



Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Bolton Local Area Strategic Overview 2024 – 2029

May 2024, Updated September 2024



Introduction

In line with Bolton's 2030 Vision, we are committed to giving our children the best possible start in life, so that they have every chance to succeed and be happy. Our partners are committed to inclusion and ensuring that children and young people feel they truly belong in Bolton. We have high ambitions for all our children and young people no matter what their circumstances and want them to thrive in every aspect of their life. This means that they are supported and empowered to achieve academically and socially to the best of their ability, and to have voice and influence in their lives and community.

Whilst recognising the additional challenges that children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and their families face, we want to support them to develop their strengths and abilities and to integrate fully into the Bolton Family Community. Our approach is centred on an asset-based model which focuses on the holistic assessment and identification of need, opportunities and strengths. Our approach embraces personalisation and choice for our children, young people and their families in order that we provide the right care, at the right time in the right way.

Strategic Vision and Strategic Priorities

Between 2019 and 2023 the local area partnership worked on 7 key workstreams. At end of 2023 and start of 2024, a joint review of the progress made against the workstreams was undertaken. We have also worked closely with a range of stakeholders to understand our local area from a range of different perspectives and to co-produce the vision and priorities that will guide our work over the next five years.

Our local area SEND Strategic Vision is:

Children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities will get the best possible start in life, have every chance to succeed and lead happy, healthy and fulfilled lives as part of their local community

Having listened to families, carers, children and young people and professionals across education, health and social care we are committed to further developing our local SEND system by focusing on the following seven co-produced key strategic priorities:

1. Inclusive Education and Practice from the Early Years
2. Early and accurate identification of need resulting in appropriate intervention / support
3. Consistent and timely communication and information
4. Personalisation of support for children, young people and their families
5. Workforce development to ensure a skilled and confident workforce
6. Skills for life to enable children and young people to live independently as possible
7. Performance of the local area is underpinned by data

Strategic Priorities

Priority One: Inclusive Education and Practice from the Early Years

In order to enable the best possible outcomes with children and young people (CYP) with SEND, we recognise the importance of school attendance, with children and young people feeling part of and valued within their school environment. We have a strong desire for education in Bolton to be fully inclusive. To achieve this there needs to be an inclusive culture across the whole partnership and within our schools and settings which welcomes, values and supports children and young people with a wide range of needs. We strive to identify and remove barriers so that children and young people have access to appropriate full-time education, leisure and community involvement, irrespective of need.

Our aim is to deliver an asset focused, person-centred approach that enables us to build upon individuals and families strengths and increase the skills, knowledge and resilience of the system to improve attendance, attainment and positive outcomes.

The further development of our inclusive culture across our partnership and within all our schools will support a continued focus on reducing school exclusions for children and young people with SEND.

The key outcomes identified for this work include;

- For mainstream education to be fully inclusive
- Improved outcomes for CYP with SEND
- CYP experiencing inclusive and smooth transitions
- Ensuring a continuum of specialist provision to ensure access to the right support at the right time.

Priority Two: Early and Accurate Identification of Need resulting in appropriate intervention and support

Bolton offers excellent examples of practice around the early and accurate identification of need for our children and young people with SEND.

We wish to build on this practice and share opportunities for improvements across the whole system to provide an equitable offer.

The key outcomes identified for this work include;

- An equitable offer for settings and families to be able to identify need and access the right support at the right time with a focus on seldom heard communities (via Family Hubs)
- Practitioners in Bolton feel equipped and confident in identifying and meeting the needs of those presenting with communication and interaction needs (SLCN and autism) and SEMH needs
- Children waiting for a diagnosis / assessment 'wait well' and have their needs met
- All the Early Years and Primary school workforce will have received training in the area of Autism
- Clear and robust understanding of the needs of CYP likely to require specialist placements
- Identification section of SEND handbook to be clearly available on the Local Offer website
- Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments to be completed within 20 weeks and improved timeliness in terms of annual review responses

Priority Three: Communication, Information and The Local Offer

We are committed to providing easily accessible information, advice, guidance and signposting for children and young people with SEND and their families and carers. Quality Local Offer and effective communication / information enables children and young people with SEND, their parents / carers / families, and supporting practitioners, to understand and be actively involved in planning for current and future needs.

We recognise the need to ensure that children, young people and parents/carers understand the Local Offer in Bolton and are clear on how to access support, advice and services.

The key outcomes identified for this work include;

- Regular SEND information events held across the borough
- A bi-monthly focus at SEND Steering Group on the lived experiences of CYP and their families to ensure that these are heard and acted upon.
- Staff across the local area will feel confident in having conversations with families about key areas e.g. SEN Support, EHCNAs, transitions and personal budgets
- Families will receive consistent and timely information / messages regarding services, support and their SEND journey in their preferred language

Priority Four: Personalisation of support for children, young people and their families

Personalisation is at the heart of supporting children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability and seeks to put children, young people and their families at the centre of the Education, Health and Care planning process.

We recognise that children, young people and their families have their individual strengths, circles of support and preferences on what good support looks like for them. We want to harness this and provide increased choice and control on the who, how and what their day-to-day support looks like from a holistic perspective, to assist them to achieve their personal outcomes on an ongoing basis as they navigate through this journey from early years right through to adulthood.

To ensure children and young people with SEND and their families feel informed, listened to and part of all decisions made about them, we are committed to co-designing services and provisions with them. The views, wishes and feelings of children and young people including their families are at the heart of everything we do. We recognise the need to continue to build on improving and developing co-production arrangements to further enhance both the offer of service provision and also relevant information provided to children, young people and their families.

We are committed to ensuring that children, young people and parents / carers continue to be involved in the shaping and implementation of Bolton's SEND approach.

The key outcomes identified for this work include;

- Improvement in Annual Review practice
- Increased pupil voice at SEN Support and in both initial Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments and Annual Reviews
- To embed coproduction at individual level
- To improve the awareness and use of the Bolton co-production toolkit
- To have a reviewed and well understood personal budget policy
- Clear processes and systems for joint working between education and social care to support transitions for those who are post 16 to ensure a personalised and timely process

Priority Five: Workforce Development

There is a strong desire for practitioners in Bolton to be more skilled and confident in the meeting the SEND needs of CYP. As a result, we feel that;

- There would be a more consistent approach across settings
- The needs of CYP would be met by a more skilled and confident workforce
- Parental confidence in schools meeting the needs of their children at SEN Support would increase
- The achievement of CYP with SEND would improve due to needs being even better met

The key outcomes identified for this work include;

- More confident and skilled practitioners who have a good understanding of legislation, guidance and how to identify and support needs and how to use parent and pupil voice in planning.
- Several Early Years settings will have achieved / be accessing the EY IQM (Inclusion Quality Mark) thus furthering their professional development.
- Ongoing workshops for parents / carers to increase their knowledge and confidence of local processes, practices and pathways.

Priority Six: Preparing for Adulthood (Skills for Life)

Preparing children and young people with SEND for a successful adulthood is a key requirement of the Children and Families Act 2014. If done collaboratively and well, those who have the potential to do so can be enabled to live as independently as possible, to be a valued and visible part of their community, to enjoy life and to be an active member of society. Where possible, young people can be supported into paid employment which improves their own life chances as well as reducing costs for adult services.

We want every young person to reach their potential regardless of any additional need and/or disability. It's essential we ensure our children have the skills and aptitude to make their own way in the world, having a positive experience and outcome as they prepare and enter adulthood.

The key outcomes identified for this work include;

- For young people to understand and manage their own health needs as independently as possible
- To maximise opportunities for young people with SEND to make and maintain friendships, relationships and be visible in the local community
- For young people with SEND to maximise their opportunity to live as independently as possible
- For young people with SEND to have opportunities to access employment and / or purposeful occupation

Priority Seven: Performance of the local area is underpinned by data

Ensuring that the identification of priorities, commissioning and the ongoing evaluation of the performance of the local area is underpinned by up to date and accurate data will ensure that the needs of families are met, and that money is spent well and targeted to the priorities that need it most.

The key outcomes identified for this work include;

- We will have a multi-agency SEND data dashboard which is used across all SEND sectors (including SEN support)
- We will have refined the broader population data that we have to better understand our SEND population
- There will be a clear link between data and commissioning – including the active use of the JSNA
- Projection data will be available to support the planning of special school places going forward
- A bi-monthly focus at SEND Steering Group on the lived experiences of CYP and their families to ensure that these are heard and acted upon.

Delivery and Governance

In order to effectively manage, monitor and evaluate progress we recognise the importance of effective governance. The strategic priorities are supported by a detailed action plan, each priority has an allocated lead who will be responsible for monitoring and updating progress. The Governance of the strategic priorities will be overseen by SEND Executive Board and the work programme led by the multi-agency Bolton SEND Strategic Steering Group.

The SEND Strategic Steering Group considers a range of data, information and soft intelligence from a variety of sources. In considering these data sources the group will evaluate the progress made by the partnership in delivering key improvements for children, young people and their families. The partnership will also consider key risks to the successful delivery of the strategy and mitigate / remove any blockers to improving outcomes for this group of children and young people, escalating issues as and when needed.

Local area partnership inspection recommendations

The priorities and supporting action plan encompass the recommendations identified as part of the Area SEND inspection of Bolton Local Area Partnership. The table identifies the key actions in delivery against the recommendations.

<p>Recommendation: Health leaders must deliver the neurodevelopmental transformation programme to ensure that neurodiverse children and young people receive effective support in schools, other settings and communities. Health leaders should be clear about how waiting times will be reduced to meet the requirements of the national guidance.</p>
<p>Key Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To establish a multi-agency neurodevelopmental group to oversee this transformation work• To deliver the GM neurodevelopmental transformation programme in Bolton, including consideration of the development of “hub” approaches, the implementation of neuro-profiling tools, the implementation of GM-wide training, education and support packages, and the implementation of prevention and early intervention programmes• To continue to expand the neurodiversity in schools project, including the delivery of relevant training and support
<p>Expected outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Positive prevention and early intervention programme implemented• Reduced waiting times for ASD and ADHD diagnosis so that these are in line with national guidance• More positive experience for families waiting for a diagnosis• Both primary and secondary schools will be better equipped to effectively meet the needs of neurodiverse CYP
<p>Recommendation: The local area partnership should improve the quality of EHC plans and the annual review process. This includes ensuring that EHC plans are updated following annual review, that all professionals contribute to the plans and that professionals and families receive the reviewed plans in a timely manner.</p>
<p>Key Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To elicit and hear the lived experiences of both parents/carers and CYP who have recently been through the EHCNA process and use this information to shape any changes made.• To recruit to SENDAS in order to increase capacity and specialisms within this service.• To further develop the knowledge of the workforce, and the quality of information provided by the workforce, both during the EHCNA process and the Annual Review process.• To review and refine the EHCNA and Annual Review processes locally.
<p>Expected outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The timeliness of new EHCPs will consistently be above the national average.• EHCPs will be judged to be of at least ‘good’ quality via multi-agency quality assurance processes.• Parent/carers and CYP will report feeling engaged with, and listened to throughout, the EHCNA and Annual Review processes.