

Somerset County Council

Scrutiny Committee

– Children, Young People and Families – 3 October 2022

SEND Strategy development

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1. Summary

- 1.1.** Somerset Local Area partners are in the process of developing the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy 2023-26
- 1.2.** The strategy will set the priorities for SEND improvement following on from the Written Statement of Action (WSOA) period, due to be completed by the end of December 2022.
- 1.3.** The Priorities are evidence based and have been developed through extensive engagement, from the findings of the SEND JSNA, and taking into consideration the vast amount of research commissioned to better understand the needs of the SEND system.

2. Issues for consideration

- 2.1.** Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the following emerging SEND Strategy Themes which will be underpinned by a number of mission statements, outlining how these will be delivered, for consultation.
 1. **Listen, Hear and Respond** - Children and young people with SEND and their families will be heard and feel they have choice and control about their lives. Not for me, with me.
 2. **Working Together** and Coordinated - We are working together as a co-ordinated system and at the case level, around the family.
 3. **Getting Help as Early as Possible** - Children, young people and their families are able to access the right support at the right time.
 4. **Access to the right information, support and provision** - Children, young people and their families telling us: "I understand the support and provision that is available to me, and I can access it, if I need it."
 5. **Preparing for the future** - Children and young people have the right skills and options, according to their individual needs, to take control of their future and achieve the ambitions important to them.

3. Background

- 3.1.** Following an OFSTED and CQC joint inspection of the local area in March 2020 Somerset was subjected to a WSoA. Partners have worked successfully together to deliver a programme of work to meet the actions and outcomes contained within the statement and commissioned a peer review earlier this

year to consider progress against some key areas of concern raised. The Peer Review made the following key recommendations:

- Partnership leaders should develop and communicate a clear vision and strategy with children and young people's outcomes at the heart.
- Be ambitious and aspirational for children with additional needs from the start.
- Use the wider organisational changes across local government and the NHS to put children and young people centre stage.
- Build an environment of trust and collaboration by improving the quality and regularity of the dialogue with children, families and professionals.
- Strengthen the local area data set to identify local need, inform performance, address early identification and measure outcomes.
- Develop a system wide/ integrated universal early help offer for social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) and autism.
- Develop a clear understanding of the resources available and how they are accessed by both professionals and parents, building on the lived experiences of parents.
- Improve the level of understanding within the wider workforce of the partnership regarding neurodevelopment.
- Embed (and resource) the Graduated Response approach.
- Continue to strengthen the voice of CYP to raise aspirations and evaluate success.
- Develop a comprehensive SEND partnership workforce strategy.

The Peer Review together with the following key documents, and engagement with children, young people and families provide the evidence and rationale for the emerging themes

3.2. The SEND Charter was developed in 2020 and provides the key principles for delivery across the SEND system. These can be summarised as:

- Ensuring that provision is child and family centred and that they are at the heart of everything we do and involved in processes
- All practitioners will be treated respectfully and professionally by one another in a blame-free, supportive environment offering positive challenge where appropriate
- Help will be provided early reducing the need for statutory or specialist intervention, empowering families to promote their independence
- Communication will be clear and open, ensuring information is shared effectively, helpful signposting is in place and clarity given over roles and responsibilities

3.3. The latest WSoA position statement has highlighted the following areas which will need continued focus past the date of closure:

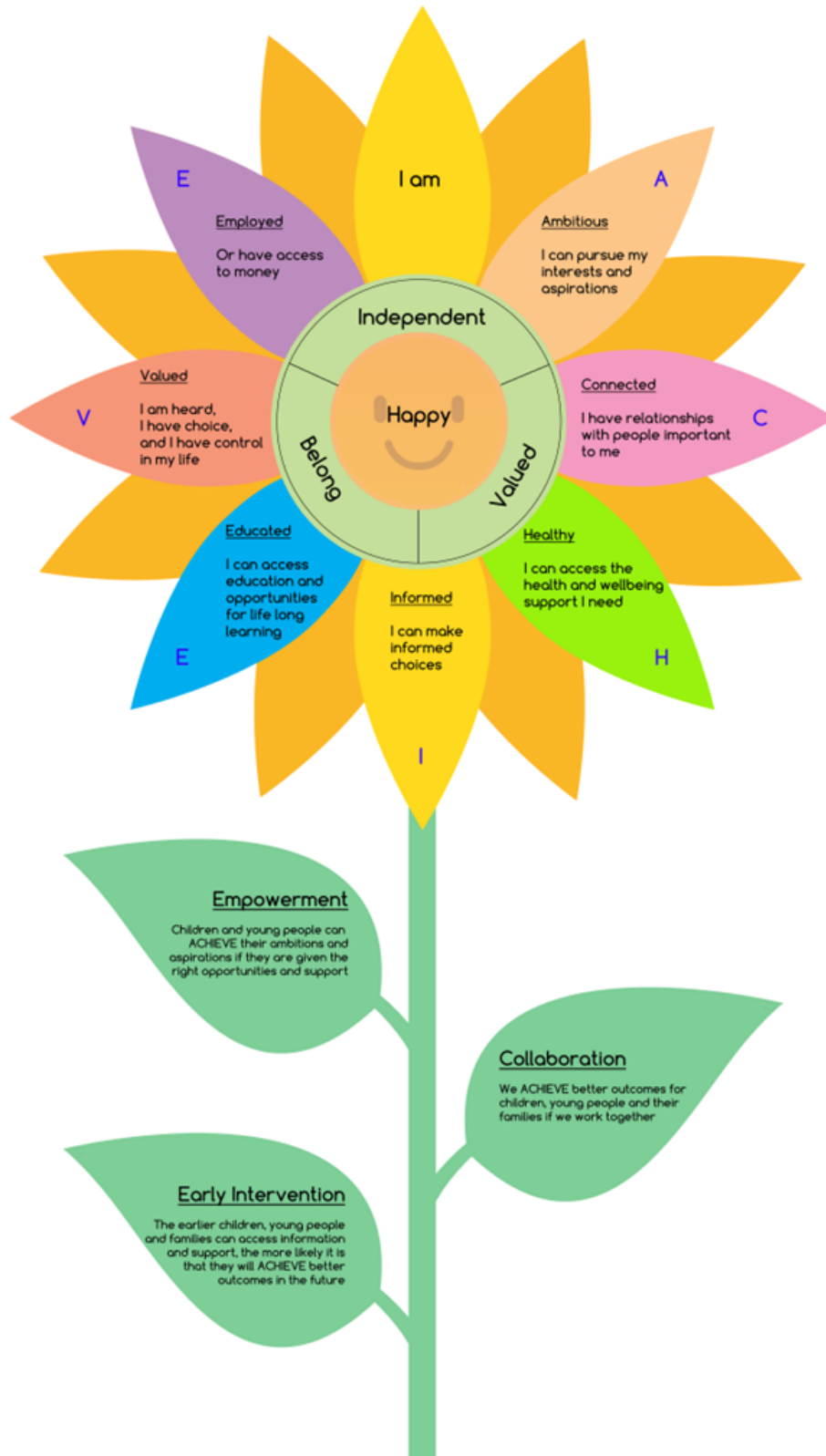
- Continue to engage and involve children, young people and their families

- All change to be based on / evidenced by family experience
- Further work is required to continue to join up available data
- Further develop and strengthen the neurodevelopmental pathway
- Continue the focus to improve the inclusiveness of schools
- Embed and ensure consistency of the graduated response

3.4. As part of the delivery of the WSoA a school-led education Inclusion Inquiry was undertaken. This concluded with recommending the following key areas of focus:

- **Better signposting of support services:** A clearer signposting to support services across Somerset for all to access
- **Earlier Intervention:** There needs to be better local early intervention strategies in place for identification and support for children and young people
- **Behaviour planning and support structure:** There needs to be better behaviour planning and support structures within Somerset.
- **Inclusion data shared with schools:** Inclusion data should be shared, routinely with education settings to ensure that evidence based inclusive practice becomes standard.
- **Trust Building:** Trust and transparency were central to children, young adults, parents and Somerset staff when seeking advice or support for SEND or inclusion.

3.5. The local area worked with children and young people to agree a SEND outcomes framework. These should underpin the strategy and form the basis of how success is measured.



3.6. The SEND Joint Strategic Needs Assessment was completed during May/June 2022 and is being explored at a Health and Wellbeing Board workshop later this month. The findings can be summarised as follows and the workshop will help to further refine the SEND Strategy Themes.

- The local area should maintain a focus on Social Emotional Mental Health

- Continued improvements should be made in the field of Joint Commissioning and commissioners should see to take a place-based approach
- Service development, particularly across the neurodevelopmental pathway, should explore the current gender imbalance
- More research is required into the need of children in special circumstances and those who are preparing for adulthood

3.7. IMPOWER were commissioned to review the progress and impact of transformation activity and support the Somerset SEND system to explore further opportunities to ensure that children and their families receive the right support at the right time. Discovery work was carried out between April and July 2022 which recommended the following priority areas to be underpinned by a strong grip of future need and support:

- Improving access to timely support & advice to enable early intervention
- Embedding child centred, strengths-based practice
- Improving transitions and phase transfers enabled by building inclusive practice in schools
- Identifying and meeting Social, Emotional & Mental Health need early

4. Consultations undertaken

4.1. The local area has conducted listening events, coffee morning and conversations with staff teams to gather their views on what the future priorities of the SEND strategy should be. In addition, all engagement which has taken place throughout the life of the WSoA has been analysed and has contributed to the development of the emerging themes. Further engagement is planned over the next few weeks to refine the draft priorities followed by an 8 week consultation period.

4.2. Some of the messages from families can be summarised as follows:

- Children and carers are the experts in their lives, experience should be used to plan future services
- All delivery should focus on the strengths of children, young people and their families and should promote Independence
- Silo working should be removed allowing a tell us once approach and a focus on the whole family
- Support for carers is important
- Access to services can feel slow – a week can feel like a year, continuous communication is needed
- From listening needs to come action.
- Learn from the mistakes that have been made – a process of learning from every mistake / complaint / tribunal is important
- Put the child at the centre of every decision. Team around the child / family is very important and should include families
- Transparency and accountability – be realistic with parents – who will I

get a response from and when.

- 4.3.** The recently closed local area 360 degree survey findings will help to further develop the emerging strategy priorities and mission statements.

5. Implications

- 5.1.** Through the development of the strategy a number of risks and issues have been identified. These will need to be considered as part of strategy refinement and implementation.

- The risk that partners are unable to develop a sense of shared responsibility for joint funding gaps between services.
- The issue that joined up working at all levels is hampered by key barriers in the current system. These include a lack of shared governance and ensuring data and lived experiences really inform plans and decisions
- The issue that partners are all using different Information Technology / recording systems
- The issue that there are currently too many front doors to services (families can become confused on where to go and services have too many options to signpost)
- The risk the resources are too stretched, with the development of key change programmes across the system, to maintain a focus on delivering the SEND Strategy
- The risk that families do not feel heard resulting in them feeling there is no point in giving feedback

6. Background papers

- 6.1.** Draft SEND JSNA
- 6.2.** SEND Charter
- 6.3.** Somerset Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Peer Challenge 23rd May 2022 – 26th May 2022 Feedback Report
- 6.4.** Impower Somerset SEND Transformation Discovery Report July 2022

Note For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author