

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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MEDWAY JOINT LOCAL AREA SEND ACTION PLAN

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Summary

Medway's Joint Area SEND Strategy 2022-25 was developed in 2022, agreed by Cabinet on 18 October 2022, and sets out the vision, guiding principles and the key areas of development which are the focus for Medway's children and young people with SEND. Following the development of the strategy, the Action Plan was shaped with partners and stakeholders, to focus activities and actions on achieving the priority areas identified in the strategy.

1. Recommendations

1.1. The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider and comment on the SEND Strategy Action Plan.

2. Budget and policy framework

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

2.2. 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.
- 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

3. Background

- 3.1. A revised three year joint strategy for Medway children and young people who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) was developed by Medway Council in 2022.
- 3.2. 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.
- 3.3. The strategy sets out the five joint strategic priorities and a set of principles for the delivery of these priorities. These are:
 1. Access to the right support, at the right time, in the right place
 2. Preparing young people for adult life
 3. Working together with Children and Young People with SEND and their families and carers
 4. Achieve better outcomes through inclusion.

5. Reduce inequalities following the Covid Pandemic

3.4. We have the highest expectations for children and young people with SEND in Medway. To deliver the vision and achieve these priorities, the principles agreed by partners and agencies are 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

4. Advice and analysis

- 4.1. The SEND Strategy Action Plan with key outcomes, milestones, clear accountabilities and agreed measures of impact has been co-produced with Local Area Partners, including parents.
- 4.2. The SEND Strategy Action plan will be monitored monthly by the multi-agency SEND Operational Group and is subject to the Governance of the SEND Partnership Board with links into the Health and Well-Being Board.
- 4.3. The action plan focuses on managing a sustainable system that uses resources efficiently and aligns with the High Needs Block Recovery Plan/Safety Valve Intervention Programme.
- 4.4. 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.
- 4.5. The SEND Strategy Action Plan is updated regularly as actions are completed and new actions identified in order to meet the key ambitions described in the SEND Strategy.

- 4.6. Regular feedback on the progress of the SEN Strategy Action Plan will be provided via the SEND Newsletter and The Local Offer with Quarterly Reports to the SEND Partnership Board.

5. 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 and action plan 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.	CII
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.	CII
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	CIII

Likelihood:	Impact:
A Very likely	I Catastrophic
B Likely	II Major
C Unlikely	III Moderate
D Rare	IV Minor

6. Consultation

- 6.1. Medway's Joint Area SEND Strategy 2022-25 was co-produced with parents, carers and young people and their views and input have informed the key priorities and actions include in the SEND Strategy.
- 6.2. 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.

6.3. Formal consultation on Medway's Joint Area SEND Strategy 2022-25 took place between August and September 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 received 120 responses, which demonstrated overwhelming agreement to the 5 ambitions set out in the Strategy.

6.4. The SEND Operational Group, including parent/carer representatives have been fully involved in the development of the SEND Strategy Action Plan. As part of this work, a focus group was held with Medway Parent Carers Forum.

7. Financial implications

7.1. Funding for children with SEND comes to the Local Authority through a High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) from the Department for Education. This funding is announced annually.

7.2. In 2020-21, the Department for Education (DfE) introduced the Safety Valve Intervention Programme (SVIP) to support local authorities with the very highest percentage DSG deficits. In May 2022, Medway Council was invited to take part in the SVIP and had an introductory meeting with representatives from the DfE and the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) colleagues to discuss engagement with the programme.

7.3. Medway's DSG budget remains under significant financial pressure, particularly in relation to the in year overspends on the high needs block of the grant. At the end of the 2022-2023 financial year the cumulative deficit was £21.440million. The current statutory override which, ends in March 2026, allows the Council to transfer this deficit into a ring-fenced reserve.

7.4. Medway Council and the DfE formally entered into a Safety Valve Agreement in March 2023. Medway Council will receive £17.7m investment as part of the SVIP, to support the delivery of a substantial plan for reform to its high needs systems. The Council received the first tranche of this funding in March 2023 totalling £5.723million.

7.5. The SVIP funding is dependent on evidence of improvements being delivered. This investment along with the planned changes outlined in our safety valve programme will bring the Council DSG reserve back into surplus before the statutory override ends.

8. Legal implications

8.1. 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 Medway Joint Area SEND Strategy and SEND Strategy Action Plan 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.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Medway Joint Area SEND Strategy 2022-25

Appendix 2 - SEND Strategy Action Plan