

Sheffield SEND Manifesto: A Proposal

An Overview

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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Why the SEND Manifesto?

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 [more detailed 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.

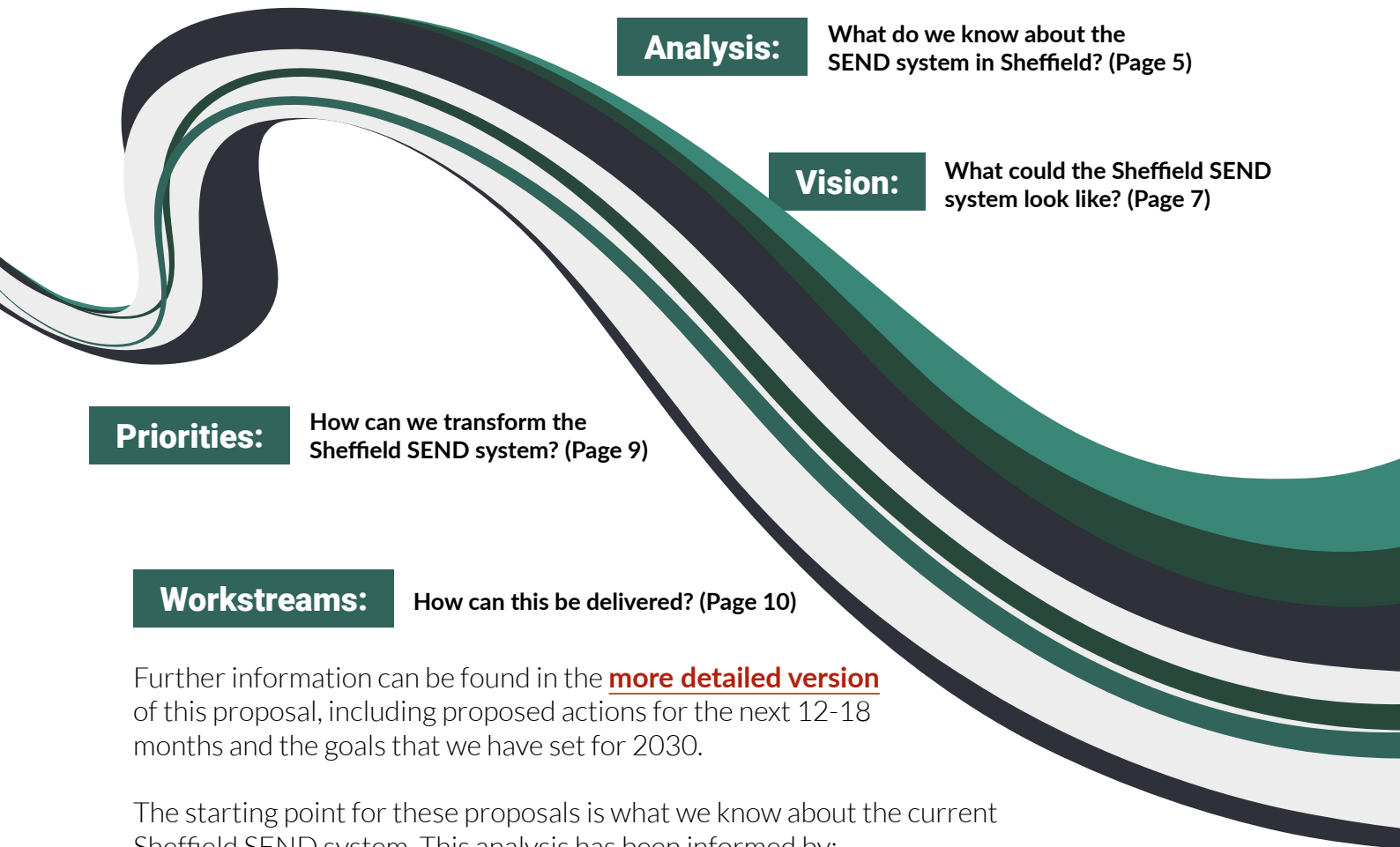


How has the SEND Manifesto been developed?

Leaders from the Sheffield Local Area SEND Partnership have been meeting since September 2024, led by Learn Sheffield, to discuss and develop the SEND Manifesto.

The Manifesto proposals begin with an analysis of the Sheffield SEND system (pages 5 and 6 in this document) and a vision for what the system could look like (pages 7 and 8).

It goes on to propose priorities (what's the most important) and workstreams (how it can be done) which are designed to transform the Sheffield SEND system (pages 9-11).



Further information can be found in the [more detailed version](#) of this proposal, including proposed actions for the next 12-18 months and the goals that we have set for 2030.

The starting point for these proposals is what we know about the current Sheffield SEND system. This analysis has been informed by:

- existing information from the local area partners– this includes feedback and surveys (for example from Sheffield Parent Carer Forum)
- the findings of previous reviews into SEND in Sheffield or specific services and processes
- the Ofsted Local Area SENDAP Inspection (which took place in March 2025)
- an extensive programme of SEND Enquiry led by Learn Sheffield in May and June 2025 (which included a deep dive into Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in 11 settings and 13 focus groups with professionals, parents and carers).

What do we know about the SEND system in Sheffield?

Our analysis 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, young people and their families are often not listened to or included in decisions made about their lives and how best to support them.

This means that children and young people with SEND in our city have often not been prepared well for their future.

When feedback describes good practice, it often highlights specific individuals rather than systems or processes.

Although there are examples of schools, organisations and services which provide excellent support, this is inconsistent and often not joined up.

The identification and assessment of need is not fit for purpose and the process for meeting children's needs (often called the graduated approach) is not effective.



Current approaches to funding and providing services for children and young people with SEND are not working.

Decisions are often made with limited insight into children's aspirations, experiences and outcomes. Information around how decisions have been made is often unclear.

The lived experiences of children, young people and their families are not taken into account well enough.



SEND in Sheffield must be transformed. This cannot happen without leaders across education, health and care working together.

Children and young people's experiences and outcomes can be improved if everybody is open to working differently to ensure greater consistency.

We know that the majority of children and young people do not receive the right help, in the right place, at the right time.

In the recent Ofsted SEND inspection, it was acknowledged that there has been an improvement in how senior leaders work together across Sheffield. The Local Area Partnership is committed to working differently and this document shares proposals for what that different long-term approach could include.

The proposals in this document demonstrate a new willingness to look at SEND differently. All that we know about the Sheffield SEND system tells us that things must change.

What could the Sheffield SEND system look like?

The Manifesto outlines a vision for improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND in Sheffield, with a focus on healthy child development as the essential starting point.

If we can strengthen multi-agency working and develop a whole-system approach then more children and young people can have positive experiences, achieve good outcomes and be well-prepared for adult life.

The Manifesto promotes a whole-system approach. This would encourage collaboration across services rather than different parts of the system working in isolation.

If this happens in a consistent and joined-up way then children, young people and families would start to have better experiences. The best practice would be more consistently available, and systems and processes will encourage and support this.

A graduated approach (which is a cycle of assess, plan, do, and review, intended to match children's needs with appropriate support) is key to the Manifesto. If this process was more about having good conversations between children, young people, families and professionals, rather than being a paper-based process, the impact on experiences and outcomes would be improved.



If the identification and assessment of need, including EHCPs when required, was fit for purpose then plans would provide a clear statement of what support would make the biggest difference now. This would give clarity for the child or young person and all the adults who support them.



The Manifesto stresses that children and their families must be active participants in decisions about their lives. Listening to their voice and experiences would also inform systemwide evaluation and planning. This would mean that planning can be better informed and more proactive. Meaningful co-production (between children, families, and practitioners) to develop services would further support this.

Healthy child development, and the importance of positive experiences from early childhood through to adolescence, is at the heart of the Manifesto. If we had a shared understanding of what this looks like across childhood and adolescence, it would act as a guide for improving practice, identifying needs early, and enhancing coordination across services.

Developing the way that the children's workforce is trained and led is another key part of the Manifesto. This would remove duplication in the system and enable those with the greatest expertise to make a biggest difference.

The Manifesto considers what the structure of our SEND system should be. If professionals with expertise were able to support at an earlier stage then fewer small problems would grow into bigger problems, and better early help would be available.

“***The Manifesto stresses that children and their families must be active participants in decisions about their lives.***”

The final part of the Manifesto looks at how to measure progress. It proposes to assess not only what was done, but how well it was done and whether children's lives are actually improving. If our understanding is based upon the experiences and outcomes of Sheffield's children and young people then we would make better decisions about the future development of the SEND system in our city.

How can we transform the Sheffield SEND system?

The transformation of the SEND system in Sheffield requires leaders and organisations across education, health and care to share accountability for the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND.

This is why it is so important that the Local Area SEND Partnership work together on a shared strategy for the city, rather than working separately as they often have in the past.

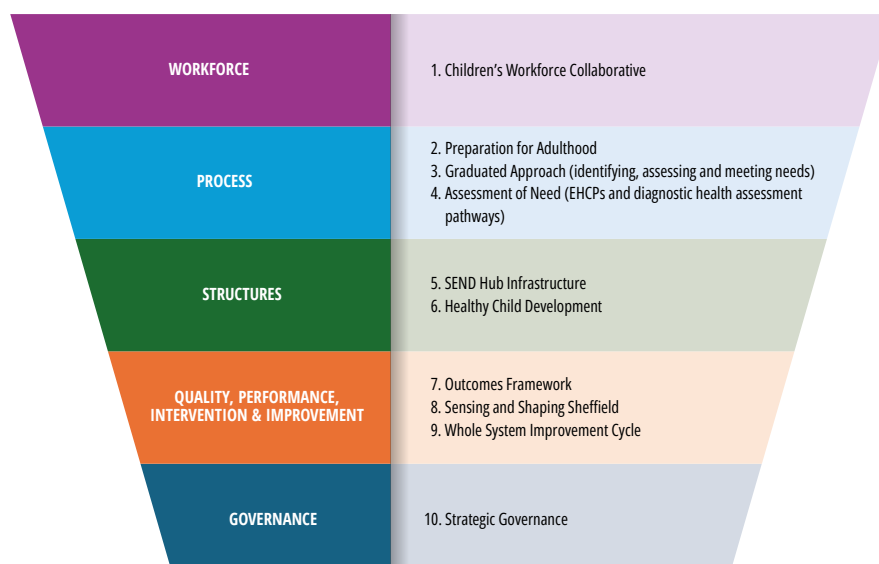
This partnership includes education, health and care organisations with responsibility for these outcomes alongside those representing families.

Based on our analysis, we have identified these five priorities:

- 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.

In our [more detailed document](#), we have looked in more depth at each of these areas. 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.

We propose that these priorities will be delivered through a series of identified workstreams. These are listed here:



How can this be delivered?

We anticipate that these workstreams would develop further through the discussions that would now take place with a much wider group of children, young people, families, organisations and professionals.

The [more detailed document](#) includes more description of the priorities and workstreams, with the intention of providing a starting point for planning the delivery of the new strategy.

WORKFORCE

Priority One: Creating the workforce that Sheffield children need to support healthy child development.

Workstream 1 proposes the creation of the **Sheffield Children's Workforce Collaborative**. This would provide a way to design and deliver training to the entire children's workforce in Sheffield. It would support the people who are leading the workstreams in the new strategy to make sure that they are not delivered in isolation.

PROCESS

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

Workstream 2 relates to **Preparation for Adulthood**. This is about making sure that young people are prepared much earlier to be able to access meaningful opportunities, post 16, which match their aspirations.

Workstream 3 is about **Graduated Approach (identifying, assessing and meeting needs)**. This would create more discussions between children, young people, families, education settings and professionals to better meet the needs of Sheffield children.

Workstream 4 is about the **Assessment of Need (EHCPs and diagnostic health assessment pathways)**. This would address the significant weakness in EHCPs and health waiting times in Sheffield. It would also ensure that planning and review captures the experiences of children, young people and their families, as well as all relevant professional information.

STRUCTURES

Priority Three: Developing the **structures** that enable improved leadership and practice.

Workstream 5 relates to the **SEND Hub Infrastructure**. This proposes exploring the potential of SEND Hubs, which could include a range of professionals working together to support a group of schools and the communities they serve.

Workstream 6 is about **Healthy Child Development**. It gives us a model for partners to come together and work on an approach that recognises the key features of healthy child development. It includes resources and training for the workforce which supports children and young people in Sheffield.

QUALITY, PERFORMANCE, INTERVENTION & IMPROVEMENT

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

Workstream 7 relates to the development of the **Outcomes Framework**. This would identify the measures which could enable everyone to understand the progress that is being made towards the goals of the new strategy.

Workstream 8 is about **Sensing and Shaping Sheffield**. This is about the development of additional tools to capture the experience of children, young people, their families and professionals. It would build on the current pilot using the SenseMaker tool.

Workstream 9 relates to the development of a **Whole System Improvement Cycle**. This would support evaluation and improvement by making sure that the partnership has clear information about performance and is able to support and challenge all parts of the SEND system.

GOVERNANCE

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

Workstream 10 proposes a new approach to **Strategic Governance**. This would streamline the monitoring and oversight of SEND so that it is more efficient and transparent, with stronger support and challenge.

What happens next?

This SEND Manifesto proposal 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 will collect feedback by:

- **Sharing links to collect feedback from individuals or groups**
For example, via 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 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.



How can everyone get involved?

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 will also be available via the Learn Sheffield website on this page:

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

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.

WWW.LEARN SHEFFIELD.CO.UK

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

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