

CABINET

18 OCTOBER 2022

JOINT SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY (SEND) STRATEGY 2022-25

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Mrs Josie Iles, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services
(Lead Member)

Report from: Lee-Anne Farach, Director of People – Children and Adults
Services

Author: Celia Buxton, Assistant Director, Education and SEND
Wendy Vincent, Head of Integrated 0-25 Disability Services

Summary

This paper sets out the draft updated Joint Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy which includes the vision, guiding principles and the key areas of development that will be Medway's focus for children and young people with SEND over the coming three years.

The Health and Wellbeing Board and the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the report at their meetings held during September 2022, and the comments of those meetings are set out at Appendix 3 and 4. The Cabinet are asked to approve the Strategy, as attached at Appendix 1.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

1.1. The Council Plan outlines the organisation's strategic outcome for education in Medway under its 'People' Priority: **"All children achieving their potential in education"**.

1.2. The People Strategy outlines several strategic priority activities based on its outcomes:

Under 'Children in Medway will have the best start in life' –

- Support families to give their children the best start in life by developing an integrated approach to our healthy child and early years programmes.

Under 'Children and young people in Medway will develop well' –

- Ensure all children and young people receive a high standard of education locally, including a focus on supporting those with special educational needs are educated alongside their peers and in their local school and support their preparation for adulthood.
- Effective school place planning, ensuring that Medway has enough schools, school places and where appropriate adequate specialist school nursing to support a growing population and their health needs within the school setting.
- Support good mental health, emotional wellbeing and resilience for children and young people, from pre-school right through to young adulthood.
- Ensure our education system instils an appetite for life-long learning and skills attainment that provides a sound basis for employability and enables people to adapt to different employment opportunities at various stages in life.
- Children and young people will have clear pathways and smooth transitions between education, health and social care settings by effective partnership working. Their preparation for adulthood will be built on their strengths, thus enabling them to have an independent life as possible.

1.3. Child-Friendly Medway – and Children and Young People Plan

- Children and young people in Medway will be safe
- Children and young people have the best start in life
- Children and young people in Medway will develop well
- Children and young people in Medway will aspire to become independent and fulfilled adults
- Children and young people in Medway will participate in and contribute to their community and have a meaningful say in decisions and services and that shape their lives

1.4. Funding for children with SEND comes to the Local Authority through a High Needs Block Grant from the Department for Education. This funding is announced annually.

2. Background

2.1. A strategy for Medway children and young people who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) was developed by Medway Council and Medway CCG in 2019. This strategy was the first joint SEND Local Area Strategy and largely focused on the required improvements following the Local Area SEND Inspection in December 2017.

2.2. This revised SEND Strategy 2022-25 sets out the priorities for Children and Young People with SEND for the next three years. It has been led by the

views of parents and young people and focuses on key areas for development across the Council, health, social care and education with the key aim of improving the opportunities for young people with SEND to live fulfilled lives and achieve independence in or near their local community.

2.3. The strategy sets out the five joint strategic priorities and a set of principles for the delivery of these priorities. These are:

- Ambition 1: Achieving the best outcomes, through inclusion and participation
- Ambition 2: Preparing for a successful future at the earliest opportunity
- Ambition 3: Working together with children and young people with SEND and their families and carers
- Ambition 4: Access to the right support, at the right time, in the right place
- Ambition 5: Children and young people with SEND recover from the Covid pandemic

2.4. We have the highest expectations for children and young people with SEND in Medway. To deliver the vision and achieve these priorities, our principles for all our services across partners and agencies is to:

- Put children, young people, and their families at the heart of service design and delivery through coproduction and a person-centred approach ensuring opportunities to work together to find solutions
- Ensure that children and young people with SEND feel safe and protected from harm
- Ensure that children and young people are seen and heard and supported as early as possible to prevent escalation to more specialist services
- Ensure children and young people with SEND are included in all educational settings effectively, removing barriers to learning with high quality teaching, support from services and access to opportunities
- Deliver services within local settings and communities wherever possible
- Break down the cultural and structural divisions between agencies in the interest of improving outcomes for children and young people so that professionals can work seamlessly and effectively together
- Make best use of resources that are jointly planned to meet needs and allocated fairly and openly
- Work together to evaluate and plan for change and continuously improve.

3. Advice and Analysis

3.1. A SEND Strategy Action Plan with key outcomes, milestones, clear accountabilities and agreed measures of impact is being developed and will be subject to the oversight of the SEND Partnership Board, a Cabinet Advisory Group, with links into the Health and Wellbeing Board.

3.2. Part of our role in meeting these priorities is to manage a sustainable system and use resources efficiently to ensure the greatest impact. As such, the

SEND Strategy Action Plan will align with the High Needs Deficit Recovery Plan and Safety Valve Intervention Programme.

- 3.3. Parents and young people and wider stakeholders will be central to monitoring the implementation of the strategy and measuring the impact of the actions and changes.
- 3.4. Parents and Carers requested a more accessible format for the strategy moving forward. They strongly favoured a brief, pictorial style strategy that was easy to read and conveyed the key vision and ambitions.
- 3.5. Regular feedback on the progress of the SEND Strategy Action Plan will be provided to parents, carers and young people via the SEND Newsletter and The Local Offer.

4. Risk Management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
The needs of parents, carers and young people are not met.	The strategy is not fit for purpose or ineffective in its ability to address the pressing issues.	Co-production has taken place with Medway parents and carers association to agree the priorities.	D2
The needs of parents, carers and young people are not met.	Stakeholders such as health and education have differing priorities that are misaligned with the strategy.	The strategy is a joint strategy with Health and has been shared with stakeholders through various reference groups.	D2
Services are not aligned by the agreed priorities and actions to meet them lack impact.	The strategy does not communicate the vision and priorities in an accessible way.	The strategy has been simplified to be able to present clearly the key priorities e.g. using infographics.	D3

5. Consultation

- 5.1. This joint Strategy has been co-produced with parents, carers and young people and NHS Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board (ICB). Their views and input have informed the key priorities and actions included in the SEND Strategy.
- 5.2. Parents were invited to complete a survey in November 2021 asking for their opinions on the priorities for SEND in the Local Area. In December 2021, parents and carers were also invited to take part in an annual survey which

sought their views on the effectiveness of current services and what improvements and developments they would like to see.

- 5.3. Medway Parent Carers Forum sought views during online meetings and face to face discussion from their member parents and carers. Parents were also invited to co-production coffee mornings arranged by Medway Parent Carers Forum and young people were consulted via the Young Persons Participation Groups. Their comments and opinions were carefully listened to and used to review the strategy.
- 5.4. Members of the SEND Operational Group from across health, social care and education were involved in shaping the appearance and content of the strategy. The strategic priorities jointly identified by parents, young people and local area partners were agreed by the SEND Operational Board.
- 5.5. A formal public consultation on Medway's draft Joint 0-25 SEND Strategy was launched on 23 August 2022, to provide an opportunity for Medway residents and stakeholders to provide feedback which will be used to inform a final published version. The consultation closed at 5:00 pm, 23 September 2022.
- 5.6. The consultation was promoted through a number of channels. The consultation documents were made available online through the Local Offer, Medway Council, NHS Kent and Medway ICB websites and Medway Parent Carers website and social media page. Individual emails were sent to all school leaders and to key health departments. The SEND Newsletter published an article on the consultation with details on how to get involved.
- 5.7. The consultation received 120 responses. There was overwhelming agreement to the 5 ambitions set out in the Strategy:
 - 87% of responders agreed with the ambition to achieve the best outcomes through inclusion and participation.
 - 86% of responders agreed with the ambition to prepare for a successful future at the earliest opportunity.
 - 85% of responders agreed with the ambition to work together with children and young people with SEND and their families.
 - 88% of responders agreed with the ambition to have access to the right support, at the right time, in the right place.
 - 87% of responders agreed with the ambition for children and young people with SEND to recover from the Covid pandemic.
- 5.8. Comments received as part of the survey responses were helpful in ensuring that the detail of these ambitions has the right emphasis, for example, ensuring that community-based services and out of school activities are included as an important factor to support inclusion and participation. All feedback received in the consultation will be used to inform the development of the SEND Strategy Action Plan.
- 5.9. The Health and Wellbeing Board considered the report on 1 September 2022, details of which are set out in Appendix 3.

- 5.10. The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the report on 29 September 2022, details of which are set out in Appendix 4.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1. Funding for children with SEND comes to the Local Authority through a High Needs Block Grant from the Department for Education. This funding is announced annually.
- 6.2. The High Needs Block is under significant pressure. For the 2021/22 financial year the total deficit was £20.5m.
- 6.3. Medway Council is currently in discussions with the DfE and ESFA to be part of the “Safety Valve Intervention Programme” (SVIP). The programme requires the local authority to develop substantial plans for reform to their high needs systems and associated spending. As such, activity outlined in these plans must align with the priorities of the SEND Strategy and therefore we will delay finalising the SEND Strategy Action Plan until the SVIP work has progressed further.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1. The Council has statutory duties under the Children & Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014 to provide for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. The Joint SEND Strategy sets out an approach which supports the achievement of positive outcomes for young people with SEND, within the framework of the legislative duty to ensure efficient use of public resources.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1. The Cabinet is asked to note the comments of the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee as set out at Appendix 3 and 4 to the report..
- 8.2. The Cabinet is asked to approve the Joint SEND Strategy 2022-25, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.
- 8.3. The Cabinet is asked to delegate authority to the Director of People – Children and Adult Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services (Lead Member), to make minor updates to the strategy that are necessary following completion of the Safety Valve Intervention Programme (SVIP).

9. Suggested reasons for decisions

- 9.1. The Joint SEND Strategy sets out an approach which supports the achievement of positive outcomes for young people with SEND and includes the vision, guiding principles and the key areas of development that will be Medway's focus for children and young people with SEND over the coming three years.

Lead officer contact

Wendy Vincent, Head of Integrated 0-25 Disability
wendy.vincent@medway.gov.uk

Appendices

Appendix 1: Draft Joint SEND Strategy 2022-25

Appendix 2: Diversity Impact Assessment

Appendix 3: SEND Strategy Item minutes from Health and Wellbeing Board,
1 September 2022

Appendix 4: SEND Strategy Item minutes from Children and Young People Overview
and Scrutiny Committee, 29 September 2022

Background Papers

[Medway Joint SEND Strategy 2019-2022](#)