

Shaped by what's around us: our SEND STRATEGY for making Sheffield the place where all children belong and thrive.



Sheffield's Local Area SEND Partnership Strategy 2025-2030 (Interim Review: December 2026)

Shaped by what's around us: our SEND STRATEGY for making Sheffield the place where all children belong and thrive.

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Foreword

Children, young people and their families are at the heart of this SEND Strategy. Everything we do will be guided by their voices, experiences and aspirations. This strategy is not just about improving services – it is about creating a system that works in partnership with families to ensure every child and young person can belong, thrive and achieve their full potential.

As Sheffield Leaders, we are committed to ensuring the content of this newly developed SEND Strategy is delivered. We absolutely understand that services and support for children and young people with SEND are not where they need to be; children and young people's outcomes are not good enough which means too many are not prepared for adulthood.

We will monitor progress of the implementation of the strategy, ensuring it is meeting its aims and objectives and that you

can see tangible improvements in meeting the needs of children and young people - improved inclusion, early intervention and workforce development.

Services and leaders will be held to account and there will be consistent communication and engagement with children, young people and their families to check that improvements are being felt on the ground. Although the need for change was identified through the latest Ofsted/CQC Local Area Inspection, we will ensure that SEND remains a top priority moving forwards and into the future, ensuring improvements and changes are sustained.

We can only do this in partnership across the system and with our children, young people and their families at the heart of change. We recognise the voices of families and children and young people are central to shaping the strategy.



Kate Josephs CB

Chief Executive,
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Supported by the Sheffield SEND Partnership Board, which has representatives of:



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Executive Summary

The SEND system in Sheffield needs to improve. Change is already underway. This strategy, which builds on the SEND Manifesto that was published in July 2025, sets out how this will happen.

The strategy sets out our shared commitment across education, health, and social care to improve services and outcomes for children and young people especially those with SEND aged 0–25.

The Local Area SEND Partnership is determined to build a system that families trust, that values inclusion, and that delivers positive outcomes for all.

There is a lot of evidence that change is needed in Sheffield, but not enough of this evidence comes from children and young people or their parents and carers at the moment.

There is good practice to build upon, including the work of Sheffield Parent Carer Forum and the SENDing Voices group, but the system needs to reach out more widely and more often.

We will make sure that there are regular activities which ensure that everyone involved in SEND in Sheffield has a good understanding of the experiences and outcomes of children and young people. This includes making sure that we listen to the voice of everyone in our city and everyone is included in co-producing the outcomes framework.

Three priorities for improvement have been identified. Each of these priorities has a number of key building blocks. These are described in our strategy, along with information about what this will mean for children, young people and families.

Priority 1

Workforce & Structures

Creating the workforce that Sheffield children need and the structures that enable improvement in leadership and practice.

Our commitments to children and families are:

- You will see improvement in the way you are helped and supported in your school or education setting, in your home and in your community.
- The people who help and support you will know you and you will know them. They will have strong knowledge and will work well together as a team.
- The places where you grow and learn will be inclusive and will provide the things you need to belong and thrive.
- You will know where to get the help and support you need in your community or neighbourhood.

Healthy Child Development and Ordinarily Available Provision

Improve the quality of ordinarily available provision in schools and communities. This means describing the features of healthy child development in a holistic and connected way and working out how we educate and care for children so that more grow, develop and learn well without needing additional or different provision. It will require the whole children's workforce to know more about healthy development during childhood as well as deepen their understanding of the needs of some groups of children.

Sheffield Children's Taskforce

Create the Children's Taskforce to lead the city's development programme for the whole children's workforce. This programme will be based on our description of healthy child development and the graduated approach and will be underpinned by person-centred thinking and practices and a focus on preparing children well for their adult lives.

SEND Hub Infrastructure

Create an outline plan and proposal for a place-based structure to support the full continuum of provision for Sheffield children. This includes provision that is ordinarily available to children and families and the city's graduated approach to identifying, assessing and meeting children's needs in a committed multi-agency way. It will require strong partnership arrangements and a new approach to commissioning and providing services for children and families.

Priority 2

Processes

Developing processes that work for everyone and lead to better outcomes.

Our commitments to children and families are:

- Your views and experiences will be at the centre of everything we do to help and support you.
- You will have a strong and influential voice in decision-making about your current and future life.
- The help and support you receive will prepare you well for your adult life so that you can be valued, visible and included.
- You will get the right help and support from the right group of professionals at the right time. You will know them and they will know you. They will work well together as a team.
- We will assess your needs well and work out how best to support you. Decisions that affect you will be made with you.

Preparation for Adulthood and Person-centred Thinking and Practice

Embed person-centred thinking and practices and a focus on preparing children well for their adult lives in everything we do.

Graduated Approach

Improve the way we identify, assess and meet the needs of children who need additional or different provision using a graduated approach. This means bringing children, families and the right group of professionals together at the right time to work out how best to support them now and in the future.

Alternative Provision

Improve arrangements for commissioning and providing alternative provision so that it is responsive to children's needs and consistently improves their outcomes

Statutory Assessment

As a connected part of the graduated approach, improve all aspects of education, health and care (EHC) assessment, planning and review so that children and families have positive experiences, professionals work together well, and EHC plans describe how we will collectively support children to achieve meaningful and ambitious outcomes that prepare them well for adult life.

Priority 3

Governance & Accountability

Transforming governance and redesigning the way accountability works.

Our commitments to children and families are:

- Your views and experiences will shape our ambitions, the outcomes we are all working towards and our assessment of the progress we are making.
- You will be actively involved in our city-wide approach to 'developing, designing and doing' together.
- You will see stronger leadership and better governance of the city's SEND arrangements.

Outcomes Framework

Work with the Council for Disabled Children to co-produce an outcomes framework that identifies the measures that enable everyone to understand the progress that is being made.

Understanding Lived Experience

Develop new ways of capturing the experience of children, young people, their families and professionals. Develop a collaboration between key organisations to facilitate a citywide network which connects children, young people and their families to trusted partners so that everyone in our city can contribute.

Whole System Improvement Cycle

Put in place a whole system improvement cycle that supports evaluation and improvement by making sure that we have clear information about performance and are able to support and challenge all parts of the local area SEND system.

Strategic Governance

Develop strategic governance and streamline the monitoring and oversight of SEND so that it is more purposeful, efficient and transparent.

How will we measure success and stay accountable?

Our most important accountability is to the children, young people and families of Sheffield.

Following our Local Area SEND Inspection, we have a SEND Improvement Board which has an independent chair. It will hold the Local Area Partnership to account for progress in delivering this strategy and the delivery plan.

Introduction

**The SEND system in Sheffield needs to improve.
Change is already underway.**

This strategy sets out how this change will happen and is being developed through collaboration by the Local Area SEND Partnership and engagement with families, education settings, local authority partners, health partners, and community organisations. It builds on progress already made and focuses on what we need to do next – together – to deliver lasting change. It also contributes to Sheffield's broader ambition for belonging, inclusion and equality, supporting every child and young person to achieve their potential, live healthy and fulfilling lives, and be valued participants in their communities.

The strategy sets out our shared commitment across education, health, and social care to improve services and outcomes for children and young people especially those with SEND aged 0–25. The current experience for young people and their families is that, whilst there are areas of strength within Sheffield's SEND system, these are often due to individuals rather than systems and not felt consistently by all families. Too many still face barriers in getting the right help at the right time. This needs to change. We aim to ensure that children, young people, and their families experience a well-designed, responsive system that consistently provides the right support at the right time, delivered by skilled and knowledgeable professionals.

Our aims are clear:

- Identify needs early and provide the right support as soon as possible.
- Meet needs effectively through strong partnership working across education, health, and care.
- Improve outcomes in learning, health, independence, and community participation as children and young people move into adulthood.

The priorities that we have identified in this strategy, which are based on our analysis of what needs to change, will enable us to achieve these aims.

This strategy represents our collective determination to make Sheffield a city where every child and young person, especially those with SEND, can thrive.

Our analysis indicates that children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds often experience the poorest outcomes. By ensuring that children, young people, and their families receive timely, equitable and appropriate support, we aim to reduce the social inequalities that persist within our communities.

The Local Area SEND Partnership is determined to build a system that families trust, that values inclusion, and that delivers positive outcomes for all.

How did we know change was needed?

The need for change in Sheffield has become better understood.



Sheffield Parent Carer Forum have published regular feedback from parents and carers in Sheffield about SEND. The most recent report was published in July 2023 and its recommendations have informed the development of this strategy.

[READ MORE](#)

[State of Sheffield Report \(July 2023\)](#)

“You have no idea where you are in the process, it’s bewildering.”

“No help or support is given. Waiting times are ridiculously long, you receive a piece of paper with a diagnosis and then you are just left to figure it out yourself”



Data analysis underlines the need for change in Sheffield. An example of this is the Insight Report published by Learn Sheffield in February 2024. This explores how needs have changed in the city and considers why this might be, and how we might improve the experiences of children and young people.

[READ MORE](#)

[SEND Insight Report \(February 2024\)](#)

“Are we all on the same page, or even reading the same book?”

“Many professionals in Sheffield provide great support, but it is usually by working around the systems and not because the systems are effective.”





In March 2025, Sheffield's Local Area SEND Partnership was inspected by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission. The findings, published in June 2025, highlighted serious concerns, including several Priority Actions, alongside some areas of progress. These are addressed through a SEND Improvement Plan and have informed this strategy.

[READ MORE](#)

[Inspection Report \(March 2025\)](#)

[Improvement Plan \(August 2025\)](#)



A programme of SEND Enquiry was carried out in May 2025. It included thirteen focus groups (four with parents and carers and nine with professionals) and case studies of more than fifty EHCPs across eleven educational settings. The recommendations from this work have informed this strategy.

[READ MORE](#)

[SEND Enquiry Report \(May 2025\)](#)



The shared analysis of the Sheffield Local Area SEND Partnership was published within the SEND Manifesto in July 2025. This was based on all of the above and was the basis for the priorities and workstreams suggested in the Manifesto.

[READ MORE](#)

[SEND Manifesto \(July 2025\) Full Version](#)

[Overview Version](#)



The feedback on the SEND Manifesto was collected across the summer and September 2025. It was provided by parents, carers and professionals and underlines the level of change that is required. The feedback has influenced development of this strategy.

[READ MORE](#)

[SEND Manifesto Feedback \(October 2025\)](#)



What do we need to know more about?

There is a lot of evidence that change is needed in Sheffield but not enough of this evidence comes from children and young people, their families or communities.

We need more ways to understand the voices, experiences and outcomes of all children, young people and their families in Sheffield.

There is good practice to build upon, including the work of Sheffield Parent Carer Forum and the SENDing Voices group, but the system needs to reach out more widely and more often. This needs to be done systematically,

in regular and planned activities rather than occasional or one-off events.

The young people who are a part of SENDing Voices would like to say -



“We are a group of young people age 13-24 years with special educational needs and disabilities who come together and meet fortnightly to be part of an action group called “SENDing Voices”. This is a place for us to have our say on issues that we are passionate about for example education. We have made five animation films on topics that we have all had various experiences in – positive & negative and would like to share with you the difficulties young people with SEND have on a daily basis whilst attending schools/colleges.”



 [Alisha - Acceptance](#)



 [Rosie - Independence](#)



 [Alex - Communication](#)



 [Sam - Inclusion](#)



 [Lee - Transition](#)

Gathering feedback from children, young people and families needs to be a two-way process, with activities that provide opportunities for conversation. It is important to hear everyone's voice, but it is equally important that everyone can participate in decisions and activities which affect them. In this way, everyone can contribute to the improvement of Sheffield's SEND system.

Moving forward, we are committed to ensuring meaningful engagement with children and young people whose voices are often underrepresented, and whose experiences and perspectives may otherwise be overlooked or misunderstood.

We strive to foster strong networks which reflect the diversity in Sheffield's communities. Approaching this proactively will enable the Local Area Partnership to

include a more diverse range of perspectives and experiences in its decision making and governance structures, whilst the partnership becomes more representative. This will ensure an inclusive process of co-production and consultation.

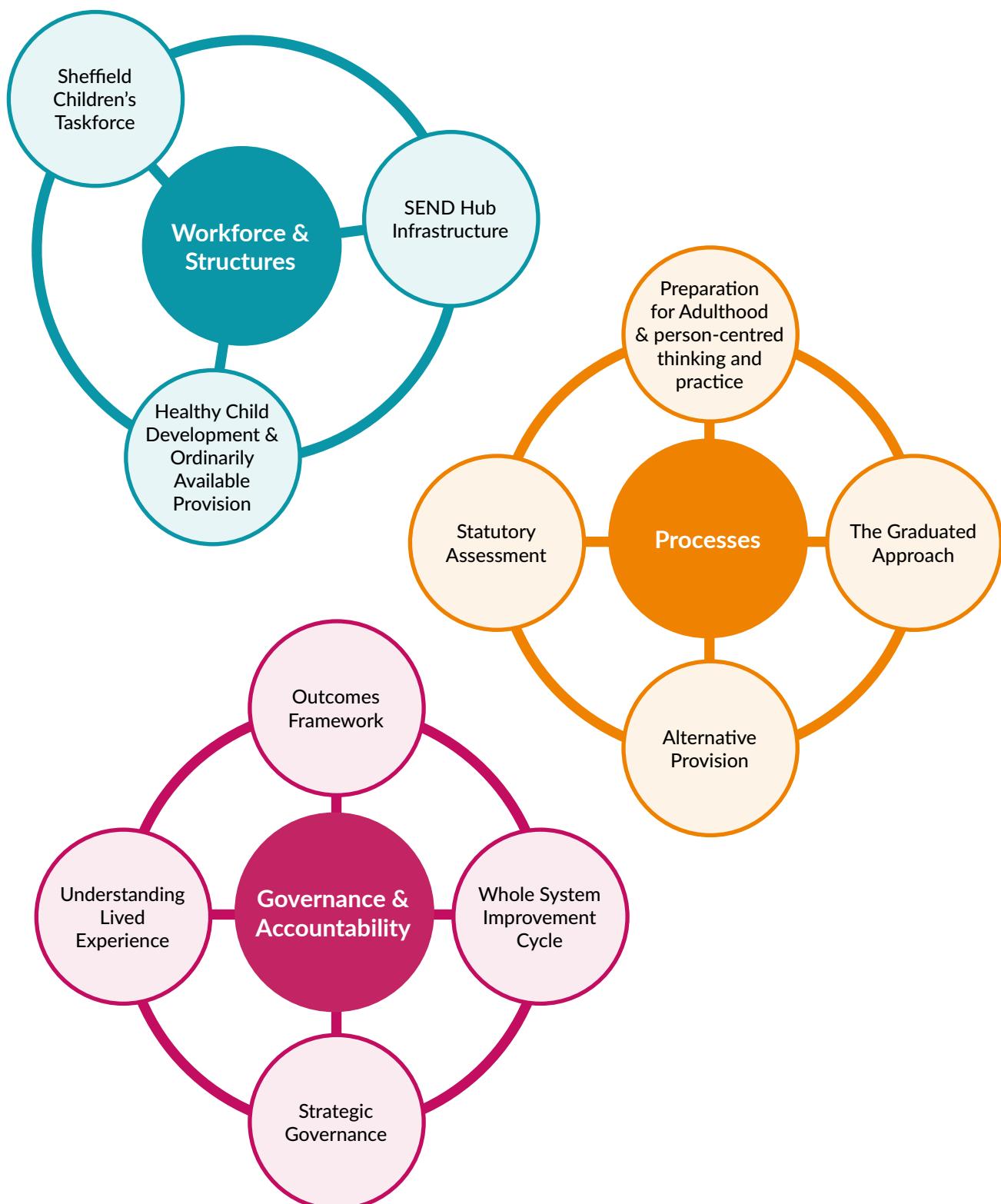
Collaboration between key organisations will facilitate a citywide network which connects children, young people and their families to trusted partners so that everyone in our city can contribute. This will include the Local Area Partnership, networks across education, health and care, alongside community and voluntary sector groups. Using these systems to measure success, gather feedback and support decision making will ensure that the work we do is having a positive impact on children and young people in Sheffield and that we continue to meet their evolving needs.



What are the priorities for improvement?

The following three priorities have been identified.

Each priority has a number of key building blocks. These are described on the following pages, along with information about what this will mean for children, young people and families, and how these priorities will be delivered.



Priority 1

Workforce & Structures

Creating the workforce that Sheffield children need and the structures that enable improvement in leadership and practice.

To achieve this we will:

- Improve the quality of ordinarily available provision in schools and communities. This means describing the features of healthy child development in a holistic and connected way and working out how we educate and care for children so that more grow, develop and learn well without needing additional or different provision. It will require the whole children's workforce to know more about healthy development during childhood as well as deepen their understanding of the needs of some groups of children. It will require a strong commitment to creating enabling environments in all the places where children live and learn.
- Create the Children's Taskforce to lead the city's development programme for the whole children's workforce. This programme will be based on our description of healthy child development and the graduated approach and will be underpinned by person-centred thinking and practices and a focus on preparing children well for their adult lives.
- Create an outline plan and proposal for a place-based structure to support the full continuum of provision for Sheffield children. This includes provision that is ordinarily available to children and families and the city's graduated approach to identifying, assessing and meeting children's needs in a committed multi-agency way. It will require strong partnership arrangements and a new approach to commissioning and providing services for children and families.

Our commitments to children and families are:

- You will see improvement in the way you are helped and supported in your school or education setting, in your home and in your community.
- The people who help and support you will know you and you will know them. They will have strong knowledge and will work well together as a team.
- The places where you grow and learn will be inclusive and will provide the things you need to belong and thrive.
- You will know where to get the help and support you need in your community or neighbourhood.

This means:

- Developing the knowledge and skills of the whole children's workforce relating to healthy child development, the features of enabling environments for healthy learning and development, and the differential needs of some groups of children [December 2026].
- Creating the structures that help education, health and children's services professionals build strong and sustained relationships with children and families and work well together in a person centred way [December 2026].

Priority 2

Processes

Developing processes that work for everyone and lead to better outcomes.

To achieve this we will:

- Embed person-centred thinking and practices and a focus on preparing children well for their adult lives in everything we do.
- Improve the way we identify, assess and meet the needs of children who need additional or different provision using a graduated approach. This means bringing children, families and the right group of professionals together at the right time to work out how best to support them now and in the future. It will require clear and understandable processes that facilitate high-quality multi-agency working as well as changes to the way education, health and children's services are commissioned and provided.
- As a connected part of the graduated approach, improve all aspects of education, health and care (EHC) assessment, planning and review so that children and families have positive experiences, professionals work together well, and ensure EHC plans describe how we will collectively support children to achieve meaningful and ambitious outcomes that prepare them well for adult life. This will require new systems and processes and different ways of working, as well as strong governance and oversight of timeliness and quality.
- Improve arrangements for commissioning and providing Alternative Provision so that it is responsive to children's needs and consistently improves their outcomes.

Our commitments to children and families are:

- Your views and experiences will be at the centre of everything we do to help and support you.
- You will have a strong and influential voice in decision-making about your current and future life.
- The help and support you receive will prepare you well for your adult life so that you can be valued, visible and included.
- You will get the right help and support from the right group of professionals at the right time. You will know them and they will know you. They will work well together as a team.
- We will assess your needs well and work out how best to support you. Decisions that affect you will be made with you.

This means:

- Creating a graduated approach to identifying, assessing and meeting children's needs that works for everyone and focuses on preparing children well for their adult lives [July 2026].
- Developing the knowledge and skills of the whole children's workforce and creating the structures that help them to work with children and families in a person-centred way [December 2026].
- Changing the way we commission and provide education, health and children's services so that children and families receive the right specialist help and resources when they are needed [December 2026].

Priority 3

Governance & Accountability

Transforming governance and redesigning the way accountability works.

To achieve this we will:

- Work with the Council for Disabled Children to co-produce an outcomes framework that will identify the measures that enable everyone to understand the progress that is being made towards the strategy goals.
- Develop new ways of capturing the experience of children, young people, their families and professionals. Develop a collaboration between key organisations to facilitate a citywide network which connects children, young people and their families to trusted partners so that everyone in our city can contribute. This will include the Local Area Partnership, networks across education, health and care, alongside community and voluntary sector groups.
- Put in place a whole system improvement cycle that will support evaluation and improvement by making sure that we have clear information about performance, and are able to support and challenge all parts of the local area SEND system.
- Develop strategic governance and streamline the monitoring and oversight of SEND so that it is more purposeful, efficient and transparent.

Our commitments to children and families are:

- Your views and experiences will shape our ambitions, the outcomes we are all working towards and our assessment of the progress we are making.
- You will be actively involved our city-wide approach to 'developing, designing and doing' together.
- You will see stronger leadership and better governance of the city's SEND arrangements.

This means:

- Co-producing an outcomes framework with meaningful measures of quality and performance and embedding it in our whole system improvement cycle [April 2026].
- Developing effective and inclusive ways of understanding the views and experiences of children and families [December 2026].
- Developing and implementing a whole system improvement cycle with arrangements for escalation and intervention in response to concerns about children's experiences and outcomes or the effectiveness of leadership and practice [May 2026].
- Changing the leadership and governance of the local area SEND partnership so that it is more diverse and more representative of the views and experiences of children with SEND and their families [April 2026].

How will we be accountable?

Our most important accountability is to the children, young people and families of Sheffield. Following Sheffield's Local Area SEND Partnership inspection by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission, Sheffield has established a new leadership group to oversee the changes that need to happen to improve the SEND system. This new structure is set out below. The SEND Improvement Board has an independent chair and will hold the Local Area Partnership to account for progress in delivering this strategy and the Improvement Plan which responds to the inspection.



The SEND Improvement Board brings together senior leaders from:

- Sheffield City Council
- South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB)
- Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust
- Schools and education leaders (including Learn Sheffield)
- The Sheffield Parent Carer Forum, representing families' voices.

The SEND Steering Group will provide more detailed oversight of the delivery plan, ensure communication is improved and evaluate quality and performance for review at the Improvement Board. The delivery groups will be responsible for different aspects of the delivery plan and will report directly to the steering group.



How will we measure success?

We will develop an Outcomes Framework to accompany this strategy. This will identify the measures which enable everyone to understand the progress that is being made towards the goals of the strategy.



We have commissioned expertise from the [Council for Disabled Children](#) (CDC). They will support us to develop a holistic outcomes framework.

We will co-produce the outcomes framework with children, young people, parent, carers,

local leaders and practitioners. There will be two versions of the framework, including an accessible version that brings it to life for everyone.

This approach is an important part of the Governance & Accountability priority in this strategy and will be closely connected to the other building blocks in this area.

It will ensure that those leading this work are focused on clear and co-produced outcomes, which help everyone to understand the progress that is being made. Those involved in governance will use the outcomes framework to measure success and know if change has been successful.





Sheffield's Local Area SEND Partnership Strategy 2025-2030

This document has been produced by Sheffield's Local Area SEND Partnership.

Our Local Area SEND Partnership includes Sheffield City Council, South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board, Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust, Sheffield Parent Carer Forum and Learn Sheffield.

