

Sheffield SEND Manifesto: A Proposal

July 2025

In September 2024, Sheffield City Council funded Learn Sheffield, on behalf of the Local Area SEND Partnership, to support the development of a new SEND and Inclusion Strategy for the city. This SEND Manifesto has been developed alongside the Partnership for this purpose.

The next step is to collect further feedback from across Sheffield to inform the final content of the new strategy.



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building Blocks• Outcomes Framework• Collecting Feedback



Introduction

Sheffield City Council have funded Learn Sheffield, on behalf of the Local Area SEND Partnership to support the development of a new SEND and Inclusion Strategy for the city.

The Local Area SEND Partnership in Sheffield includes:

- Sheffield City Council
- South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board
- Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust
- Sheffield Parent Carer Forum
- Learn Sheffield.



Learn Sheffield has led the creation of the SEND Manifesto proposal to provide the basis for further discussions across Sheffield.

It has been developed with leaders from the Local Area Partnership and provides a starting point for the development of a long-term strategy for Sheffield. The next step is to collect further feedback, from across Sheffield, to inform the final content of the new strategy.

We hope that this document, along with the **overview version**, provides a strong basis for the transformation of the SEND system in Sheffield and leads to better experiences and outcomes for children and young people in our city.



Summary

Our Process

Learn Sheffield worked with local area leaders to develop a vision about how the SEND system could look. This was shared more widely late in the autumn term of 2024. It can be read in full later in this document (pages 9-15) but is summarised on the next page.

This has been built on throughout the spring and summer by taking the series of questions below to provide a thread from the vision, analysis and guiding principles through to the priorities and workstreams that we believe can transform the experiences of children, young people and families in Sheffield.

Vision: SEND Manifesto (Page 9-15)

What do we want the Sheffield SEND system to be more like for children, young people, their families and the professionals who support them?

Analysis (Page 16-19)

What do we know about the Sheffield SEND system?

Guiding Principles and Culture (Page 20)

What do we know and understand about the culture that our SEND system needs?

Priorities (Page 21-29)

What are the most significant priorities to transform the Sheffield SEND system?

Workstreams (Page 30-40)

What are the workstreams which will deliver our shared local area priorities?

Outcomes Framework (Page 42-44)

Which outcomes can help us to understand how much progress we are making?

Summary - SEND Manifesto Vision

The Sheffield SEND Manifesto outlines a vision for improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND by promoting healthy child development, strengthening multi-agency collaboration, and reforming public services with a whole-system approach.

The Manifesto begins by highlighting how essential early childhood experiences are to a person's lifelong health, wellbeing and success. It emphasises that good health from before birth lays the foundation for strong development. In Sheffield, however, too many children miss out on these positive early experiences, often due to poverty and inequality, creating a cycle of disadvantage.

Current systems in education, health and care are largely reactive. There is a pressing need to shift to a proactive model that identifies and supports children's needs early. A key proposal is to create a shared, holistic definition of healthy child development that spans the perinatal period through secondary education. This will act as a guide for improving practice, identifying needs early and enhancing coordination across services.

The Manifesto promotes a whole-system approach that prioritises collaboration across services rather than isolated excellence in individual organisations. Drawing on David Hargreaves' four forms of capital (intellectual, social, organisational, and material) the document calls for thoughtful development and deployment of resources to support long-term system transformation. At the heart of this is the graduated approach - a cycle of assess, plan, do, review - intended to match children's needs with appropriate support. However, the current system is seen as overly bureaucratic, and the Manifesto proposes restoring its original intent: personalised, timely and dialogic support for children and families.

To guide this transformation, the document defines the key features of an effective local SEND system, including strong strategic leadership, inclusive practices, skilled workforces and meaningful engagement with children and families. It stresses that children must be active participants in decisions about their lives, and their experiences should inform systemwide evaluation and planning.

Co-production (working alongside children, families and practitioners to develop services) is central. The Manifesto identifies five dialogic principles for co-production: mutuality, kinship, empathy, risk and commitment. These values should shape decision-making, prioritising relational and participative accountability over top-down regulation.

The final sections of the Manifesto focus on how to measure progress. The document critiques the over-reliance on quantitative data, proposing a broader approach using task, quality and outcome measures. These will assess not only what was done, but how well it was done and whether children's lives are actually improving.

Summary – Our Analysis

The analysis shared in full later in the document (pages 16-19) reflects the views of the Local Area SEND Partnership. It is informed by the existing perspectives of the partners, the findings of previous reviews and activities, the [Local Area SENDAP Inspection](#) (which took place in March 2025) and an extensive programme of SEND Enquiry led by Learn Sheffield in May and June 2025.

This tells us that too many Sheffield children and young people with SEND do not have positive experiences, do not make enough progress and do not achieve good enough outcomes. These children and their families are often not meaningfully included in decision making about their current and future lives and how best to support them. Children and young people with SEND in our city are not making consistently strong progress and are not prepared well for their adult lives. This must improve.

Our city has many knowledgeable and highly-skilled individuals in education, health and care services. Where there is high-quality and inclusivity, this is often a result of individual relationships, organisations circumnavigating the systems and designing individual responses. There are few examples of effective multi-agency working across the system. The identification, assessment and meeting of children's needs is not fit for purpose and there is no effective graduated approach. Decision making about SEND in Sheffield must become long-term, coherent and connected.

Strategic leadership of SEND in Sheffield is changing. The Manifesto, this document and the development of a new strategy demonstrates a new willingness to look at SEND differently. This is a positive first step, but it is the first of many different steps that are required. The conditions required for highly effective multi-agency working are not currently in place. Current approaches to commissioning and providing services for children with SEND are ineffective. The local partnership has some understanding of the strengths and needs of children but limited insight into children's experiences and outcomes. The views and experiences of children do not feature in the local area's analysis often enough. This must change.

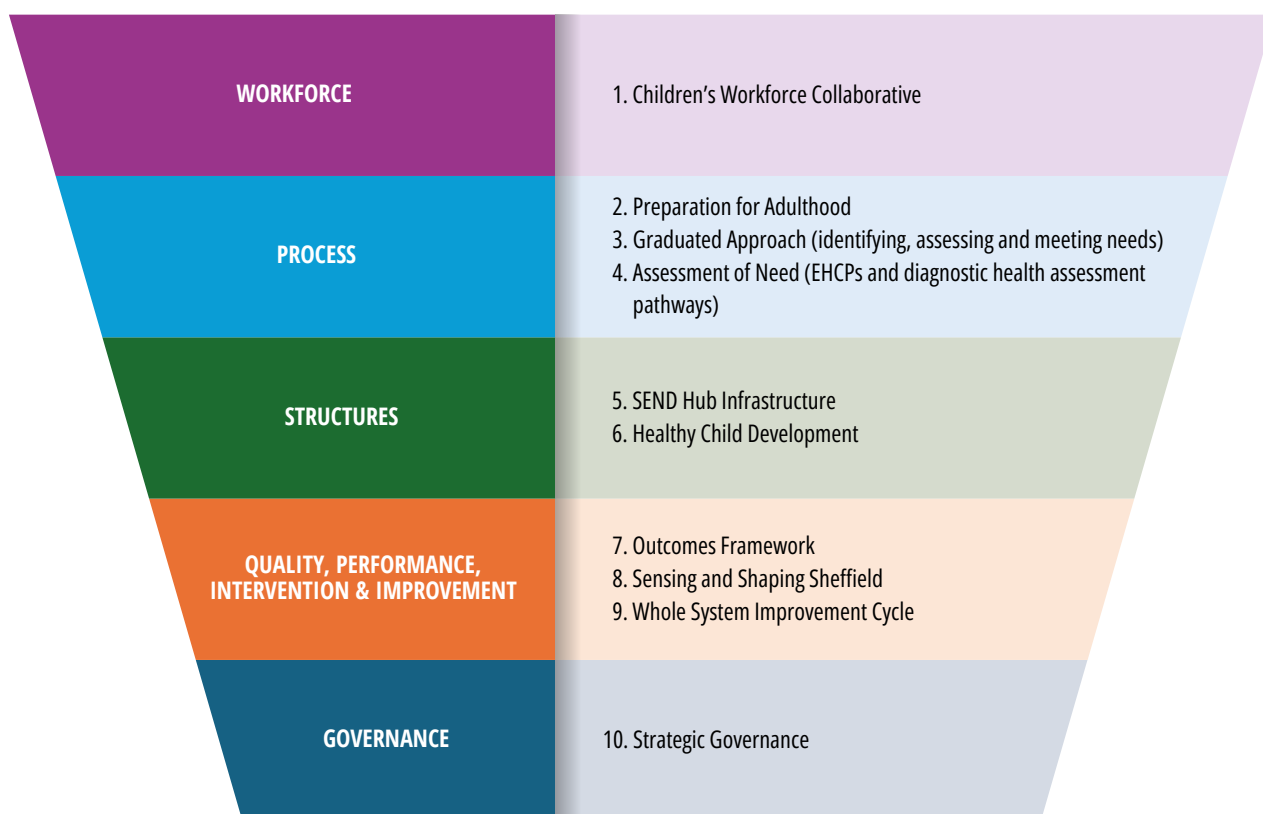
Transforming SEND in Sheffield requires shared accountability and strategic partnership across education, health and care. Children's experiences and outcomes are the product of our collective actions. We need a balanced model (with specialist, targeted and universal provision) across the SEND system, so that children and young people can receive the right help, in the right place, at the right time. We must develop and mobilise the intellectual, social, organisational, and resource capital needed for whole-system transformation.

Unreformed, the SEND system is unmanageable. If we do what we have always done, we will get what we have always got. This Local Area SEND Partnership is committed to working differently. This document shares our proposals for that different, long-term, strategic approach.

Priorities and Workstreams

We have identified the five key priorities below. They are described in more detail later in this document (pages 21-29). For each priority, we have described our understanding of the issue and provided the longer-term goal for 2030. We have also outlined the shorter-term objectives for the first 12-18 months and set out our current thinking on what our initial actions will be.

We propose that these priorities will be delivered through a series of identified workstreams. These are listed below and can be found later in this document (pages 30-40). The information about each workstream is designed to provide a starting point for delivery planning for the new strategy. In each case, we have described which part of the 2030 goals, and the proposed initial actions, the workstream is intended to deliver and set out how each workstream links to the rest of the strategy.



Outcomes Framework

We are unconvinced by the approaches to measuring outcomes that are typically used. We believe that, too often, only those things that can easily be measured are valued, and cause and effect is often attributed where it does not exist. We propose to commission external expertise to work with colleagues in Sheffield to design an outcomes framework which can be used in the years ahead to enable all stakeholders to understand the progress that has been made. We intend for this to be in place by December 2025.

Vision: SEND Manifesto

Better lives for Sheffield Children with additional needs: a Manifesto

Our strategy for improving the lives of all Sheffield children, especially those with additional needs, is summarised in this Manifesto.

The case for change

Like other core cities, in September 2024 almost 4 in every 10 Sheffield children started Year 1 without having achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD) at age 5. In some schools in the city, 7 in every 10 children did not achieve GLD and started Year 1 without the knowledge and skills they need to learn and make progress.

We also know that 1 in every 10 school-age children in Sheffield has a long-term, persistent speech, language and communication need (many with developmental or complex language disorders). In the most disadvantaged communities in the city, children are twice as likely to have language difficulties and as many as half will start school without the language they need.

Nationally and in Sheffield, the number of school-age children requiring SEND support and Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) has increased year-on-year for almost a decade. During this time, improvement activity has focused more on strengthening the arrangements for identifying, assessing and meeting children's special educational needs than on understanding why the number of children needing something additional or different has increased significantly.

We are therefore aiming to increase the number of children who have positive experiences and achieve good outcomes without requiring additional or different provision at the same time as transforming the arrangements for identifying, assessing and meeting the needs of those who do. We see these goals as connected and inter-dependent. They are the core ambitions of our strategy.

Healthy child development

The strong consensus on the importance of healthy child development is summarised well in the introduction to Harvard University Center on Child Development report, 'The foundations of lifelong health are built in early childhood.'

A vital and productive society with a prosperous and sustainable future is built on a foundation of healthy child development. Health in the earliest years—actually beginning with the future mother's health before she becomes pregnant—lays the groundwork for a lifetime of wellbeing. When developing biological systems are strengthened by positive early experiences, healthy children are more likely to grow into healthy adults. Sound health also provides a foundation for the construction of sturdy brain architecture and the associated achievement of a broad range of abilities and learning capacities.

Health is more than merely the absence of disease—it is an evolving human resource that helps children and adults adapt to the challenges of everyday life, resist infections, cope with adversity, feel a sense of personal wellbeing and interact with their surroundings in ways that promote successful development. Nations with the most positive indicators of population health, such as longer life expectancy and lower infant mortality, typically have higher levels of wealth and lower levels of income inequality. In short, children's health is a nation's wealth, as a sound body and mind enhance the capacity of children to develop a wide range of competencies that are necessary to become contributing members of a successful society.

But we know that more and more Sheffield children do not have the healthy childhood experiences that cause them to learn and develop well and achieve good outcomes. Too many do not acquire and develop the assets that help them to be healthy and successful. They have things missing from the 'toolkit' we all need to improve our health (or retain good health), learn well and make good progress. While caused in part by poverty, this is also a cause of poverty - a cycle that repeats destructively in the lives of too many children, families and communities in our city.

We know that small problems become big problems in children's lives but we have no means of moving from a reactive (fail first) to a proactive (succeed first) approach. The strong correlation between children's outcomes at age 5 and their future successes and life chances is a sobering mark of this whole-system failure. So, what can we do? The essential starting point is creating a holistic and connected description of the features of healthy child development from the perinatal period into early childhood and through the primary and secondary school phases. Why? If we can describe the features of healthy child development and environments that enable healthy child development:



- We can direct attention and action in the education, health and care system towards improving these features.
- We will have an early warning system that will help us to identify children with increased likelihood of needing something additional or different to learn and develop well.
- We will have a reference point that connects thinking and practice in the education, health and care system and facilitates better multi-agency working.

Crucially, without this holistic and connected description of healthy child development we cannot build up a picture of what it's like to be a child growing up in Sheffield or make good child and family centred decisions about what to do differently and better in the education, health and care system.

A whole-system approach to improving children's learning and development

Public service reform in recent years has focused too much on organisations and services, and not enough on the way they work together to help and support children, families and communities. We know that children's experiences and outcomes are the product of our collective actions so we cannot be content with developing fantastic practice in parts of the education, health and care system while knowing that terrible practice persists elsewhere. Whole-system change to a position that is far from current practice requires a long-term strategic approach that deliberately builds the capacity (or growth potential) needed for this transformation. David Hargreaves describes capacity as existing in four forms of capital:

- Intellectual capital: the education and training of individuals as well as their knowledge, skills, capabilities, competencies, talents, expertise, practices and routines.
- Social capital: the character and quality of social relationships; culturally, social capital is the level of trust and structurally it is the extent and quality of internal and external networks.
- Organisational capital: the knowledge of how to deploy material, intellectual and social capital; organisational know-how or the knowledge of how to get what is needed done.
- Material capital: financial capital and physical capital such as buildings and equipment.

Creating high capacity by thoughtfully developing and deploying these forms of capital will be a core feature of our approach to whole-system transformation and will underpin the graduated approach to identifying, assessing, and meeting children's additional needs.

The graduated approach is a repeated cycle of assess, plan, do, and review that matches the continuum of education, health and care provision to the continuum of children's additional needs. It should be collaborative and person-centred and was intended to be dialogic: bringing the right expert knowledge and resources together at the right time for children and families. Despite being one of the main constructs of local area SEND arrangements for almost three decades, it has become an over-bureaucratic resource allocation system. We plan to re-engineer the graduated approach so that it is underpinned by:

- Strong person-centred values and practices
- Dialogic processes that mobilise the right forms of intellectual, social, organisational and material capital in the right ways and at the right time for children and families.

This will require new arrangements for commissioning and providing universal, targeted and specialist services that facilitate a social ecological approach to helping and supporting children and families in an early, effective and graduated way.

This work will connect to Sheffield's involvement in the Cabinet Office's Public Service Reform test and learn, which focusses on Family Hubs and improving delivery and impact for children under five and their families.

The features of an effective local area SEND system

The SEND code of practice provides statutory guidance for organisations that work with and support children with SEND. It first came into effect in September 1994 and has been revised and updated several times, most recently in January 2015. Inspections of local area SEND arrangements have revealed widespread failings characterised by ineffective leadership and children's poor experiences and outcomes. The SEND system in local areas and nationally is frequently described as 'broken' and 'out of control'. The discourse is rarely positive.

Although the ontology of SEND arrangements is complex and cannot be separated from wider political and public policy influences, we believe that it is helpful to describe the features of an effective local area system. We see this being used to support self-evaluation and improvement planning and not as a checklist or scorecard.

SEND system features

Experiences, progress and outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children have a positive experience of education, health and care services.• Children and families are meaningfully included in dialogue and decision making about their current and future lives and how best to support them.• Children make consistently strong progress towards ambitious outcomes relating to their cognition and learning, communication and interaction, physical and sensory development and social, emotional and mental health.• The outcomes children achieve prepare them well for their adult lives. They belong and are valued, visible and included in the communities where they live, learn and work.
Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High-quality and inclusive universal education, health and care services.• Knowledgeable and highly skilled education, health and care workforce.• An effective graduated approach to identifying, assessing and meeting the needs of children who need something additional or different.• Strong person-centred practice and effective systems to support engagement and co-production with children and families.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective multi-agency working across education, health and care. • Practice that focuses on improving children's experience, progress and outcomes, especially their preparation for adulthood outcomes.
Strategic leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong Local Area Partnership and the conditions for highly effective multi-agency working. • Shared ambitious vision for children with SEND. • Effective engagement and strategic co-production with children and families. • Accurate understanding of the strengths and needs of children with SEND and their families. • Effective strategic commissioning of universal, targeted and specialist services. • Strong systems for decision making and the allocation of resources. • Strong governance and oversight of the quality and performance of services, children's experience, progress and outcomes, and value for money. • Effective workforce development focusing on children who are vulnerable or have SEND.

Alongside better understanding what it is like to be a child growing up in Sheffield we will build up an evidence-based picture of these SEND system features through dialogue and rapid self-evaluation. This will be facilitated by a small team of education, health and care practitioners and stakeholders.



Working together

Co-production is a way of working where children, families and those that provide services work together to create a decision or service that works for everyone. Individually, it means working in a person-centred way and strategically it means 'developing, designing and doing' together. We will work together to inform, consult, involve and co-produce using five dialogic principles:

- Mutuality: a collaborative orientation and a spirit of mutual equality.
- Kinship: always involving others in the dialogue and decisions that affect them.
- Empathy: an atmosphere of respect, trust and supportiveness and an inclusive orientation.
- Risk: the willingness to take relational risks in always doing the right thing.
- Commitment: genuineness, authenticity and a commitment to our collective goals.

To be successful we will need to prioritise networked and participative forms of accountability (the ways we are accountable to children and families and to each other) over hierarchical and contractual forms of accountability (the ways we are held to account through inspection, regulation, contacts and commissioning). Governance arrangements will assure fidelity to this commitment in all our decisions and actions.



Children's experiences, progress and outcomes

The measures and datasets most widely used by local areas provide poor insights into strategic leadership, practice and children's experience, progress and outcomes. Too much weight is given to quantitative measures and the views and experiences of children and families feature minimally in local area self-evaluation. We focus too much on measuring the performance of each part of the education, health and care system at the expense of understanding how these parts interact. We value the things that can be measured instead of measuring the things we value. We will use an outcomes-based accountability approach based on three types of measures:

- Task and process measures: how much of what we said we would do have we done?
- Quality and impact measures: how well was it done and what difference did it make to capacity and practice in the education, health and care system?
- Outcome measures: how much are children's lives improving as a result of what we have done?

The quality, impact and outcome measures will be both quantitative and qualitative (narrative). The outcome measures will be our high-level goals and ambitions - the co-produced measures that describe a generational change in the experiences, progress and outcomes of Sheffield children and their families.

To support the development of the Manifesto further we will:

- Create a holistic and connected description of healthy child development.
- Re-engineer the graduated approach to identifying, assessing and meeting children's needs.
- Use SenseMaker to better understand what it's like to be a child growing up in Sheffield.
- Create an evidence-based self-evaluation using our description of SEND system features.



These priorities are the key workstreams in the development of the Manifesto in 2025. We will use the outcomes from this work to inform our thinking about the strategic commissioning of universal, targeted and special education, health and care services.

Analysis

This is the shared analysis of the Sheffield Local Area SEND Partnership. It is based on the SEND system features that are included in the SEND Manifesto (as described on pages 12 and 13 in this document).

The evidence base for this analysis includes the professional judgment of the partners, and the organisations and sectors they represent (summarised by Nick Whittaker – Learn Sheffield), the findings of the SENDAP Inspection in March 2025, and the SEND Enquiry activities carried out in May and June 2025 (led by Lee Carey – Learn Sheffield).

Section 1: Experiences, progress and outcomes

Children have a positive experience of education, health and care services.	Children and families have highly variable experiences of the local area SEND system. Sometimes they receive timely and well co-ordinated help while on other occasions professionals and services fail to work together to provide the effective support children and families need. Positive experiences are typically the result of the work of a single professional or a small group of professionals and rarely reflect a family's experience of the local area system as a whole.
Children and families are meaningfully included in dialogue and decision making about their current and future lives and how best to support them.	Children and families do not have strong voices in dialogue about their current and future lives. Children and young people's views and experiences are neither sought nor valued consistently well and they rarely get the help they need to influence important decisions about how they are supported.
Children make consistently strong progress towards ambitious outcomes relating to their cognition and learning, communication and interaction, physical and sensory development and social, emotional and mental health.	Outcomes for children are rarely ambitious or functionally meaningful enough. They focus too little on important areas of children's learning and development and are often imprecise. There is limited evaluation of the progress children make towards the outcomes in their plans. As a result, the plans are often inaccurate and out of date.
The outcomes children achieve prepare them well for their adult lives. They belong and are valued, visible and included in the communities where they live, learn and work.	Outcomes for children do not focus enough on the things they need to achieve to be well prepared for their lives as adults. The local area partnership is ambitious for children to be valued, visible and included as adults in the communities where they live, learn and work. Significantly more needs to be done to achieve this goal for Sheffield's children.

Section 2: Practice

High-quality and inclusive universal education, health and care services.	There are examples of high-quality and inclusive education, health and care services but there is too much variability and too little joined-up working. The partnership's approach to identifying, assessing and meeting children's needs has become increasingly short-term and reactive.
Knowledgeable and highly skilled education, health and care workforce.	There are many knowledgeable and highly skilled individuals in education, health and care services. The local partnership's approach to developing the children's workforce is not coherent or connected.
An effective graduated approach to identifying, assessing and meeting the needs of children who need something additional or different.	Despite several examples of strong practice, there is no effective graduated approach to identifying, assessing and meeting the needs of children with SEND in the local partnership.
Strong person-centred practice and effective systems to support engagement and co-production with children and families.	There is no embedded culture of working in a person-centred way with children and families. Similarly, the way practitioners work together is not underpinned by strong dialogic principles. Practice in some parts of the education, health and care system is effective but there is too much variability in the experiences of children and families.
Effective multi-agency working across education, health and care.	There are few examples of effective multi-agency working across the education, health and care system. The features of effective practice and the conditions needed for this to flourish have not been identified or agreed.
Practice that focuses on improving children's experience, progress and outcomes, especially their preparation for adulthood outcomes.	The local partnership has a partial picture of children's experiences, progress and outcomes. Local area leaders are too reliant on provider-level measures that give limited insight. The partnership's strategic analysis provides minimal assurance.

Section 3: Strategic Leadership

Strong Local Area Partnership and the conditions for highly effective multi-agency working.	The local partnership is forming, and there are examples of, effective multi-agency working. Relationships between senior leaders are developing and trust is increasing. However, the conditions required for highly effective multi-agency working are not currently in place.
Shared ambitious vision for children with SEND.	The local partnership is ambitious for children with SEND but this is not articulated clearly in a single compelling voice.
Effective engagement and strategic co-production with children and families.	There are examples of effective engagement but co-production is less evident in leadership and practice in the local partnership. Sheffield Parent Carer Forum is a strategic asset but more work is needed to genuinely 'develop, design and do' together.
Accurate understanding of the strengths and needs of children with SEND and their families.	The local partnership has some understanding of the strengths and needs of children with SEND. Local area leaders are too reliant on provider-level measures that give limited insight into children's experiences and outcomes. The views and experiences of children feature minimally in the local area's analysis.
Effective strategic commissioning of universal, targeted and specialist services.	The partnership's current approach to commissioning and providing services for children with SEND is ineffective. It does not align with the graduated approach or the requirements specified in the SEND Code of Practice.
Strong systems for decision making and the allocation of resources.	There are examples of effective joint decision making. In general, however, decision-making systems lack transparency, undermine trust and cause inequity. Resources reside in different parts of the system which do not connect. Too often, decisions that affect parts of the system are made without reference to them.

Strong governance and oversight of the quality and performance of services, children's experience, progress and outcomes, and value for money.	Governance and oversight of the quality and performance of services, children's progress and outcomes, and value for money is undermined by outdated structures and systems and a lack of shared understanding. There is no system of escalation when there are concerns about quality or performance.
Effective workforce development focusing on children who are vulnerable or have SEND.	There is strong practice and some examples of effective workforce development but this is rarely connected between different parts of the SEND system. The approach to workforce development is often reactive and short-term rather than long-term and strategic.



Guiding Principles and Culture

We are committed to changing the way we interact and work together. We will inform, consult, involve and co-produce in a spirit of mutuality, and with kinship, empathy, a willingness to take relational risks and a commitment to our collective goals. This will be embedded in culture and practice in our local area SEND partnership.

The following principles have guided the development of the SEND Manifesto and will guide our future work together:

- We understand that wellness is more than the absence of illness.
- We see that small problems become big problems.
- We recognise that good systems are both the product of their parts and the way these parts interact.
- We know that increasing capacity for growth means learning how to develop and mobilise intellectual, social, organisational and material capital.
- We measure things that have value. We do not value things just because they can be measured.
- We make decisions that are long-term and strategic. We recognise that 'the long way round is sometimes the shortest way home'.



Priorities

Based on our analysis, we have proposed five priorities and themes:

- Creating the **workforce** that Sheffield children need to support healthy child development.
- Developing **processes** that work for everyone and lead to better outcomes.
- Developing the **structures** that enable improved leadership and practice.
- Redesigning our approach to understanding **quality, performance** and developing a system of **intervention** and improvement support.
- Transforming **governance** arrangements for Sheffield's SEND system to provide effective and active support and challenge.

The initial thinking behind each of these priorities is shared over the following pages. We have described our understanding of **the issue** in relation to each priority. This is followed by the longer-term **goal for 2030** and an outline of the shorter-term objectives for the **first 12-18 months**. For each priority we have also set out our current thinking on what **our key actions will be**.



Proposed Priority One

Creating the **workforce that Sheffield children need to support healthy child development.**

The Issue: There is strong practice and some examples of effective workforce development, but this is rarely connected between different parts of the SEND system. The approach to workforce development is often reactive and short-term rather than long-term and strategic. While there are many knowledgeable and highly skilled individuals in education, health and care services, the local partnership's approach to developing the children's workforce is not coherent or connected.

Our goal for 2030: Education, health and care services will be strategically commissioned and provided using a balanced model. The children's workforce will have deep expert knowledge and skills as a result of our ambitious programme of professional learning. They will have the products and resources they need to influence in all the places where children live, grow, play and learn. Sheffield children will have the leaders they need now and in the future.

In the first 12-18 months we propose to:

- Develop a description of the children's future workforce and a phased plan for creating that workforce.
- Launch the Children's Workforce Collaborative to develop and coordinate future workforce development, beginning with the roll out of the healthy child development work as its first priority.
- Ensure that education, health and care training is increasingly coherent.
- Develop our local area leaders, including identifying workstream leads, to ensure strong and sustainable leadership capacity now and in the future.

The initial actions we propose are to:

- Launch the Children's Workforce Collaborative (August 2025).
- Map and review planned training in each sector of the children's workforce (August 2025) and develop a coherent and connected workforce development plan for all aspects of the children's workforce in 2026/27 (June 2026).
- Identify our first cohort of local area leaders (September 2025) and initiate high-quality leadership development programmes (November 2025).
- Develop multi-agency workforce development pilots (September 2025).
- Develop a coherent and connected workforce development plan for the roll out of healthy child development work (October 2025).
- Develop a description of the children's future workforce as a key part of the local area strategy for commissioning and providing services using a balanced model (December 2025).
- Develop a phased plan for creating the children's workforce that has been described (April 2026).

Proposed Priority Two

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

The Issue: The partnership's current approach to commissioning and providing services for children with SEND is ineffective. It does not align with the graduated approach, or the requirements specified in the SEND Code of Practice. There are examples of effective joint decision making. In general, however, decision-making systems lack transparency, undermine trust and cause inequity. Resources reside in different parts of the system which do not connect. Too often, decisions that affect parts of the system are made without reference to them. Children and families do not have strong voices in dialogue about their current and future lives. Children and young people's views and experiences are neither sought nor valued consistently well and they rarely get the help they need to influence important decisions about how they are supported. Outcomes for children are rarely ambitious or functionally meaningful enough. They do not focus enough on the things that children need to achieve to be well-prepared for their lives as adults. There is limited evaluation of the progress children make towards the outcomes in their plans. As a result, the plans are often inaccurate and out of date. Despite several examples of strong practice there is no effective graduated approach to identifying, assessing and meeting the needs of children with SEND. The partnership's approach to identifying, assessing and meeting children's needs has become increasingly short-term and reactive.

Our goal for 2030: Person-centred values and dialogic principles will be embedded in all systems and processes in the local area. Children, young people and their families will be well supported to articulate and realise their ambitions. Their views and experiences will be at the centre of the support they receive into adulthood and beyond. Sheffield's children and young people will be celebrated and championed as valued, visible and included as adults in our city.

The graduated approach will be re-engineered and there will be highly effective multi-agency practice at setting, locality and city-wide levels in Sheffield. Open and transparent processes for decision making and resource allocation will be embedded at all levels in the local area SEND system. Sheffield will operate under a balanced model of support where children and young people will access the right support, at the right time from the right place for them.

The local area partnership's approach to EHC needs assessment, planning and review, including the function of SENDSARS, will be re-designed as a connected part of the city's graduated approach. Open and transparent processes for decision making and resource allocation will be embedded at all levels in the local area SEND system.

In the first 12-18 months we propose to:

- Embed person centred values and dialogic principles in all systems and processes by agreeing a Sheffield guarantee and developing the professional learning tools, to support its implementation and understand its impact on the experience of children and families.
- Reengineer the graduated approach to identifying, assessing and meeting children's needs and develop multi-agency setting, locality and citywide systems and processes. Agree the features of high-quality multi-agency practice. Develop a programme of professional learning focusing on these features. Gather data and information about these features using SenseMaker and other tools.
- Urgently redesign EHC needs assessment, planning and review so that children and families are meaningfully included in dialogue and decision making, plans are up to date and high quality, and children have positive experiences and achieve good outcomes.
- Develop a shared, whole-system view of the resourcing of universal, targeted and specialist services. Use the insights to inform decision-making about commissioning and providing services for children and families in Sheffield

The initial actions we propose are to:

- Develop and implement a rapid improvement plan focusing on all aspects of statutory assessment, planning and review. Establish, test and evaluate new proformas for all current and future EHCPs with a revised format based on dialogic principles and children and family voice (September 2025).
- Scope the restructure of delivery models into a citywide and locality balanced system of multi-agency support. Align this with the graduated approach and ordinarily available provision across education, health and care services to support children and young people. This should include an evaluation and mapping of resources that are currently available to settings (December 2025).
- Secure a systemwide commitment to person centred values and dialogic principles in Sheffield (December 2025). Work with the Children's Workforce Collaborative to develop training and tools to support implementation (April 2026). Include measures for this workstream in the development of the outcomes framework (April 2026).
- Develop co-production opportunities for young people and their families to jointly develop and plan the support they need to move into meaningful opportunities which meet their ambitions through into adulthood (December 2025).
- Develop systems to ensure enhanced and proactive planning and support is in place across education, health and care services as young people progress through their education and then prepare to transition into adult services (January 2026).
- Test a refreshed post assessment feedback approach which routinely includes a dialogue between professionals and families/settings. Individualised advice and strategies could be explained in this forum to more robustly support the child or young person, rather than reliance on assessment documentation and reports (January 2026).

- Test and evaluate alignment of information and decision-making across diagnostic assessment pathways to facilitate children and young peoples' needs being considered in a more holistic and timely manner (January 2026).
- Undertake a multi-agency caseload validation approach across all services to cross reference children and young people awaiting multi-agency diagnosis and support (January 2026). Check that this is ensuring that children and young people's needs are known and that the right support is available at the right time from the right pathway (July 2026).
- Produce an insight report focusing on the demand for and resourcing of universal, targeted and specialist services for children and families. Use the findings and recommendations in the report to create a long-term plan for resourcing the city's SEND arrangements (May 2026).
- Evaluate progress by reviewing evidence about the quality of EHCPs alongside children's views, experiences and outcomes (June 2026).
- Address commissioning gaps in post-16 health services within a wider review of health SEND sufficiency (June 2026).
- Consider and scope the creation of a multi-agency SEND assessment team to meet the demands for statutory assessment (June 2026).
- Produce Sheffield SEND Guides for professionals, settings, children and families which describe and exemplify our multi-agency graduated approach. Modify assessment outputs so they clearly detail what is required within a graduated approach over and above ordinarily available provision to make the difference for that individual (July 2026).
- Create and communicate the support options available from education, health and care so professionals, children, young people and their families know about the expertise available in Sheffield and how it interfaces with other provision (July 2026).
- Task the Children's Workforce Collaborative with leading the development of multi-agency practice in all parts of the local area SEND system. Define and exemplify the features of high-quality multi-agency practice (September 2026).



Photo provided by Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust

Proposed Priority Three

Developing the **structures that enable improved leadership and practice.**

The Issue: There is no embedded culture of working in a person-centred way with children and families. Similarly, the way practitioners work together is not underpinned by strong dialogic principles. Practice in some parts of the education, health and care system is effective but there is too much variability in the experiences of children and families. Positive experiences are typically the result of the work of a single professional, or a small group of professionals, and rarely reflect a family's experience of the local area system as a whole. There are few examples of effective multi-agency working across the education, health and care system. The features of effective practice and the conditions needed for this to flourish have not been identified or agreed.

Our goal for 2030: A locality-based model will be in place for providing universal, targeted and specialist services for children and families in a balanced and effective multi-agency way. A connected and holistic description of healthy child development will define the approach to educating and caring for children and young people in the city. New civic and corporate structures will be in place for whole-system transformation and to realise a generational change in Sheffield children and young people's experiences and outcomes.

In the first 12-18 months we propose to:

- Develop and test a scalable locality-based model for providing universal, targeted and specialist services for children and families.
- Secure strong civic and corporate commitments to the primacy of healthy child development and an ambitious place-based approach to our long-term strategy 'Shaped by what's around us: making Sheffield the place where all children belong and thrive'.

The initial actions we propose are to:

- Complete the connected and holistic description of healthy child development through the secondary phase to the age of 18 years (November 2025). Use the healthy child development work to create a range of products for civic and corporate leaders focusing on what children need to be healthy and well during childhood. Secure strong civic and corporate commitments to improving the lives of Sheffield children as a core transformational goal for the city (July 2026).
- Develop proposals for the development of integrated locality hub models for providing universal, targeted and specialist services for children and families. This would include options relating to different locality models. (December 2025). Implement a pilot of the model using a test and learn approach (September 2026) and develop a phased plan for scaling up this locality-based approach, based upon evaluation (December 2026).

Proposed Priority Four

Redesigning our approach to understanding quality, performance and developing a system of intervention and improvement support.

The Issue: Relationships between senior leaders are developing and trust is increasing but the conditions required for highly effective multi-agency working are not currently in place. Local area leaders are too reliant on provider-level measures that give limited insight into children's experiences and outcomes. The views and experiences of children feature minimally in the local area's analysis. The local partnership has a partial picture of children's experiences, progress and outcomes. The partnership's strategic analysis provides minimal assurance.

Our goal for 2030: An outcomes framework will be in place for Sheffield children and families using a results-based accountability model. The measures in this framework will be meaningful to children, young people and families, and effective in enabling the local partnership to understand its progress. A sensor-network approach will be used to gather data and information about the experiences of Sheffield children and young people, and the outcomes they achieve. This will complement other approaches to understanding and enquiring about children and young peoples' experiences and the outcomes they achieve. A whole-system improvement cycle will be developed and implemented as part of a robust system of escalation and intervention. Activity will focus on the parts of the education, health and care system that need to improve.

In the first 12-18 months we propose to:

- Develop our SEND system features to include exemplification and plan a programme of SEND Enquiry for the 2025/26 academic year which links to the reshaped governance arrangements and the local area SEND self-evaluation.
- Work collaboratively (including with external expertise) to develop an outcomes framework for Sheffield children and families using a results-based accountability model.
- Further develop the use of SenseMaker and other tools to gather high quality data and information about the measures specified in the outcomes framework.
- Develop a system of escalation and intervention as a connected part of a whole system improvement and accountability cycle.

The initial actions we propose are to:

- Evaluate the first phase of the SenseMaker pilot to understand its effectiveness and the inclusiveness of our approach (August 2025). Use SenseMaker and other tools to gather high quality evidence about the views and experiences of children, young people, families and professionals (December 2025).
- Agree a programme of SEND Enquiry for the 2025/26 academic year which links to the reshaped governance arrangements with local area senior leaders (October 2025). Ensure that the views of families and professionals in Sheffield are consistently heard and valued, so that concerns about quality are escalated (November 2025).
- Agree the scope and focus of the outcomes framework (October 2025). Develop the content of the outcomes framework (December 2025) and test the capacity for information gathering and reporting (April 2026). Create the information gathering and reporting tools which will support this framework (July 2026).
- Building on the development of SenseMaker, task an expert group with developing a wider set of data and information tools, linked to the measures specified in the Outcomes Framework (April 2026). Pilot and evaluate these tools (July 2026).
- Work with a group of local area leaders across the partnership to design a system of escalation and intervention in response to concerns about quality and performance. Embed this system in structures and processes as part of the local areas approach to support and challenge (July 2026).



Proposed Priority Five

Transforming **governance arrangements for Sheffield's SEND system to provide effective and active support and challenge.**

The Issue: Governance and oversight of the quality and performance of services, children's progress and outcomes, and value for money is undermined by outdated structures and systems and a lack of shared understanding. There is no system of escalation when there are concerns about quality or performance.

Our goal for 2030: An aligned governance structure with clearly specified responsibilities and accountabilities will be in place. A participative approach to joint accountability will be evident at every level in the local area SEND system. The governance of the SEND system will be facilitated by an effective secretariat which provides high-quality business support. The long-term leadership of SEND arrangements in the city will be secure and embed the partnerships ambitions for children and families.

In the first 12-18 months we propose to:

- Ensure that the governance structure for each workstream in this strategy is clearly in place. Develop an effective secretariat to support each governance group by providing access to business support, data analysis and expert knowledge.
- Create a SEND Governance guide which describes our new approach and can be used to assess the quality and impact of governance, alongside external perspectives.
- Building on the work of the SEND system-wide leadership group, create new leadership and governance structures for the development and implementation of the SEND and Inclusion Strategy and workstreams.

The initial actions we propose are to:

- Review existing forms of governance (August 2025). Develop recommendations for the reshaping of governance arrangements including the statutory requirements of key partners and the response to the Ofsted inspection (September 2025).
- Work with the SEND systemwide leadership group to develop effective joined-up structures for leading the development and implementation of detailed delivery plans for all workstreams in the SEND and Inclusion Strategy (October 2025).
- Scope and consider a SEND Secretariat function (September 2025) which would provide access to effective business support, data analysis and expert knowledge in 2025/2026.
- Create a SEND Governance Guide in two stages. The initial stage (December 2025) will set out intent and this will then be revisited, modified as required and supplemented by case study exemplification (July 2026).
- Develop an options paper for the SEND system-wide leadership group to consider the structural options for the development of the long-term leadership of SEND arrangements in the city (September 2026).

Workstreams

Overview

The five priorities and themes proposed in the previous section would be delivered through a series of identified workstreams.

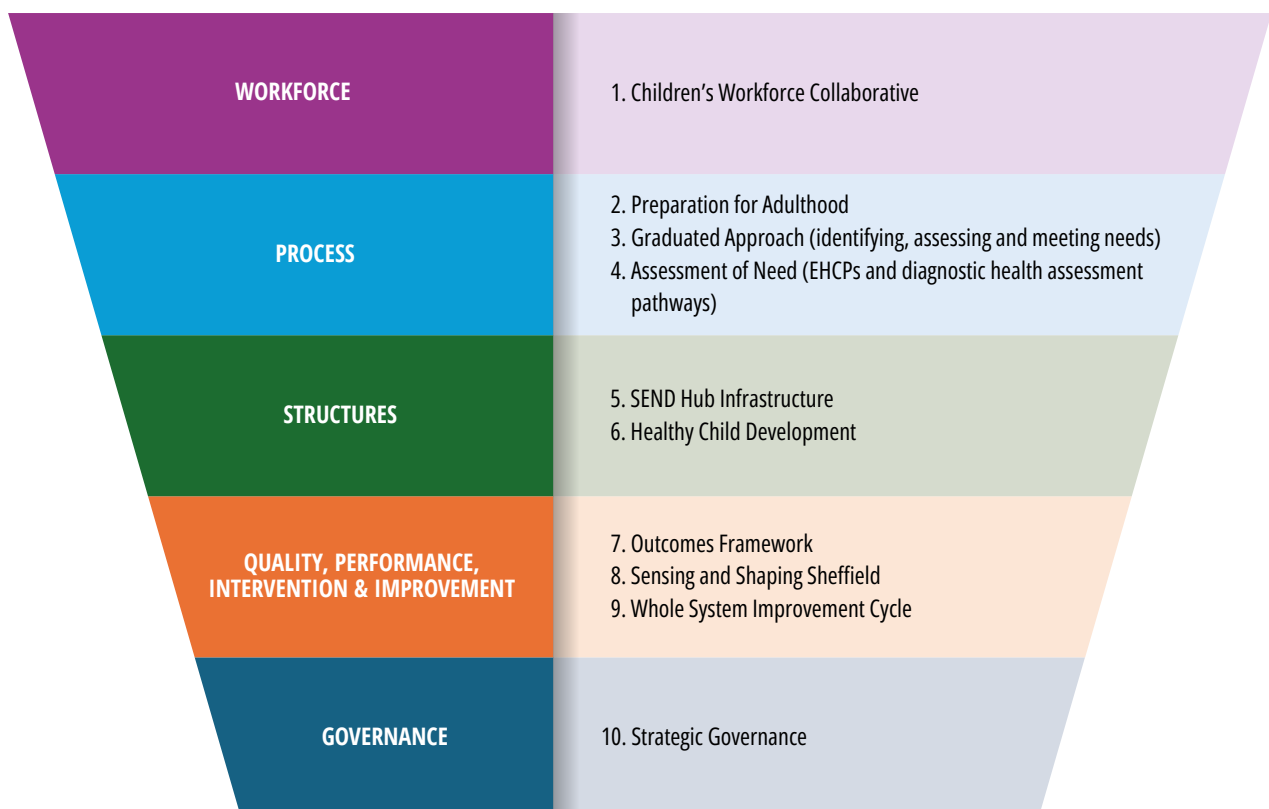
We have described a set of proposed workstreams over the pages that follow. The intention of these descriptions is to provide a starting point for delivery planning for the new strategy. Clearly, it will be crucial for those leading each workstream to own and develop each plan, but we hope that this exemplification will be supportive of that process and the debate that is necessary to build the momentum for this change.

In each case we have described the workstream in relation to the 2030 goals in the priorities and set out how each links to the priorities and, where appropriate, other workstreams. Each workstream also has a suggested initial delivery timeline and lead organisation. The governance of each workstream will be determined and included in the final strategy.

We may also suggest how each priority could contribute the development of a balanced model in Sheffield and to system transformation. We have completed this in the first workstream to exemplify this possibility for discussion.

The systemwide leadership group will also need to agree the lead organisation for each workstream. The governance of each workstream will be developed through the delivery of the initial actions in workstream 10 for inclusion in the final strategy.

The proposed workstreams are listed below:



Proposed Workstream 1

Children's Workforce Collaborative

Description (2030 Goal):

Education, health and care services will be strategically commissioned and provided using a balanced model. The children's workforce will have deep expert knowledge and skills as a result of our ambitious programme of professional learning. They will have the products and resources they need to influence in all the places where children live, grow, play and learn. Sheffield children will have the leaders they need now and in the future.

Contribution to delivering the priorities:

This workstream connects to the proposed workforce priority. The Children's Workforce Collaborative will become a significant part of the SEND infrastructure and therefore also links to the priority about structures. This workstream will connect to others which rely upon the Collaborative as a delivery mechanism, for example healthy child development (workstream 6). It is also likely to connect to other priorities and workstreams because the development of a balanced model is central to the proposed strategic approach. This will be exemplified more as the workstreams are further developed.

Delivery (Initial Actions):

- Launch the Children's Workforce Collaborative (August 2025).
- Map and review planned training in each sector of the children's workforce (August 2025) and develop a coherent and connected workforce development plan for all aspects of the children's workforce in 2026/27 (June 2026).
- Identify our first cohort of local area leaders (September 2025) and initiate high-quality leadership development programmes (November 2025).
- Develop multi-agency workforce development pilots (September 2025).
- Develop a coherent and connected workforce development plan for the roll out of healthy child development work (October 2025).
- Develop a description of the children's future workforce as a key part of the local area strategy for commissioning and providing services using a balanced model (December 2025).
- Develop a phased plan for creating the children's workforce that has been described (April 2026).

Proposed Workstream 2

Preparation for Adulthood

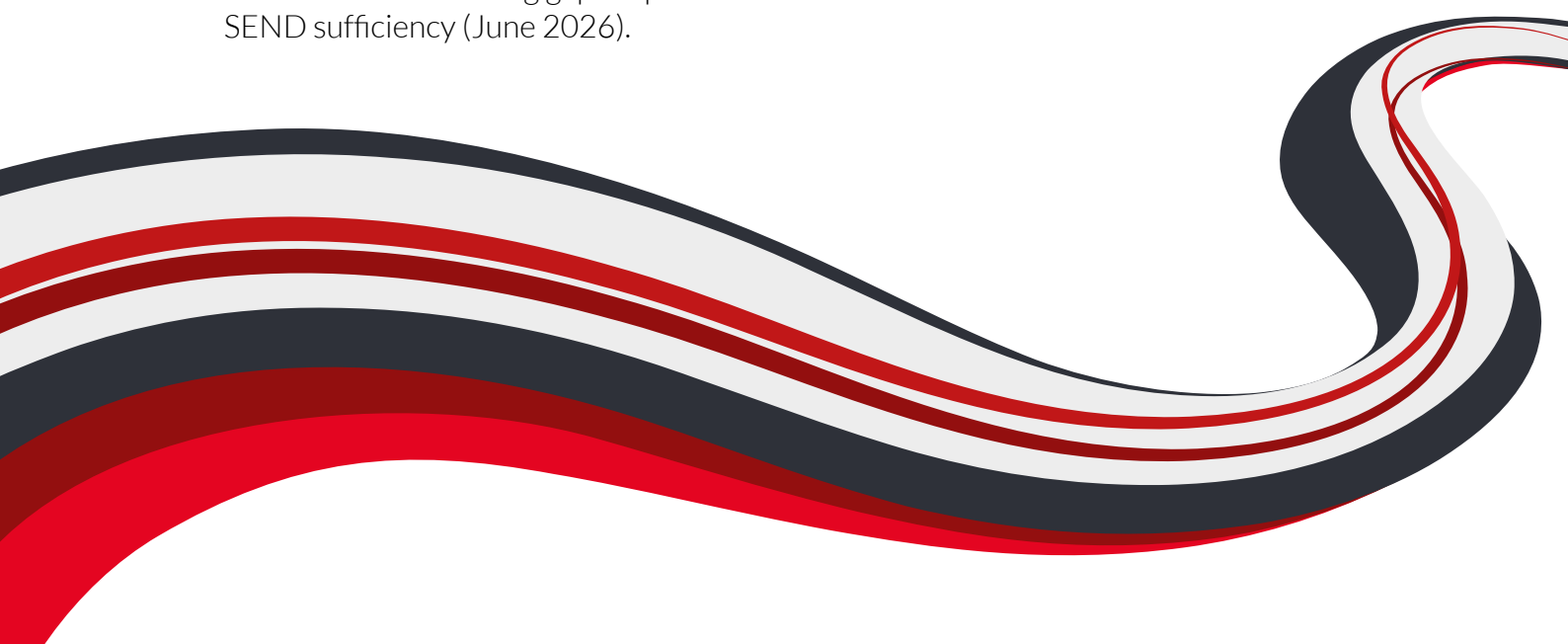
Description (2030 Goal):

Person-centred values and dialogic principles will be embedded in all systems and processes in the local area. Children, young people and their families will be well supported to articulate and realise their ambitions. Their views and experiences will be at the centre of the support they receive into adulthood and beyond. Sheffield's children and young people will be celebrated and championed as valued, visible and included as adults in our city.

Contribution to delivering the priorities:

This workstream connects to the proposed process priority, alongside others which seek to develop processes (workstreams 3 and 4). The initial actions in this workstream also connect to the Children's Workforce Collaborative (workstream 1) and the outcomes framework (workstream 7).

Delivery (Initial Actions):

- Secure a systemwide commitment to person centred values and dialogic principles in Sheffield (December 2025).
 - Develop co-production opportunities for young people and their families to jointly develop and plan the support they need to move into meaningful opportunities which meet their ambitions through into adulthood (December 2025).
 - Develop systems to ensure enhanced and proactive planning and support is in place across education, health and care services as young people progress through their education and then prepare to transition into adult services (January 2026).
 - Work with the Children's Workforce Collaborative to develop training and tools to support implementation (April 2026).
 - Include measures for this workstream in the development of the outcomes framework (April 2026).
 - Address commissioning gaps in post-16 health services within a wider review of health SEND sufficiency (June 2026).
- 

Proposed Workstream 3

Graduated Approach (identifying, assessing and meeting needs)

Description (2030 Goal):

The graduated approach will be re-engineered and there will be highly effective multi-agency practice at setting, locality and city-wide levels in Sheffield. Open and transparent processes for decision making and resource allocation will be embedded at all levels in the local area SEND system. Sheffield will operate under a balanced model of support where children and young people will access the right support, at the right time from the right place for them.

Contribution to delivering the priorities:

This workstream connects to the proposed process priority, alongside others which seek to develop processes (workstreams 2 and 4). The reengineered graduated approach connects particularly closely to assessment of need (EHCPs and diagnostic health assessment pathways - workstream 4). Arrangements for SEND resourcing in 2025/26 are in place so this workstream seeks to build the understanding required to create a long-term plan from September 2026 onwards.

Delivery (Initial Actions):

- Scope the restructure of delivery models into a citywide and locality balanced system of multi-agency support. Align this with the graduated approach and ordinarily available provision across education, health and care services to support children and young people. This should include an evaluation and mapping of resources that are currently available to settings (December 2025).
- Produce an insight report focusing on the demand for and resourcing of universal, targeted and specialist services for children and families. Use the findings and recommendations in the report to create a long-term plan for resourcing the city's SEND arrangements (May 2026)
- Produce Sheffield SEND Guides for professionals, settings, children and families which describe and exemplify our multi-agency graduated approach. Modify assessment outputs so they clearly detail what is required within a graduated approach over and above ordinarily available provision to make the difference for that individual (July 2026).
- Create and communicate the support options available from education, health and care so professionals, children, young people and their families know about the expertise available in Sheffield and how it interfaces with other provision (July 2026).
- Task the Children's Workforce Collaborative with leading the development of multi-agency practice in all parts of the local area SEND system. Define and exemplify the features of high-quality multi-agency practice (September 2026).

Proposed Workstream 4

Assessment of Need (EHCPs and diagnostic health assessment pathways)

Description (2030 Goal):

The local area partnership's approach to EHCP assessment, planning and review, including the function of SENDSARS and diagnostic pathways (including neurodiversity and ADHD) will be re-designed as a connected part of the city's graduated approach. Open and transparent processes for decision making and resource allocation will be embedded at all levels in the local area SEND system.

Contribution to delivering the priorities:

This workstream connects to the proposed process priority, alongside others which seek to develop processes (workstreams 2 and 3). The redesign of assessment of need, including EHCPs and diagnostic health assessment pathways, connects particularly closely to the reengineered graduated approach (workstream 3). The gathering of evidence about the quality of EHCPs alongside children's views, experiences and outcomes will be developed within the work on 'sensing and shaping Sheffield' (workstream 8) and be highly relevant to the outcomes framework (workstream 7).

Delivery (Initial Actions):

- Develop and implement a rapid improvement plan focusing on all aspects of statutory assessment, planning and review. Establish, test and evaluate new proformas for all current and future EHCPs with a revised format based on dialogic principles and children and family voice (September 2025).
- Test and evaluate alignment of information and decision-making across diagnostic assessment pathways to facilitate children and young peoples' needs being considered in a more holistic and timely manner (January 2026).
- Test a refreshed post assessment feedback approach which routinely includes a dialogue between professionals and families/settings. Individualised advice and strategies could be explained in this forum to more robustly support the child or young person, rather than reliance on assessment documentation and reports (January 2026).
- Undertake a multi-agency caseload validation approach across all services to cross reference children and young people awaiting multi-agency diagnosis and support (January 2026). Check that this is ensuring that children and young people's needs are known and that the right support is available at the right time from the right pathway (July 2026).
- Evaluate progress by reviewing evidence about the quality of EHCPs alongside children's views, experiences and outcomes (June 2026).
- Consider and scope the creation of a multi-agency SEND assessment team to meet the demands for statutory assessment (June 2026).

Proposed Workstream 5

SEND Hub Infrastructure

Description (2030 Goal):

A locality-based model will be in place for providing universal, targeted and specialist services for children and families in a balanced and effective multi-agency way.

Contribution to delivering the priorities:

This workstream connects to the proposed structures priority, alongside others which seek to develop the structures that enable improved leadership and practice (for example workstream 6). Any change to the SEND infrastructure in Sheffield, including the development of SEND Hubs, will have implications for most workstreams due to the scale of this change. The potential for SEND Hubs to lead to more opportunities for professionals to work more closely with each other and families could have an amplifying impact on other workstreams.

Delivery (Initial Actions):

- Develop proposals for the development of integrated locality hub models for providing universal, targeted and specialist services for children and families. This would include options relating to different locality models (December 2025).
- Implement a pilot of the model using a test and learn approach (September 2026) and develop a phased plan for scaling up this locality-based approach, based upon evaluation (December 2026).



Proposed Workstream 6

Healthy Child Development

Description (2030 Goal):

A connected and holistic description of healthy child development will define the approach to educating and caring for children and young people in the city. New civic and corporate structures will be in place for whole-system transformation and to realise a generational change in Sheffield children and young people's experiences and outcomes.

Contribution to delivering the priorities:

This workstream connects to the proposed structures priority, alongside others which seek to develop the structures that enable improved leadership and practice (for example workstream 5). The Children's Workforce Collaborative (workstream 1) will be the mechanism to roll out the healthy child development work as its first priority. The underlying principles and products from this workstream will have a profound impact on other priorities, in particular the process priority and the priority relating to quality, performance, intervention and improvement.

Delivery (Initial Actions):

- Complete the connected and holistic description of healthy child development through the secondary phase to the age of 18 years (November 2025).
- Use the healthy child development work to create a range of products for civic and corporate leaders focusing on what children need to be healthy and well during childhood (January 2026). Secure strong civic and corporate commitments to improving the lives of Sheffield children as a core transformational goal for the city (July 2026).

Proposed Workstream 7

Outcomes Framework

Description (2030 Goal):

An outcomes framework will be in place for Sheffield children and families using a results-based accountability model. The measures in this framework will be meaningful to children, young people and families, and effective in enabling the local partnership to understand its progress.

Contribution to delivering the priorities:

This workstream connects to the proposed quality, performance, intervention and improvement priority, alongside others which support redesigning our approach to support and challenge (workstreams 8 and 9). The outcomes framework will also inform the development of strategic governance (workstream 10) by providing the basis upon which we are able to understand progress and performance.

Delivery (Initial Actions):

- Agree the scope and focus of the outcomes framework (October 2025).
- Develop the content of the outcomes framework (December 2025) and test the capacity for information gathering and reporting (April 2026).
- Create the information gathering and reporting tools which will support this framework (July 2026).



Proposed Workstream 8

Sensing and Shaping Sheffield

Description (2030 Goal):

A sensor-network approach will be used to gather data and information about the experiences of Sheffield children and young people, and the outcomes they achieve. This will complement other approaches to understanding and enquiring about children and young peoples' experiences and the outcomes they achieve.

Contribution to delivering the priorities:

This workstream connects to the proposed quality, performance, intervention and improvement priority, alongside others which support redesigning our approach to support and challenge (workstreams 7 and 9). In particular, the relationship with the outcomes framework (workstream 7) will be crucial.

Delivery (Initial Actions):

- Evaluate the first phase of the SenseMaker pilot to understand its effectiveness and the inclusiveness of our approach (August 2025).
- Use SenseMaker and other tools to gather high quality evidence about the views and experiences of children, young people, families and professionals (December 2025).
- Building on the development of SenseMaker, task an expert group with developing a wider set of data and information tools, linked to the measures specified in the Outcomes Framework (April 2026). Pilot and evaluate these tools (July 2026).



Proposed Workstream 9

Whole System Improvement Cycle

Description (2030 Goal):

A whole-system improvement cycle will be developed and implemented as part of a robust system of escalation and intervention. Activity will focus on the parts of the education, health and care system that need to improve.

Contribution to delivering the priorities:

This workstream connects to the proposed quality, performance, intervention and improvement priority, alongside others which support redesigning our approach to support and challenge (workstreams 7 and 8). The improvement cycle will also inform the development of strategic governance (workstream 10) by contributing to the activity which will inform our understanding of progress and performance.

Delivery (Initial Actions):

- Agree a programme of SEND Enquiry for the 2025/26 academic year which links to the reshaped governance arrangements with local area senior leaders (October 2025).
- Ensure that the views of families and professionals in Sheffield are consistently heard and valued, so that concerns about quality are escalated (November 2025).
- Work with a group of local area leaders across the partnership to design a system of escalation and intervention in response to concerns about quality and performance. Embed this system in structures and processes as part of the local areas approach to support and challenge (July 2026).

Proposed Workstream 10

Strategic Governance

Description (2030 Goal):

An aligned governance structure with clearly specified responsibilities and accountabilities will be in place. A participative approach to joint accountability will be evident at every level in the local area SEND system. The governance of the SEND system will be facilitated by an effective secretariat which provides high-quality business support. The long-term leadership of SEND arrangements in the city will be secure and embed the partnerships ambitions for children and families.

Contribution to delivering the priorities:

This workstream connects to the proposed governance priority. This workstream also impacts on all the other priorities by determining the approach to the governance of every workstream in the strategy. There will be strong connection between governance and the SEND enquiry activity (workstream 9 – whole system improvement cycle) which informs judgements. The location of the SEND system-wide leadership group in this priority will connect it to all parts of the strategy.

Delivery (Initial Actions):

- Review existing forms of governance (August 2025).
- Develop recommendations for the reshaping of governance arrangements including the statutory requirements of key partners and the response to the Ofsted inspection (September 2025).
- Work with the SEND systemwide leadership group to develop effective joined-up structures for leading the development and implementation of detailed delivery plans for all workstreams in the SEND and Inclusion Strategy (October 2025).
- Scope and consider a SEND Secretariat function (September 2025) which would provide access to effective business support, data analysis and expert knowledge in 2025/2026.
- Create a SEND Governance Guide in two stages. The initial stage (December 2025) will set out intent and this will then be revisited, modified as required and supplemented by case study exemplification (July 2026).
- Develop an options paper for the SEND system-wide leadership group to consider the structural options for the development of the long-term leadership of SEND arrangements in the city (September 2026).



Next Steps

Building Blocks

Learn Sheffield have developed, alongside partners, a number of building block projects at the same time that the Manifesto has been developed. The projects have informed the Manifesto but also started to address some urgent challenges.

These building block projects will continue whilst feedback is collected on the overall proposal, in addition to exploring the outcomes framework below. The ultimate direction of this work will be determined by the feedback and the development of the final strategy, but the activity below can continue to move forwards whilst this is happening and then be adapted to the decisions that are made.

Work will be continuing on the following projects in the summer and early autumn:

- Healthy Child Development
- Improving Resourced Provision
- SenseMaker pilot
- Neurodiversity locality pilot

Work will also continue on the response to the Ofsted Local Area SENDAP Inspection, including the development of a specific action plan to address the areas for priority action. This work is also likely to accelerate the review of strategic governance in workstream 10 of this proposal.

The Local Area SEND Partnership will also need to consider alternative education provision alongside the feedback on the Manifesto Proposal. Learn Sheffield published a report called [**Alternative Provision in Sheffield 2025**](#) in March and conversations are ongoing with colleagues from SCC, the education sector and Learn Sheffield. Alternative Provision often operates as a 'shadow' SEND system and so it may be sensible to include these issues within the final strategy.

Outcomes Framework

We are unconvinced by the approaches to measuring outcomes that are typically used. Our observation is that, too often, only those things that can easily be measured are valued, and cause and effect is often attributed where it doesn't exist.

We would like to understand more about results-based or outcomes-based accountability (RBA/OBA) approaches and will commission expertise to help us to do this as a Local Area Partnership.

The development of this transformational approach will be included within the information about priorities and workstreams. Although this work is expected to take place through until the early autumn, we will include some information about the likely approach in the document when published at the start of July.

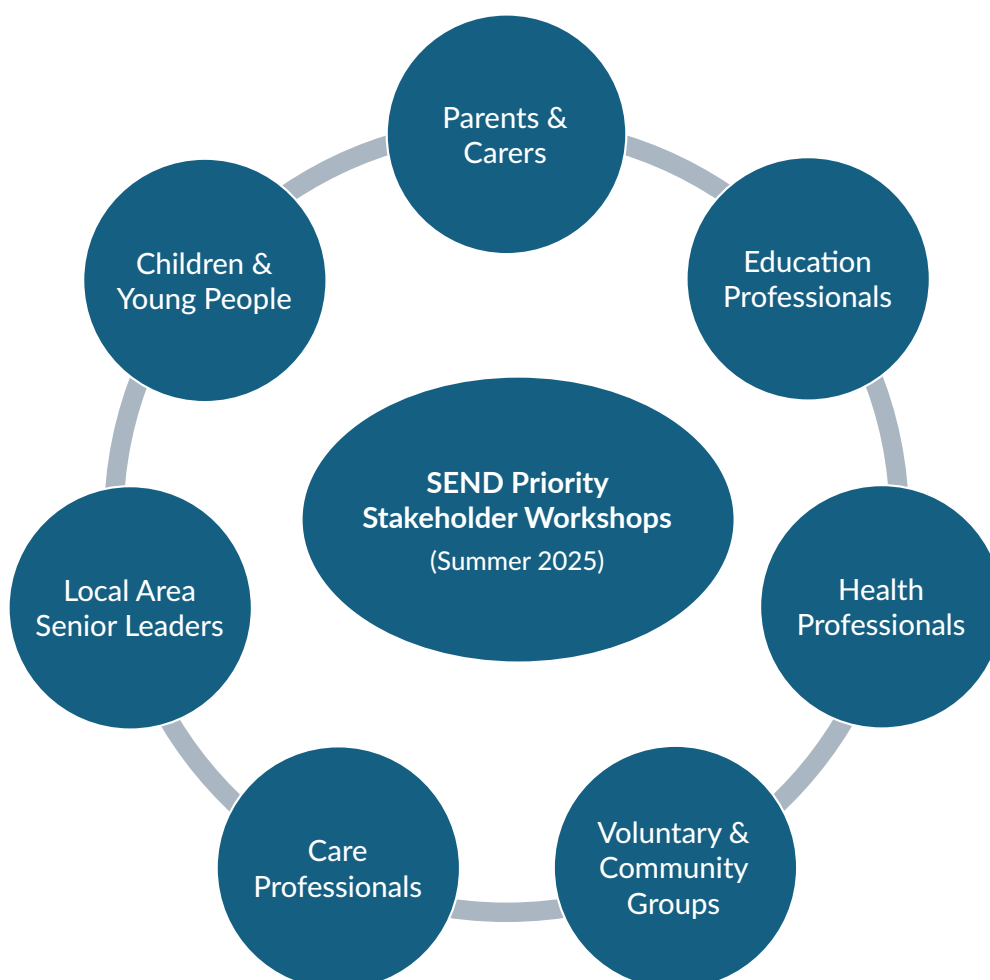
Collecting Feedback

This SEND Manifesto proposal has been developed with leaders from the Local Area SEND Partnership and provides a starting point for the development of a long-term strategy for Sheffield.

The next step is to collect further feedback, from across Sheffield, to inform the final content of the new strategy.

We will collect feedback by:

- **Sharing links to collect feedback from individuals or groups**
For example, the links on the next page.
- **Asking partners across the system to respond**
For example, seeking feedback and conversations with organisations who support children, young people, families and professionals.
- **Holding stakeholder workshops to discuss specific proposals**
For example, workshops to discuss the five proposed priorities so that people can join discussions about the parts of the strategy that they are most interested in.



This feedback will support the Local Area SEND Partnership to build on the SEND Manifesto Proposal and publish a long-term strategy for SEND and Inclusion in Sheffield.

This work needs to happen quickly. We hope to publish a strategy by the end of September 2025, providing this has given enough opportunity for feedback.

If you would like to share your **feedback or ask a question**, you can do this using the QR code or link below:



Share your Feedback or ask a Question

If you would like to **join a mailing list** to receive information and updates about the SEND Manifesto feedback process, you can do this using the QR code or link below:



Join the Mailing List

We will develop a **short feedback questionnaire about the SEND Manifesto Proposal**.

This will be available by Friday 18 July 2025. It will be circulated to everyone on the mailing list above and also available via the Learn Sheffield website on this pages:

<https://www.learnsheffield.co.uk/Projects/Sheffield-SEND-Manifesto/>



Sheffield
Children's
Hospital

Photo provided by Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust

This document has been produced by Learn Sheffield in response to a commission from the Local Area SEND Partnership, to support the development of a new SEND and Inclusion Strategy for the city. The 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.

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If you have any questions or would like to discuss this document please contact enquiries@learnsheffield.co.uk

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