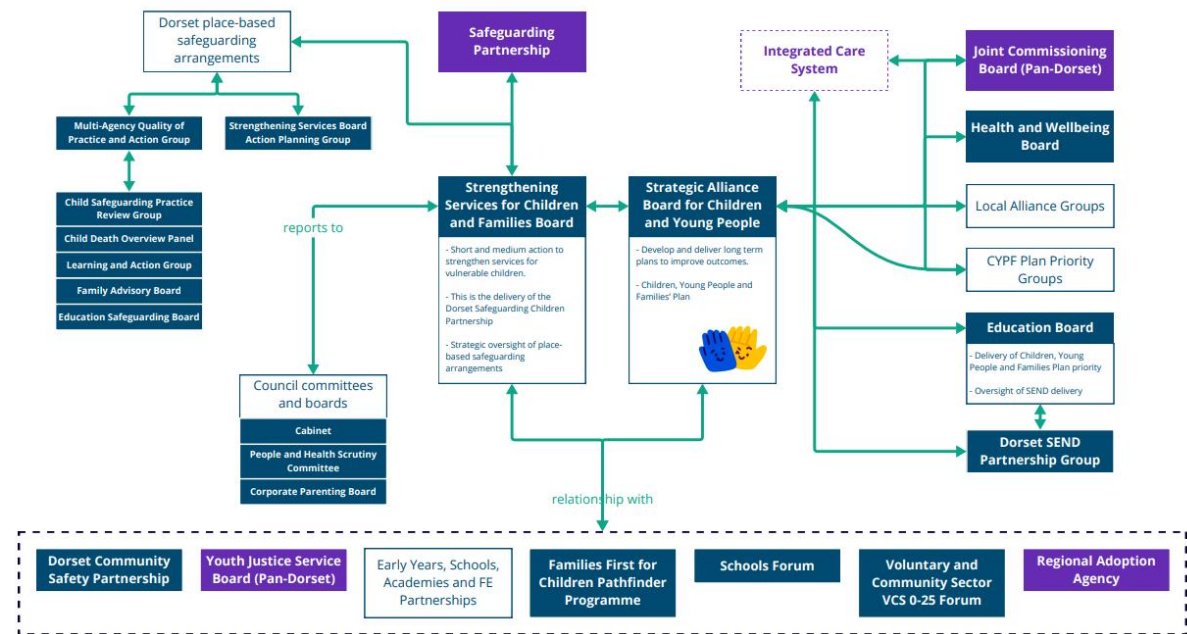
A termly report detailing evidence and impact of actions will be presented for each of the priority areas.

Key performance indicators will also be monitored through the Education Performance and Practice meeting and Children’s Services Performance Board.

Our SEND Inclusion Board was created in 2023 and reports to the Dorset Education Board. The diagram below shows our strategic partnership governance arrangements.

Dorset Children's Strategic Partnership Governance

Pan-Dorset
Dorset Council area



References and further reading

Dorset Education Strategy [Education Strategy 2024 to 2027 - Dorset Council](#)

Department of Education [Children with special educational needs and disabilities \(SEND\): Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Department for Education (2021) [SEND: old issues, new issues, next steps - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Department of Education (2023) [SEND and alternative provision improvement plan - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Local Government Association (2024) [Towards an effective and financially sustainable approach to SEND in England | Local Government Association](#)

Department for Education (from April 2024) [Area SEND inspections: framework and handbook - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

The RISE Partnership (Research and Improvement for SEND Excellence) [Home - What Works in SEND \(whatworks-send.org.uk\)](#)

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Review

- This strategy was last reviewed in 2024
- The next expected review date is 2027

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