

# Special Educational Needs and Disabilities: Somerset's new SEND Strategy &

# Background

- 2020 – OFSTED/ CQC inspection leading to **Written Statement of Action**
- 2022 – development of new SEND strategy (JSNA, engagement, peer review, formal consultation)
- Dec 2022 – OFSTED/ QCC revisit – **sufficient progress made** for 7 out of 9 areas of weakness.
- 29 March 2023 – **closure** of written statement of action.
- What next?
  - Accelerated progress plan – 12 month action plan to address remaining areas of weakness
  - SEND Strategy – 3 year programme for improving SEND services and outcomes

# What difference has been made?

*Leaders across the partnership worked to resolve their differences and come together to tackle the widespread weaknesses. (OFSTED/ CQC, 2023)*

## Better working together

- Involvement of parent carers in strategic developments
- Spirit of collaboration, mutual trust and support.
- System performance information
- Comprehensive strategic needs assessment

## Better offer of services

- Autism pathway
- Specialist education provision
- Education, health and care plans
- Joint commissioning of SEND Information and Advice Service

## Better access to support

- Therapy services (SLT, OT, Physio)
- Reduced waiting times for Portage
- Access to social care advice and support
- Schools taking lead on EHC requests

# Accelerated progress plan

## **Poor assessment and meeting of need caused by inconsistent practice, leading to poor outcomes for children and young people with SEND.**

There has been considerable work to develop a graduated response toolkit. This toolkit is intended to improve the assessment and meeting of needs for children and young people identified as needing SEND support in mainstream schools. The views of stakeholders, including parents and carers, have been considered in detail when designing this toolkit. However, this has taken time. School SENCos find aspects of this toolkit helpful, for example when seeking ideas about how best to support pupils' different needs in school. However, it is early days in the implementation of this toolkit. Added to this, some SENCos do not have the time, resources or influence needed to implement the requirements of the graduated response as expected. This means that many children and young people needing SEND support continue to have a poor experience.

Moreover, for some children and young people who have an EHC plan, parents and carers continue to experience difficulty in securing the appropriate provision to meet needs. Consequently, there are still too many children and young people who do not receive the provision set out in their EHC plans.

## **Too many children and young people not accessing education because of the disproportionate use of exclusion and poor inclusive practices across the area.**

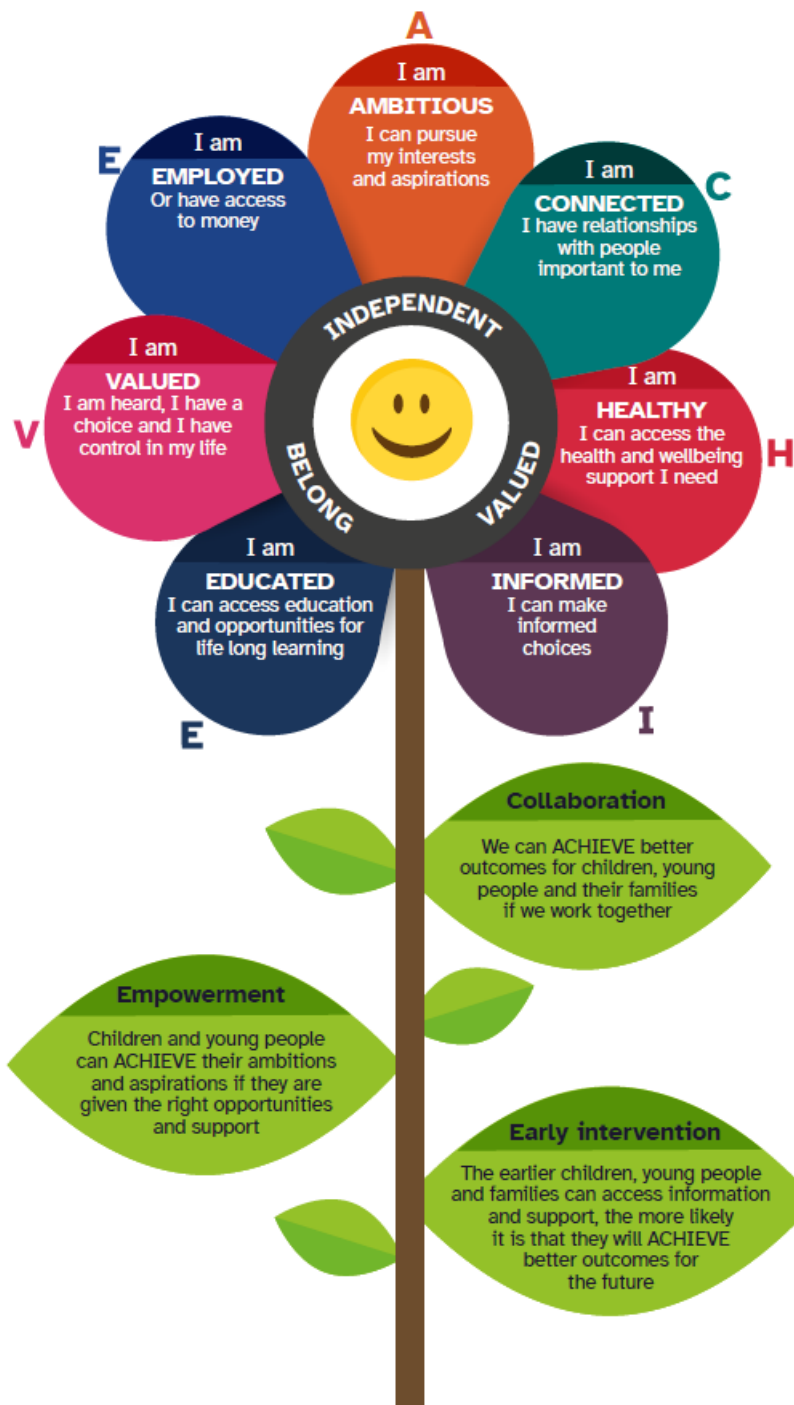
The rate of exclusion for children and young people with SEND continues to be too high. Still, too many children and young people miss out on learning because they are excluded, suspended or experiencing part-time timetables. Inspectors heard experiences of frequent exclusion, repeat suspensions and the imposition of long-term part-time timetables. Parents and carers told inspectors that these experiences are pushing them to the brink, often exacerbating their child's anxiety. Consequently, a few parents and carers choose to keep their children at home, outside exclusion or elective home education arrangements.

While some innovative practice has developed to reduce exclusions and retain pupils in their schools successfully, this is too little, too late.

# Accelerated progress plan

- Developed through series of workshops, involving LA Inclusion services, education providers, social care, health commissioners and providers, parent-carer forum.
- APP submitted to DfE/ NHSE on 21 March 2023 – awaiting sign-off.

- Improve **consistency of identification and support** using the Graduated Response Tool
- Assurance that the **provision in EHC plans** is being delivered
- Address gaps in service and to modernise the early intervention offer for **mental health**
- Reduce waiting times for **assessment of autism** and improve support for children and families
- Improve the identification of need and provision relating to SEND within **social care** practice.
- Address sufficiency gaps relating to **specialist provision for SEMH** needs
- Roll out foundations of **inclusive practice** programme in schools
- Targeted intensive multi agency support for cohort of **children most at-risk** of exclusion or care
- use **Area Inclusion Partnerships** to provide effective multi-agency arrangements for working with schools to identify vulnerable children and commission the right support,
- Targeted work with a **group of 10-20 schools**, to improve systems and processes for supporting children who are vulnerable to exclusion.

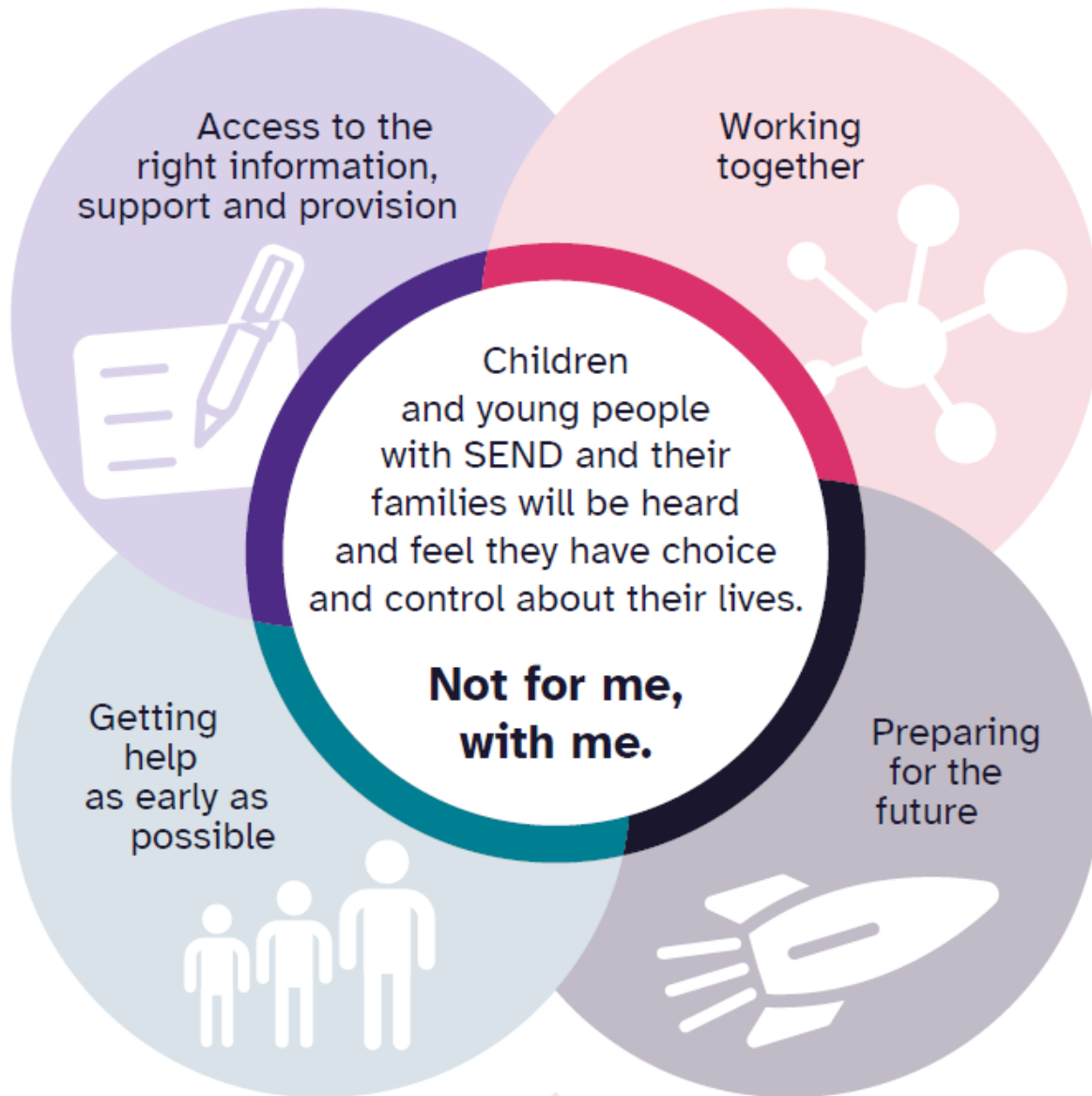


# SEND Strategy (2023-25)

## Vision

*We want to be able to move through the world without having to force our way through it.*

***My life - not a service.***



- Formal consultation period – Oct to Dec 2022
- 4 themes for priorities –working with children and families runs through each theme.
- Post consultation:
  - Missions refined – made clearer / more specific
  - Greater focus on work with the **Unstoppables**, identifying and addressing gaps in **mental health** support, **short breaks** and wraparound care, preparing for adulthood (**housing, health** support)



# Working together

- We will improve the way we work together and with you in your community. One of the ways we will do this is by developing effective **Community Hubs**, a place that you can visit for face-to-face help.
- We will establish **Area Inclusion Partnerships** that enable schools to better support vulnerable learners.
- We will ensure services work together through local partnerships that bring together schools, support services and others to agree how to use shared resources to help you.
- We will make sure that your information is shared with those working with you, and the roles and responsibilities of those you meet is clear. You will be given the information you need to make a decision and you will be involved in designing any plans that include you.
- We will publish clear information on Somerset's **SEND Local Offer** about how to access support and how long it may take.
- To better understand your needs and to improve the ways we support you, we will develop systems to **listen and learn from feedback** and share this knowledge with teams across the partnership.
- We will ensure Somerset's SEND Local Offer to provide updates on changes made based on the feedback we have been given. We will publish the results and actions taken following feedback from families.
- We will make sure **we listen and respond to children and young people with SEND** and their families. We will collaborate with schools, communities and groups including The Unstoppables.



# Getting help as early as possible

- We will make it easier to access early advice, information and support for special educational needs through **Connect Somerset**, local community hubs and online guidance. Hubs will use the systems we establish together to regularly gain feedback from families to understand their needs.
- SENCOs and other staff in education settings will have access to support through a dedicated **inclusion advice phone line**, enabling them to identify help and support at an early stage.
- We will use the **Somerset Inclusion Tool** with schools to establish an offer for schools, addressing gaps in support, sharing knowledge and enabling your child's school to have an open conversation with you about how their needs can be met.
- We will work with you and the professionals supporting you to develop a joined up **Speech, Language and Communication** offer which will improve support for children from birth, in their early years, at school settings, and at home.
- We will help you and the teams working with you to feel confident to recognise and support trauma in children and young people by implementing a **Trauma Informed** approach.
- We will promote clear and up-to-date information around **mental health support** and ensure our services are easily accessible.
- We will work to ensure that gaps in Mental Health support are identified and addressed.

# Access to the right support and provision

- We will ensure that you are able to access clear information about when to request a neurodevelopmental assessment (such as **autism or ADHD**) and how you can participate in making the request. You will be able to access clear information about the process and timeframes for the assessment.
- We will invest in and develop a **neurodevelopmental pathway** so that if you have an assessment it will be timely and you will receive support throughout the process.
- We will work with schools to promote inclusion by sharing expertise and skills and providing opportunities to learn in a way that suits you. We will work with schools to develop **enhanced offers of support in mainstream schools** so that you can access education in your local community.
- We will increase the number of **specialist places for children with social and emotional mental health needs** available to meet needs.
- We will make sure that through our assessment processes **you are given the advice you need** so that you do not need to seek private reports.
- We will recruit **key workers** to co-ordinate support for children and young people with a learning disability or autism and their families, so that they can receive the right support to live safely at home.
- We will work with you to understand what you require from **short breaks** and work with you and the professionals and communities who support you, to put in place a new short breaks offer.
- We will work with schools to put in place enhanced **wrap around support** for children with additional needs.

# Preparing for the future

- So that you can live your best life and achieve your goals, we will evaluate the **support and guidance** available to you and develop it so that you can plan for adult life as early as possible. This includes if you need to transfer to adult services across health and social care.
- You will be supported to be as independent as you can be through **work readiness and life skills** programmes. We will work with supported employment groups and key partners to improve the **employment opportunities** available to you.
- We will **support you in your next steps** whether you choose to continue your education, take up employment or training after you leave school.
- You and your family will be able to get **support to be as healthy** as you can be. This will be supported by local partnerships including; education, health, care and the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sectors.
- We will have clear **guidance about career options available from year 7**. We will audit what's already available in schools, including where they already work with the local community. We will monitor effective careers delivery using 'Compass' a careers benchmark tool.
- As part of developing our **housing strategies** we will work with you to understand what you need to live as independently as possible, including in your own home, flat or shared living. Based on what you tell us, we will develop a refreshed and accessible housing offer in a location that is right for you.

# Governance and monitoring

## **APP Delivery Group –**

- Sub group of SEND partnership board
- co-chairs: Camilla Hutchings (DCO, ICB Health SEND Lead); Claire Merchant-Jones (LA Head of SEND)
- Names action leads
- Dedicated programme support

## **SEND Partnership Board**

- Co-chaired by ICB & LA accountable officers
- Monthly progress overview and exceptions report – escalation of risks and issues
- Performance dashboard – agreed KPIs

## **Children & Families Board**

- Co-chaired by ICB & LA executive leads
- Bi-monthly progress overview

## **Quarterly DFE/ NHSE progress reviews**

Bi-annual reports to:

- Children and Families Scrutiny Committee
- Health and Wellbeing Board

## **ICS Children and Families Board**

Co-chairs: Shelagh Meldrum (Chief Nursing Officer, ICB Executive Lead SEND); Claire Winter (Director of Children's Services, Somerset Council)

## **SEND Partnership Board**

Co-chairs: Andrew Keefe (Deputy Director Commissioning, ICB); Rob Hart (Service Director, Inclusion, Somerset Council)

SEND  
Strategy  
Subgroups

Performance  
& Data  
Subgroup

Inspection  
Readiness  
Subgroup

Accelerated  
Progress Plan  
Delivery  
Group

**SEND** Somerset's  
Local Offer