

17 September 2024

Subject: SEND AP and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2029

Cabinet Member: Cllr Jane Davies - Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, SEND and Inclusion

Key Decision: Key

Executive Summary

Wiltshire's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2023-32) sets out the vision that 'People in Wiltshire are empowered to live full, healthy and enriched lives.' Our ambition to achieve this vision rests on ensuring that children and young people get a good start in life, build resilience and get the very best from their education. Offering support to all children, young people and their families, as well as focusing on those who need the help the most, reduces inequalities and improves outcomes.

Following the successful implementation of the 2020-2024 SEND and Inclusion Strategy, the Local Area has embarked on a rigorous period of co-production with parents and carers, children and young people to understand what was required from the next iteration.

As a result of this work, the new strategy "Meeting Needs Together - Ambitious for All" has been written. The Strategy has six key priorities which will be underpinned by a clear implementation plan and oversight via the Local Area SEND and AP Board:

Priority 1: Children and young people and their families will be at the centre of planning, their views and aspirations heard and acted upon, as true partners.

Priority 2: Getting the right support at the right time, identifying and acting on our children's needs at the earliest opportunity and through promotion of inclusive approaches and practice across the local area.

Priority 3: Provide opportunities for timely planning, reflective of the views of the child or young person and parent carers' current needs, that have clear outcomes.

Priority 4: Ensure good quality communication and information, for families to have a positive experience when navigating services, with information that is easy to access and use.

Priority 5: Professionals and officers across the SEND system will have the skills, knowledge and training to enable effective collaboration across services, joint assessments and sharing of good practice.

Priority 6: Children and young people will be prepared for adulthood and experience timely transitions, leading to increased skills, greater independence, and a greater range of opportunities in life.

This report describes the key achievements of the previous (Special Educational Needs and Disability) SEND Inclusion Strategy 2020 – 2024, before setting out the background and the consultation that was taken forward to create the SEND Inclusion Strategy for 2024 – 2029.

Proposals

That Cabinet note:

- 1) The key achievements of the 2020-2024 SEND and Inclusion Strategy

That Cabinet approve:

- 2) The SEND, Inclusion and Alternative Provision Strategy 2024-2029

Reason for Proposals

To support the work of the Wiltshire's Local Area Partnership in the implementation of the strategy

Lucy Townsend
Chief Executive

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

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Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to note the progress and achievements of the 2020-2024 strategy and to note and approve the SEND, Inclusion and Alternative Provision Strategy 2024-2029.

Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

2. The proposal is relevant to the following priorities and objectives laid down in the Council's Business Plan:

The people of Wiltshire are empowered to live full, healthy, and enriched lives:

- We get the best start in life;
- We are safe;
- We live well together;

3. To support the working themes in the Council's Business Plan 2022-2024, commissioning priorities are to:
 - a. **Priority 1** - ensure services are in the right place at the right time.
 - b. **Priority 2** - ensure right people receive services in the right place i.e. increasing services delivered in the community and in people's homes.
 - c. **Priority 3** - ensure right service, right price

Background

4. Wiltshire's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2023-32) sets out the vision that 'People in Wiltshire are empowered to live full, healthy and enriched lives.'
5. Our ambition to achieve this vision rests on ensuring that children and young people get a good start in life, build resilience and get the very best from their education. Offering support to all children, young people and their families, as well as focusing on those who need the help the most, reduces inequalities and improves outcomes
6. We are committed to improving our services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) and their families. We believe that SEND is everybody's business and are focused on providing excellent educational opportunities including alternative provision (AP) for those who need it. We are determined to do everything we can to provide better experiences and outcomes for all our children and young people with SEND in educational settings as well as for those that attend Alternative Provision.

7. To do this a clear strategy underpinned by an implementation plan with impact measures and robust scrutiny is required.
8. The proposal for a 2024-2029 SEND strategy builds on the work undertaken over the last four years by the previous strategy and implementation plan
9. SEND is a local area priority across health, education and social care.
10. This strategy has been produced in partnership and the consultation process has taken a year to complete.
11. The work represents a marked shift in our local area, as it has been built upon the current lived experience and expertise of our children, young people and their parents/carers as the driving force for change.
12. The strategy sets out an ambitious goal for making sure that SEND becomes 'everybody's business' through pro-active inclusion from the outset. The strategy was produced together with key partners and draws upon feedback from children, young people and their parents/carers, professionals and front-line workers, education settings and the voluntary sector.

Main Considerations for the Council

13. The 2020-2024 strategy has now been concluded with a draft report submitted to the Local Area SEND Board for review and sign off (appendix 1).
14. Through consultation and co-production six priority areas were agreed, including implementation plans and how we will know if we are making a difference for children and young people with SEND and their families. For each of the priority areas a detailed implementation programme was developed, with each area having a responsible lead.
 - Developing holistic plans with children and young people
 - Inclusion and removing exclusion in education
 - Inclusion and well-being in the community
 - Improving the range and quality of provision
 - Progress and attainment
 - Well planned transitions
15. To lead in the oversight and scrutiny of this work the SENDAP Board was established in 2020 and provided a partnership approach to the implementation of the strategy.
16. Through this implementation plan the local area has demonstrated a high level of commitment to supporting children and young people and their families and carers through the significant levels of activity undertaken to deliver the implementation plan and have a positive, and lasting, impact. The activity has been wide ranging and shown an understanding of the challenges faced within our communities across the 0-25 age range. This commitment has been matched with significant investment in resources, including staff, new provision and services.
17. Whilst there has been clear and evidenced impact in a number of areas, there have also been challenges in meeting need in an ever-changing context with increasing numbers of EHCPs and developments in government policy superseding planned activity. Additionally, whilst the local area has focused on the quality of support, the challenge of sustainable models of funding and the current high needs deficit have added an additional dimension which is to be addressed through the Safety Valve programme. Overarching themes that have emerged from the work include the growing pressures emerging from the increase in the number of EHCPs, including

waiting times, our improved engagement with children and young people, the development of a more collaborative local area approach and the continued need for a focus on post-16 support for young people.

18. As we move forward towards the approval of the new strategy (2024-29) it is essential that we are clear on the areas of work that should be continued from the 2020-24 strategy and aligning with the SEND Transformation Programme to be able to give parents and carers, children and young people and all stakeholders within the local area, clear plans, with agreed performance indicators for measuring success.
19. As such the key recommendations were to ensure a continuation of delivery of priorities for our communities within business-as-usual operations:
 - o Develop, clarify and raise awareness of the health offer to colleges and Alternative Provision settings
 - o Fully integrated SEND and AP Dashboard
 - o Continued development of the Alternative Provision offer, including increased DfE (Ofsted) Registered provision
 - o OPAL – Ordinarily Available Provision needs to saturate all services, settings and establishments to provide a common language and shared expectations with the aim of all children receiving an equitable offer of provision.
 - o RB Network/Reviews – Resource Bases are now operating within a cycle of reviews and support, with all RBs receiving a review at least annually (support is available more regularly where needed). RB Networks take place termly and are well-attended to ensure that sharing of best practice and school improvement remain at the forefront of all planning.
 - o Replacement tool for recording voice of CYP, parents and professionals following the end of POET.
20. The following items were agreed to be incorporated into the new strategy:
 - o Development of the Post-16 offer including the commissioning of specific Post-16 services and working with further education, training and employment providers
 - o To develop plans that deliver improvements as highlighted through the wellbeing survey
 - o Work continues to take place to finalise a joint personal budget statement and develop the offer of personal budgets, including expanding the offer to enable greater usage.
 - o Expansion of young people's voice, particularly for more 'hard to reach' cohorts including those educated out of county, educated other than in school, primary age children, children from minority groups and those who are non-verbal
 - o Development of plans to address increased suspension rates
 - o Continued activity to improve waiting times for statutory services
 - o Development of early identification and effective mainstream provision for children with SEND driven by all through the language of OPAL.
 - o Focus on ISS placements (Safety Valve)
 - o Creation of a new behaviour support offer for secondary schools to reduce EHCP suspension rates
21. The new strategy, entitled 'Meeting Needs Together - Ambitious for All' sets out our joint vision and the priorities we will focus on as a partnership over the next five years. Our aim is to be ambitious for all our children and young people and to work together

to deliver cohesive, holistic support, having the child or young person's aspirations and needs at the centre of our work. We believe that meeting the needs of every child and young person with SEND or in AP in Wiltshire, is the responsibility of everyone.

22. Over the last year we have worked together in consultation with our parent-carers at face-to-face events across the county and through a range of online discussion groups. We have listened and gained the voice of children and young people with lived experience of SEND, including those who may be educated other than at school or from other harder to reach groups. We have worked with our schools and settings via partnership forums and networks, via surveys and polls. Our workforce from across all services and teams have actively engaged in meetings and surveys as part of this consultation work and have given their views and experiences as practitioners and officers.
23. As a result, the vision created with stakeholders through consultation is:
'To create a future where every young person in Wiltshire has the tools and support needed to thrive and achieve their dreams. We want to support children and young people to be aspirational and hopeful, to increase their confidence, to have the resources to live the futures they want to live and to foster a culture of empowerment and inclusion.'
24. In adhering to true coproduction principles, we ensured that the voice of the local area has fully informed the priorities identified and shaped our collective vision. We have pledged to embed coproduction principles in everything we do and as a result of conversations and a joint working group with families, have written a 'Working Together Agreement', which is our commitment to deliver this. This agreement can be seen towards the beginning of the strategy document.
25. This vision will be delivered through six priority areas:

Priority 1: Children and young people and their families will be at the centre of planning, their views and aspirations heard and acted upon, as true partners.

Priority 2: Getting the right support at the right time, identifying and acting on our children's needs at the earliest opportunity and through promotion of inclusive approaches and practice across the local area.

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26. The stakeholders agreed that we would work to these priorities through a joint implementation plan that will set our actions and outcomes framework, to monitor the effective delivery of strategy.
27. The implementation plan will be overseen by the SEND and AP Partnership Board with regular reporting against each priority. We have also committed to publishing

regular reports on the Wiltshire SEND Local Offer website. We will ask ourselves the question 'what difference has this made?' at each point of delivery and will work with children and young people with lived experience of SEND and AP so they can tell us how we are doing.

28. The strategy sets out a comprehensive response to the views, comments and issues raised by stakeholders right through the consultation process. This strategy represents a core document with high levels of engagement which sits amongst a range of strategic responses to the scope of the issues that the local area partnership wants to develop and address. There are separate plans either in place or in development which create the detail behind each of the priorities identified in the strategy.
29. There are three main considerations for the cabinet:
- To be assured that the strategy reflects the scope of intention regarding SEND, Inclusion and Alternative Provision
 - To ensure there is sufficient ambition in what we want to achieve
 - To understand and support how the strategy will be monitored

Safeguarding Implications

30. The implementation of this strategy will ensure the continued prioritisation of the safeguarding needs of children and young people with SEND.
31. Through the comprehensive stakeholder engagement process a number of principles were established to underpin how we keep children/young people safe, but with a particular focus on how we can enable children and young people and their families to take risks which take forward their wellbeing in safe ways.

Public Health Implications

32. The wellbeing and health of our children and young people with SEND, alongside those of parents, carers, family and friends is clearly at the heart of this strategy. The local area partnership, through the SEND Inclusion board, will be working together to improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people with SEND enabling them to be confident members of their communities.
33. This should both maintain our commitments within public health as well as the wider commitments within the Wiltshire business plan (2022 – 32), but more importantly, building on our commitment to partnership, genuinely enable our children and young people with SEND to thrive in our communities.

Procurement Implications

34. There are no direct implications for procurement in the strategy, although a number of commissioned providers will be involved in the implementation of service requirements which will be managed in line with procurement regulations and legislation

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

35. As part of the engagement and coproduction process of the strategy a proactive approach was undertaken to ensuring accessibility with a focus on hard-to-reach communities

36. An equalities impact of the proposed decision is low against all criteria on the Equalities Risk Criteria Table and, therefore, a full Equalities Impact Assessment is not required for the strategy.
37. As part of the development of the implementation plan an equalities impact assessment will be utilised to ensure that we are meeting the needs of all of our communities and supporting engagement and partnership with all.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

38. The proposal has no direct environmental or climate change impacts.
39. However, the strategy is expected to deliver reductions in energy consumption as we look to ensure more young people are supported to remain within their local communities without the need to travel long distances for provision.
40. Any proposals delivered through the strategy will be individually assessed to consider how they will contribute to the Council's Climate Strategy and Business Plan commitments to net zero and to plan for the impacts of climate change.

Workforce Implications

41. There are no workforce implications for the Council

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken

42. The primary risk inherent in the failure to agree the strategic approach to supporting families and children with SEND is that the local area will lack a focused approach which will lead to poor service provision for our communities and poor outcomes for our children and young people with additional needs.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks

43. Failure of the local area to deliver on the agreed priorities of the strategy is the primary risk.
44. To mitigate against this risk the SEND AP Board will provide the primary oversight of the implementation plan with robust qualitative and quantitative KPIs in place to support in measuring the success of the plan.
45. Regular reporting alongside opportunities for feedback from our communities will ensure that we are clear on how well the local area is delivering on the strategic plan

Financial Implications

46. There are no direct financial implications for the strategy in and of itself.
47. Most of the activity to be delivered in the implementation of the strategy is funded through the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The spending plan for the high needs block aligns with the strategy.

48. The financial impact of all specific programmes of work highlighted through the implementation plan, will be individually assessed and, as appropriate, be reported via specific cabinet approval processes

Legal Implications

49. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report as it is for information only and no decision is required.

50. Legal Services will be referred to, as is appropriate and as required, to consider the legal implications and/or risks of specific strategic plans or programmes.

Overview and Scrutiny Engagement

51. SEND AP Board has received regular updates on the progress of the development of the new strategy

52. Members have been invited to, and have attended, various engagement events to hear directly the voice of families and children

Options Considered

53. The option of not having a strategy was discounted as it is stated within the SEND Code of Practice that local authorities must place children, young people and families at the centre of their planning, and work with them to develop co-ordinated approaches to securing better outcomes.

54. The local area should develop a shared vision and strategy which focuses on aspirations and outcomes, using information from EHC plans and other planning to anticipate the needs of children and young people with SEN and ensure there are pathways into employment, independent living, participation in society and good health.

55. A continuation of the current strategy was also discounted due to the changing needs of the local area and the importance of coproduction in ensuring emerging need is met through the development of updated strategic plans.

Conclusions

56. The SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2020-2024 successfully delivered a wide range of improvements in supporting children and young people with additional needs and their families

57. A new strategy to build on the work of the previous plan is essential to deliver further incremental improvements and meet the current needs of families and children

58. The new strategy has been developed through a robust co-production process that has ensured that the voice of families and children, practitioners and voluntary groups is at the heart of the plan.

59. The strategy implementation plan will have success measures that are reviewed by the local area SEND AP Board to ensure delivery for our communities.

Kathryn Davis (Director - Education & Skills)

Report Author: Kai Muxlow, Interim Head of Families and Children's Commissioning, kai.muxlow@wiltshire.gov.uk, Gerri Kemp, SEND and Inclusion, gerri.kemp@wiltshire.gov.uk

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Impact Report –2020-2024

Appendix 2 – SEND and AP Strategy 2024-2029

Background Papers

SEND Code of Practice [SEND Code of Practice January 2015.pdf](#)
(publishing.service.gov.uk)

Wiltshire SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2020-2024 [SEND Strategy 2020-2024 ONLINE 4.pdf](#) (wiltshire.gov.uk)