

Sheffield Inclusion Strategy, 2020-2025 – Consultation document



Consultation document

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Introduction

As a city we are working to co-produce a clear vision and strategy for inclusion, including Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

This draft strategy has been developed through a number of focus groups and sessions, building on information already available.

We now seek views on the draft strategy which will be finalised after the consultation and published in early 2020.

Key terms

Throughout this strategy we use a number of key terms as follows:

- *By 'young people' we mean all children and young people from birth up to age 25*
- *By 'families' we mean all parents, carers and family members*
- *By 'services' we mean any service across Education, Health and Care supporting young people*
- *By 'schools' we mean all education providers including early years, nursery, school, colleges and training providers*
- *By 'assessments' we mean a wide range of assessments to meet needs across education, health and care services, including diagnosis and co-ordinated plans such as EHC plans*
- *By 'transition' we mean every stage that a young person moves through including into school, from primary to secondary and into adult life*

Throughout our strategy we recognise that areas overlap and so we have only included these in one specific area rather than repeating and replicating information.

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Summary and context

Inclusion is important to ensure that all young people and their families, regardless of their needs, get the opportunity to access the best life chances. The challenges to addressing inclusion, particularly around Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), are growing nationally with growing demand, changes in the complexities of needs, a new academic curriculum and financial pressures across sectors. The SEND reforms introduced through the children and families act, 2014, created an aspiration that those with additional needs would be at the centre of all decision making and that services would be more able to meet needs in a timely and co-ordinated manner.

Within Sheffield the views of our young people and their families are clear; we are not doing this well enough. The local area SEND inspection in November 2018 identified significant weaknesses and this is confirmed by feedback from families. Our schools have struggled to balance pressures and remain focused on good inclusive practice whilst support services have struggled to keep pace with growing demand.

The aspiration across the city is to change our systems so that we act early to identify, assess and meet needs, work in partnership and establish integrated and local based processes and services that make Sheffield an inclusive city.

This strategy will build on changes and developments over the past 4 years including:

- Closer school sector working with schools supporting each other to address needs and improve access to support through work such as the Sheffield Support Grid, Primary and Secondary Inclusion Panels, locality working and a developed graduated approach to meeting needs
- Piloting approaches to address needs locally, for example through addressing sensory needs or sharing of skills
- A strategic joint commissioning approach to plan support and provision at all levels of need, including a focus on all age disabilities
- Ensuring that young people and parent voices are central to developments with an evolving approach to co-production
- Developing pathways for assessment, support and provision, particularly through the development of vulnerable learner reviews and early years partnership
- Improvement in the timeliness of EHC Needs Assessments
- A focus on key transition points at age 2, 9 and 14 – focusing on planning two years in advance
- Successful improvement of our social care systems to build quality frameworks that address safeguarding needs
- Improving integration of health advice to co-ordinated needs through commissions including speech and language support via Primary Inclusion panel and pilots around addressing sensory needs

- Improving the use of data, policies and procedures to ensure access to education for all young people, including around elective home education, partial timetables and agreeing school places

While this has all driven forward improvement, there is a clear recognition that more needs to be done to reach the aspirations that the local area has for its most vulnerable young people, including where families feel change is not rapid enough. This strategy provides the overarching focus for that to be achieved, covering all areas of inclusion, including SEND.

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The voice of Inclusion in the city

We have listened to our key stakeholders:

- Children & Young People
- Parents, Carers and families
- Front line professionals
- Leaders across the city

They have told us previously, and as part of developing our strategy, what we need to do differently. We have built on work since the introduction of the SEND reforms, the outcome of the local area SEND inspection and the 2018/19 'State of Sheffield' questionnaire, conducted by the Sheffield Parent Carer Forum, to ask our stakeholders what our priorities should be and how we should be changing and improving inclusion across the city.

In order to develop our vision and strategy - using all the information gained through consultation and previous surveys – we worked with Dr Kamal Birdi from The University of Sheffield University, using the CLEAR IDEAS model. This enabled us to co-produce our priorities and solutions working with over sixty individuals from our key stakeholders. This proved successful in identifying positive solutions and priorities which has formed the basis of the strategy.

A priority for our strategy is to better listen to, and act on, the voice of children and young people. We ran a number of group discussions with young people as part of developing our strategy, but we know we need more in future as young people must be the heart of our strategy and the focus of everything we do.

Our strategic priorities 2020-2025

Our vision

Sheffield will be an inclusive city where we work together to ensure that children and young people get the right support at the right time so that they can live a happy and fulfilled life.

Our five commitments

The information and consultation we received fits into five overarching commitments:

1. Effective identification of needs with appropriate assessments (*Assessment*)
2. A wide range of services and opportunities that meet the needs of our young people (*Provision*)
3. Smooth transition at every stage of a young person's life, and particularly to adult life (*Transition*)
4. Excellent communication and engagement between young people, families, services and schools (*Communication*)
5. Skilled leader and staff capabilities to deliver the services (*Workforce*)

Our co-production identified a number of broad cross-cutting values that, alongside our commitments, underpin our strategic approach:

- Person centred approaches and effective engagement – 'No decision about us, without us'
- Consistency across the city
- Accountability and trust
- A culture of working in partnership
- All children and young people should be safe, settled and ready to learn

What success will look like?

We will know inclusion is improving in Sheffield if we see:

- Increased satisfaction from young people and families in the support and services for those with SEND
- Reduced waiting times for access to specialist support and provision
- Increased participation at school for those with SEND
- Improved educational attainment and progress for pupils with SEND
- More young people with SEND moving into meaningful activity into adulthood

Next steps

Please note this strategy sets the direction and priorities for future work. Detailed action plans will be developed in line with this strategy but are not included within this document.

Commitment 1: Effective identification of needs with appropriate assessments

Our challenge:

- We need to ensure our assessment processes follow a 'person centred' approach rather than a 'clinical led' approach
- We need greater clarity about who should do what and when, including how our assessments processes work and interact with one another
- Improving early identification to provide support as soon as possible

What it looks like now

Families, Services and schools tell us we need to be 'needs led', understanding an individual's needs and not 'diagnosis led' to best support young people.

Families, schools and services tell us that they don't always know how to access assessment and support, don't understand the process, and often have to wait too long to get help. They tell us that processes aren't clear or consistent Families tell us that we need to start with the need, and right support to meet that need rather than the service 'standard offer' or approach. There is a desire to integrate services and improve locality based services.

We have started to develop some clearer tools to support assessment processes, particularly for SEN Support (incorporating the FCAF) and Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments. Our compliance around statutory processes has substantially improved, but a challenge remains over the quality of assessments and plans to ensure that they accurately reflect young people's aspirations and provision to meet their needs and ensuring successful implementation of plans.

Our priorities:

1. A focus on earliest identification of needs to ensure young people, and their families, get the right support at the right time
2. Assessments focus on the young people and what daily life is like – what is working, what's not working and what needs to change
3. Plans contain a 'golden thread' that connects the young person's aspirations, achievable outcomes, needs and provision, written in plain English
4. Assessment and review processes describe who does what and when so that they are clear, consistent and understandable
5. Services are integrated, joined up, work well together and jointly identify and assess need

What we will change

1. We will review and revise referral routes so that there is clarity about assessment and support processes

2. We will have the right resource (people, expertise and funding) in place to identify and assess needs at the right time in a timely way, so that pressures on the system are minimised.
3. Services will develop person-centred assessment processes that include the whole family – including considering the CYP views and aspirations, what's working/not working, the team around the child and understanding what the family feels is both the challenge and the solution so that we know the right information about the CYP
4. We will create, in easy to understand language and visuals, clarity about when and how a need should be assessed and reviewed and the process for this
5. We will commission and develop integrated teams/hubs across the city so that we can implement joint assessment at the right time
6. We will update our school locality processes to support a graduated approach so that we have good and consistent decision making and access to assessment and clinical support
7. We will create a shared bank of high quality evidence-based assessment tools that support successful outcomes, including those that allow young people to communicate in the way that works best for them (eg. for those who are non-verbal) so that we remove barriers to assessment and focus on a positive strengths based approach
8. We will revise decision making processes around assessment and provision to meet needs, including resource allocation panels, so that they are transparent and accountable
9. We will create a Quality Framework to ensure that all assessments, plans and reviews are high quality, holistic and person- centred, including MyPlans and EHC Plans
10. When developing assessment and support processes we will ensure that we consider and pre-empt conflict so that we are able to build better relationships between services and families
11. We will embed a whole school approach to SEND and adverse childhood experiences (ACES) so that schools have the expertise to identify needs early

The impact this will have:

- Young people will have their needs assessed at the right time to get the support they need to access education
- Young people will be at the centre of all assessments so that they are meaningful to their life
- Services assessing young people will work together to ensure a co-ordinated assessment process so that their experience is better

Commitment 2: A wide range of services and opportunities that meet the needs of our young people (Provision)

Our challenge:

- Support must be centred on the needs of the young people and their family by ensuring they are at the heart of the commissioning process. Our services need to work together to provide consistent and easy to understand systems.
- We need sufficient expertise, support and provision across universal, targeted and specialist services to meet demand, to make the most effective use of our existing resources.
- We need to increase the inclusivity of mainstream settings, supporting schools and services to be successful and inclusive for all children within the current accountability framework, with a focus on early intervention.

What it looks like now:

Young people and families are not consistently involved in the development of provision through agreed co-production methods. Service delivery is not person centred or joined up enough, leading to inconsistency. Families and practitioners report that support systems are difficult to understand and navigate.

We have a growing level of need and demand within the city, based on changing need and growing population and not enough funding to meet this need. This means that there are not enough specialist education places to meet demand, putting significant pressures on the provision we have. Currently all our special schools are at maximum capacity and our services are stretched with large caseloads. Families report that young people are not getting enough support from specialists. Two new special schools are currently planned and due to open in 2021 and 2022 but this will not meet demand alone. We are working to improve the support young people receive in mainstream education by increasing the number of integrated resource places, redesigning health services and increasing local social care support to reduce out of area placements.

Our schools tell us that they do not have the right resource and expertise to manage needs. We are working with schools to increase resources. Funding has increased this year, however the funding situation remains challenging and further resource is needed. We are supporting school leaders to develop more inclusive practices including those aimed at reducing exclusions. We are focusing on consistency through promoting consistent use of the Sheffield Support Grid. Whilst we have a range of advisory services across Education, Health and Care, they are not integrated and of sufficient capacity. Schools struggle to be flexible in addressing needs due to the pressures they face.

Our priorities:

1. To make provision and support easy to find and access

2. To provide support as early as possible
3. To ensure there is enough of the right support for young people and families at all levels of need. Our focus will be to move resources to providing support at the earliest point and towards mainstream settings
4. To create sufficient clearly defined, high quality, local provision
5. For services and schools to work together locally to improve inclusion

What we will change:

1. We will put the voice of young people and families at the heart of our commissioning processes, working with them to coproduce our local offer of provision so that we have the right provision to meet needs.
2. We will focus on early intervention, particularly in the early years, so that provision is in place as soon as it's identified as a need.
3. We will ensure that we have the right support in place at the right time, including the right advice, support and expertise across services with appropriate funding to do this so that our system is fit for purpose. We will look to pool resources and further commission advisory services.
4. We will develop integrated flexible approaches in localities and around schools, so young people and families can access support locally and quickly
5. We will systematically review provision to identify where resources could be more effectively used and where provision needs to be increased so that we use our resources to the best effect.
6. We will develop a sector led approach to supporting whole school practice which leads to more inclusive schools and a consistent approach to inclusion across the city. This will include approaches to being flexible in how provision is put in place to meet need.
7. We will ensure there are enough suitable specialist school and integrated resource places and high quality alternative provision to support the needs of all young people in the city so that all young people can access an education that is right for them.
8. We will better support young people moving into adulthood, working with the school-sector and employers, by recommissioning our post-16 provision so that it leads to access to employment, developing life skills and improved educational outcomes
9. We will develop clearly defined and consistent funding models for provision so that schools and services are clear about the resource requirements to implement appropriate support
10. We will commission appropriate levels of advice, guidance and advocacy for young people and families to enable co-ordinated support. We will focus on effective key working as the approach to this
11. We will review our commissions, services and processes to ensure that waiting times are limited so that they are in line with nationally and locally agreed timeframes

12. We will develop systems to monitor how provision to meet needs, particularly that in EHC Plans, is being delivered so that we can be assured that where assessments identify needs they are being met and lead to successful outcomes
13. We will review and improve support to access education, focused on attendance, exclusions and access to school, so that all young people get access to a full time and appropriate education placement
14. We will review and further commission our short break and respite provision so that clear information is available with clear referral pathways and so that there are sufficient levels available to address individual unmet needs

The impact this will have:

- Children and young people will be in more inclusive schools, making them happier and more able to learn.
- Children, young people and families will:
 - Access the right high-quality support, provision and placement to meet their needs at the point when it is needed
 - Be supported earlier by services that are built around them.
 - Be part of co-producing provision

Commitment 3: Smooth transition at every stage of a young person's life, and particularly to adult life (Transition)

Our challenge:

- We need to ensure effective transition into school, between school stages and into adult life for all children and young people
- We need to simplify the current fragmented system which has different transition processes and provision, and ensure education, health, care and employment work collaboratively and effectively
- Improving opportunities for young people moving into adult life. Providing choice, through employment and meaningful opportunities, increasing independence, community participation and the ability to manage health needs is essential

What it looks like now

Families, schools and services tell us that the move through education stages and into adulthood is one of the greatest areas of concern. Although work has been initiated to improve things, young people and families feel this has had a marginal impact on practice.

Work has taken place to address some of these challenges. This includes development of transition pathways from age 2 (pre-school), 9 (Year 5) and 14 (Year 9), coproducing the process of transition annual reviews of EHC Plans from Year 9 to focus on preparation for adulthood, and auditing and planning changes to post-16 provision to focus on progression pathways and outcomes. Health services have worked to establish transition routes between health providers, and work is ongoing to develop clearly defined care pathways.

Whilst work has taken place, this has not been clearly communicated and embedded. There is poor collaboration with services working in silos meaning the system is fragmented with no system wide transition policy and protocols. This means that whilst transition reviews are undertaken, they are not integrated, person-centered or linked to aspirations and clear outcomes that focus on what the next stage or adult life will be like. There is a joint aspiration across partners to improve this, including a focus on supporting all age disability.

Our priorities:

1. Clear integrated transition pathways as young people move into school, into secondary education and into post-16 education and adult life
2. All young people will have a clear plan to move to adult life that is focused on employment and meaningful activity, independence, access to their community and managing their health
3. Address the current gaps of education, health and care provision around the 16-25 age range.

4. Ensure sufficient and appropriate opportunities for young people with additional needs that are focused on their whole life. This includes employment, day activities, housing, health support, and opportunities to have the right relationships and support
5. Ensure that young people and families are able to easily access the right support, including funding, to enable them to succeed in adult life

What we will change

1. We will develop and clearly communicate pathways of support and intervention for young people at age 2, age 9 and age 14 so that there is clarity about the support that is available to enable good transition
2. We will establish and communicate roles and responsibilities around transitions, so that there is better understanding and more effective governance, including a strategic multi-agency transition group
3. We will create a five year plan to ensure services and providers are available to children and young people, utilising intelligence from My Plans and EHCP amongst other data to inform commissioning, so there is sufficient provision including services for adult life for health services, care and community provision and housing
4. We will roll out a clear, comprehensive, multi-disciplinary, outcomes focused and person-centred review process for all CYP with SEND from age 14 onwards so that there is a focus on what adult life will look like and the pathway and support that is needed to get there
5. We will develop a process to ensure that a 5 day offer of opportunities across a varied market place combining commissioned services with community led ones, is in place so that young people enjoy a varied and meaningful life during and beyond education.
6. We will work with schools and colleges to review and revise the curriculum, for those with complex needs, to ensure that it is fit for purpose in preparing young people for adult life
7. We will ensure social care have transition plans and pathways embedded into over-arching plans so that they are effective, timely and lead to sustainable outcomes
8. We will combine health transition action plans to improve the transition pathways from paediatric to adult health services, particularly between age 16-18, so that there is clear planning to support managing health in adult life
9. We will promote the employment of young people with SEND through the development of partnerships with employers, developing supported internships and employment and job coaching so that more CYP can earn a wage
10. We will ensure sufficient resources are available within services to allow for effective transition planning so that CYP get the right support to plan and move to adult life

The impact this will have:

- Transition points will become smoother and less stressful for young people and families
- Young people will move easily and smoothly between services that are focused on children to those designed for adults without feeling like they are hitting a cliff edge.
- Services will be better equipped to support young people and families by fully understanding their needs and preferences for adult life

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Commitment 4: Excellent communication and engagement between young people, families, services and schools (Communication)

Our challenge:

- We need to build mutual trust and relationships between young people, families, schools and services across the city
- Our approach to service delivery and development needs to be person centred rather than focused on the individual service or school
- The process of communicating what, who, how and when action should be taken has to be consistent. It should be easy and interesting for young people and families to find information

What it looks like now

Families tell us that our communication systems don't work. They find it difficult to understand what should happen and hard to get answers. They feel that communication is not consistent and that there is no 'customer care' when they are going through difficult processes.

We know we have some pockets of good practice and lots of work is taking place to improve this process. This is often based on the individual SENCO or officers' knowledge and ability to communicate. It is not consistent.

Families and practitioners have told us that they want to know how systems work and for there to be more transparency. They have told us that they don't know where to go to for help when there are gaps in support. There is a real desire to improve communication which is often hindered by lack of knowledge; feedback on new recorded processes and information put in place is good but does not go far enough.

Our priorities:

1. The voice of the young person and their family will be at the centre. We will recognise, listen and respond to the family as an equal partner who is the expert of what daily life is like
2. Services and schools will work together to ensure consistent communication with a focus on the child so that services are joined up.
3. Assessment and support processes are clearly defined and easily available to all
4. From day one there is clear and consistent engagement with the family that goes throughout life so that they know what is happening and what will happen next
5. There is an open and honest relationship between young people, families, services and schools about what can and can't be done

What we will change

1. We will develop a citywide 'tell us once' approach so that young people do not have to continually repeat their story so that appropriate information is shared and available. This will link to a 'family journey' through SEND and Inclusion

2. We will develop an engagement approach with underrepresented communities to ensure that their voice is heard in how their young person is supported eg. Roma, BAME, those with their own learning needs
3. We will embed routes to hear the voice of young people in the city, including those who are non-verbal, so that we are clear about what is important to them and for them
4. We will develop and embed a 'customer approach' in services that prioritises good communication and ensures that agreed actions are completed
5. We will develop and consistently follow best practice guidance and minimum standards on how and when to communicate with families. This will include from teachers, SENCO, services as well as content of formal letters so that families are clear about how they should be informed and be reviewed through evaluation questionnaires
6. We will use individual agreed methods of communication with young people and their families so that they can understand how they are being supported. Services and schools will agree this with them when they are first involved. This will include how services will advise that they've worked with a young person.
7. We will ensure that our IT systems talk to one another so that everyone has the information they need with clear guidance on sharing personal information. This will include investigating the development of a central data system across agencies and across children and adult services to ensure effective communication
8. We will redesign our local offer website to make it fit for purpose so that everyone can be signposted to and find the help they need easily
9. We will have clearly detailed assessment and support processes, in different formats, for all to use, so that families and services know how to get help. This will include posters, animations and detailed descriptors.
10. We will put in place a marketing strategy to ensure that the profile of SEND and support available is raised through mediums such as posters in GP surgeries and use of social media, so that families are aware of how they find out information

The impact this will have

- Young people and families will have a greater understanding about how they can be supported with SEND – leading to improved relationships and increased trust in the system
- Professionals will have the tools available to them to communicate well with families
- It will be easier for families to get the information and help they need

Commitment 5: Skilled leader and staff capabilities to deliver the services (Workforce)

Our challenge:

- We need to have a sufficient workforce that works together with shared values and trust
- We need to ensure that leaders are empowered to make the right decisions to support young people and families. To do this, we need to ensure leaders have clear roles and responsibilities with decision making processes that are effective and accountable
- Our workforce needs to be supported with training to embed the right skills and knowledge, backed up by the systems they need to be efficient and effective.

What it looks like now

Sheffield has a committed and hardworking workforce, who we want to support to do their job as effectively as possible. Our families tell us that individuals who are effective go the extra mile to help but that the workforce is not sufficiently available or skilled to help everyone. Whilst we have a range of expertise across the city, it is not sufficient enough and substantial change and challenge around recruitment and retention has made the implementation of high quality assessment and provision challenging. A system of consistent, citywide training on processes and support has been developed and is being rolled out to support schools and services, particularly at locality level; however more needs to be done. The Accountable Care Partnership has developed a workforce strategy.

Our leaders tell us that systems and processes don't join up and the pressures on individual services are preventing change. We have created a system of school-sector leadership across SEND through localities and the inclusion gateway that is developing joined up education provision but requires health and care integration. Events have taken place such as the 2018 SEND Leaders Conference to promote SEND & Inclusion across the city.

There are some examples of effective joint working across Sheffield, however it is inconsistent and trust, shared values and language is lacking between teams. We know that cases involving multiple teams can be a difficult experience for families.

Our priorities:

1. We need to understand overall demands on services and identify shortages and gaps in capacity
2. We need to ensure our workforce has the sufficient skills to understand and support inclusion across the city
3. It is essential that we develop shared values, language and knowledge to be more collaborative
4. We need to ensure that support is co-ordinated and joined up, utilising a key worker approach to do this as early as possible

5. In order to ensure we have a high quality workforce we need to ensure high quality staff recruitment and retention

What we will change

1. We will develop and embed a keyworker approach so that our most vulnerable and complex young people and families have the right support to navigate their offer of support, including developing approaches to advice and guidance and advocacy
2. We will develop a knowledge hub so understanding and experience can be shared across the city
3. We will develop a skill sharing approach so different parts of the workforce can come together to share skills and expertise
4. We will identify and create a programme of core training for all schools, services, young people and families in the city around inclusion and SEND so that there is a consistent knowledge base
5. We will systematically review the demand that services are under and the expectations on them so that we can identify where gaps in capacity need to be addressed and commission appropriate staffing and training
6. We will undertake peer reviews and service evaluations across the city and with different areas so that we can share best practice and integrate practice
7. We will develop a set of shared values and common language, so that children and young people are at the heart of what we do
8. We will develop a citywide understanding of recruitment and retention issues across the city so that we can inform how we transform and change our workforce to make roles in inclusion attractive for the workforce
9. We will develop minimum standards within services for how their staff operates so that we can effectively manage the performance of staff and service and monitor the impact on systems across the city
10. We will audit and train our assessors and plan writers so that they have the skills to create high quality, holistic, accurate and specified plans
11. We will explore how to develop a 'charter mark' for inclusion and inclusive practice so that we can evidence that leaders are developing good inclusive practice
12. We will utilise the city's Inclusion Improvement Board to drive forward leadership of inclusion in the city in a way that removes barriers to system change so that our system is clearly led and transformed

The impact this will have:

- Clarity on leader's roles and responsibilities will lead to better accountability and understanding with clearly defined decision making
- We will have a sufficient and equipped workforce to meet the demands of the city, leading to better decisions, better support and increased morale
- Trust between teams will increase, leading to better joint working

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