
Herefordshire Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy 2023-26



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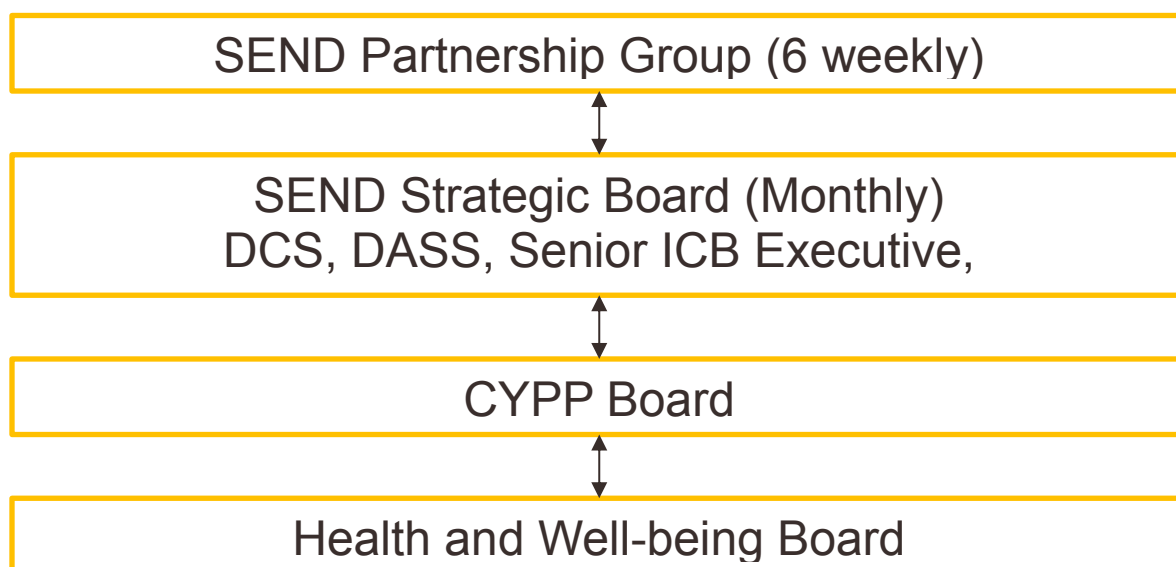
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 We, the Herefordshire SEND Partnership, are proud to present our new strategy for you. When we refer to you in this document, we mean children and young people aged 0-25 years with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in Herefordshire. It tells you where we want to be, what is happening now, and how we will get to where we want to be.
- 1.2 In Herefordshire we have the highest aspirations for all of you. We are committed to working in partnership to meet the Children and Families Act's requirements in an ambitious, inclusive and realistic in a challenging financial context. Our vision is to ensure that: 'All children and young people in Herefordshire feel safe, loved, and valued, and grow up with the confidence and skills to be the best they can be.'
- 1.3 When we refer to 'we' in this strategy document, we mean the Herefordshire SEND Partnership¹. At the heart of our partnership is a group of people who are working to make things better for you in Herefordshire. They also want to make things better for you and your family. We recognise, and our self-evaluation confirms, that while there are many examples of good practice, there is work to be done to reach the aspirations we have for all of you.
- 1.4 In 2022, we conducted an internal review of our SEND services with the Local Government Association (LGA). This strategy has been developed alongside what they told us. Progress has been made towards addressing the issues highlighted by the review and some of this work is detailed in Section 6.
- 1.5 When Ofsted and CQC (Care Quality Commission) inspected Herefordshire SEND services in 2016, they highlighted some aspects that need improvement. For example, they found that some of you had to wait too long for some community therapies. The LGA also found that some of you have been waiting for up to a year to be seen by the speech and language therapy services. This means that sometimes your needs are not assessed promptly enough, and you do not receive the timely support that you need. Although many individuals, organisations and providers do their best, your needs are sometimes identified later than we would want. Both Ofsted and the LGA made other recommendations. The partnership are working hard to improve, and more detailed priorities are included in our delivery plan. This document sets out how we will continue to improve your experiences into the future.
- 1.6 Herefordshire Council's Children's Services was found to be inadequate following a ILACs Ofsted inspection in July 2022 and a Children's Commissioner was appointed. The way that we meet your needs is included as part of the Children's Commissioner's areas for consideration. As a result, our improvement plan incorporates a priority (no.10) linked to the development of services for you.
- 1.7 This strategy has been developed by the Herefordshire SEND Partnership using a wide variety of shared information and experience. As part of this, we must also look at what we have to do because the law says we have to. We also make sure that we work collaboratively and are held to account.

¹ Please see appendix 1 for who belongs to our partnership

SEND Governance and Accountability



1.8 We have particularly listened to you and your families. What you have told us is explained in section 2 of this document.

1.9 We have also considered:

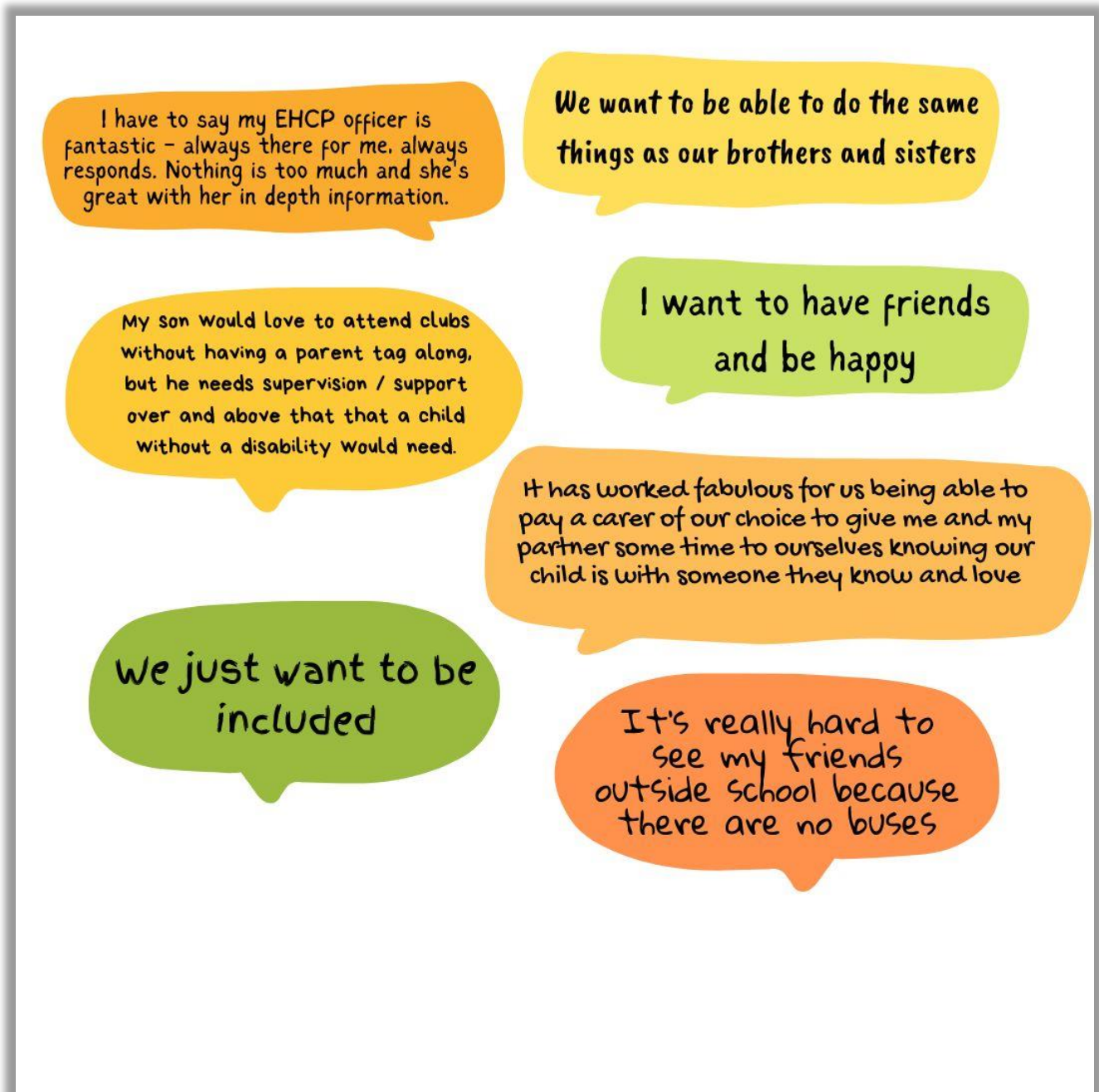
- The experience and knowledge of practitioners working with you;
- Information from the children and young people's section of Understanding Herefordshire. This is our [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment \(JSNA\)](#). This work gathers information about what it is like to be you in Herefordshire;
- Knowing what did and did not work from our previous plans to improve things after our last [SEND inspection in 2016](#);
- Up-to-date information on how well our services for education, health and care are doing;
- Reviews of ourselves using audit tools from Council for Disabled Children and Contact as well as using the Ofsted/CQC inspection framework;

- Other people's views about the services in Herefordshire such as Local Councillors on the Herefordshire Council Scrutiny Committee and the Local Government Association;
- New requirements e.g. NHS 10-year plan and the SEND Green Paper²; and,
- Our learning from working closely with similar local areas.

² The green paper sets out our proposals for a system that offers children and young people the opportunity to thrive, with access to the right support, in the right place, and at the right time, so they can fulfil their potential and lead happy, healthy and productive adult lives.

2. What You Have Told Us

2.1 Our strategy has been developed by the Herefordshire SEND Partnership using a wide variety of shared information and people's experiences. We have particularly listened to what you told us.



2.2 We have also considered:

- The things that parents and carers tell us are going well and those that are not going well. Parent Carer Voice Herefordshire, SENDIASS and Healthwatch all give us feedback. This includes an [annual co-produced parent/carer survey](#).

The main things that your parents and carers want are:

- to only have to tell their story once;

- to feel that their views on their child's needs are listened to as much as the views of 'experts'; and,
- that there are no 'blockers' for parents and carers in SEND processes, e.g. in the EHC plan process.

2.3 We have used all of this information to decide on our priorities for action. These are the main areas we want to improve between 2023 and 2026. We want to make sure that:

- your needs are identified and assessed in a timely and effective way;
- you and your family's voices are heard, and this makes a difference;
- you receive the right help at the right time;
- you are well prepared for your next steps in life; and,
- you feel valued, visible, and included.

2.4 We are committed to working in co-production with families in all areas of our work. Herefordshire's [Co-Production Charter](#), was created in partnership with Parent Carer Voice Herefordshire, Herefordshire Council, Herefordshire Integrated Care System (ICS), Herefordshire and Worcestershire NHS Trust, Wye Valley NHS Trust and SENDIASS³ and is available for download on the Herefordshire Local Offer. Our Charter is about the way we will all work together to create a culture where we will all:

- Be Open and Honest
- Actively Listen
- Value the Lived Experience
- Do What Matters
- Be Accountable and Responsive
- Work Together
- Be Respectful

2.5 You have told us that you want the same opportunities and experiences in life that other children and young people have. We want that too. One of our key pieces of work is to gather your views more often than we have done in the past and listen to what you are telling us. That is why we have created a new Herefordshire Engagement and Participation Strategy which sets out how we will work with all of you to prioritise your involvement in making decisions that impact your lives and the services you receive.

2.6 Our SEND Engagement and Market Development Officer is responsible for co-production with you and your family. Our Engagement Officer's priorities include developing:

- the voice of your parents and carers in shaping and co-producing our services ;
- capturing and listening to your views and opinions in our decision-making;

³ SENDIASS is the SEND Information, Advice and Support Service covering Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

- our joint commissioning priorities; and,
- Our Local Offer⁴.

⁴ A local offer gives you and your family information to help you find the right help and support in your area.

3. Our Vision

3.1 Our overarching vision is for all of you to have:

‘...a great start in life and grow up healthy, happy and safe within supportive family environments.’

[Herefordshire Children and Young People’s Partnership Plan](#)

3.2 This strategy will support the inclusion of all children and young people in Herefordshire. Schools and education settings are key partners in delivering this through a graduated approach⁵.

3.3 In order to deliver our vision and get to where you want us to be, we will make sure that:

- your needs are identified and assessed in a timely and effective way;
- you and your family’s voices are heard, and this makes a difference;
- you receive the right help at the right time;
- you are well prepared for your next steps in life; and,
- you feel valued, visible and included.

3.4 To make this strategy come to life, it needs the whole community to be part of making it happen. We would like you and your families to join us on this journey. This is why we are sharing this document with as many people as possible and listening to what they have to tell us.

⁵ Schools and colleges use as ‘assess, plan, do, review’ process to support you, also known as the graduated approach.

4. The Legislative Context

4.1 Children and Families Act 2014 (CFA)

The Children and Families Act (2014) included changes to the way in which we work with you. Some of the key aims of the Act are to help you achieve well, find jobs; lead happy lives and have choice over your support.

The CFA introduced Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans to replace statements of SEN. It said that help should be offered as early in your life as possible, with your parents or carers fully involved in any decisions about your support.

This means that we must:

- work in partnership with families
- ensure you are able to access the right support and provision to meet your needs
- adopt an integrated approach to meeting your needs
- meet the needs of those of you with the most complex needs through a single plan known as an Education, Health and Care Plan
- involve you and your parents or carers in decision making
- involve you and your parents or carers in shaping our services.
- publish a local offer which details the support, services and provision available within Herefordshire
- jointly plan and commission services that could be helpful to you
- provide information, advice and support to you and your family, young people and their parents/carers in line with the requirements of the Act and Code of Practice⁶.

4.2 **The Equality Act 2010** and Part 3 of the **Children and Families Act 2014** interact in a number of important ways. They share a common focus on removing barriers to learning.

4.3 Care Act 2014

The Care Act⁷ puts together all the previous pieces of law about social care for people over the age of 18. Under the Care Act, local authorities have a duty to make sure that: people who live in their area receive services that stop their care needs from becoming more serious; can get the information they need to make good decisions; and, have high quality, services to choose from.

4.4 NHS Long-Term Plan

⁶ The [SEND Code of Practice](#) provides statutory guidance on duties, policies and procedures for children and young people with special educational needs and/ or disabilities.

⁷ More information about The Care Act: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-2014-part-1-factsheets/care-act-factsheets>

In 2019, the National Health Service published its new [plan](#) for the next ten years. The plan highlights that the NHS will do more so that all people with a learning disability, autism, or both can live happier, healthier, longer lives.

Herefordshire and Worcestershire has an Integrated Care System (ICS) that covers both health and social care.

4.5 At the time of writing, the SEND green paper [SEND Review - right support, right place, right time](#) was published. It is anticipated that this will introduce changes as it comes into legislation.

Relevant legislation

- Children and Families Act 2014
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 2014
- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- Care Act 2014 Children Act 1989/ 2004
- Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Breaks for carers of disabled children regulations 2011

5. The Local Context

5.1. In Herefordshire we have seen an increase in the number of school-aged children and young people identified with SEND. Over the past two years there has been a significant increase in the proportion of children who have an Education Health and Care (EHC) Plan.

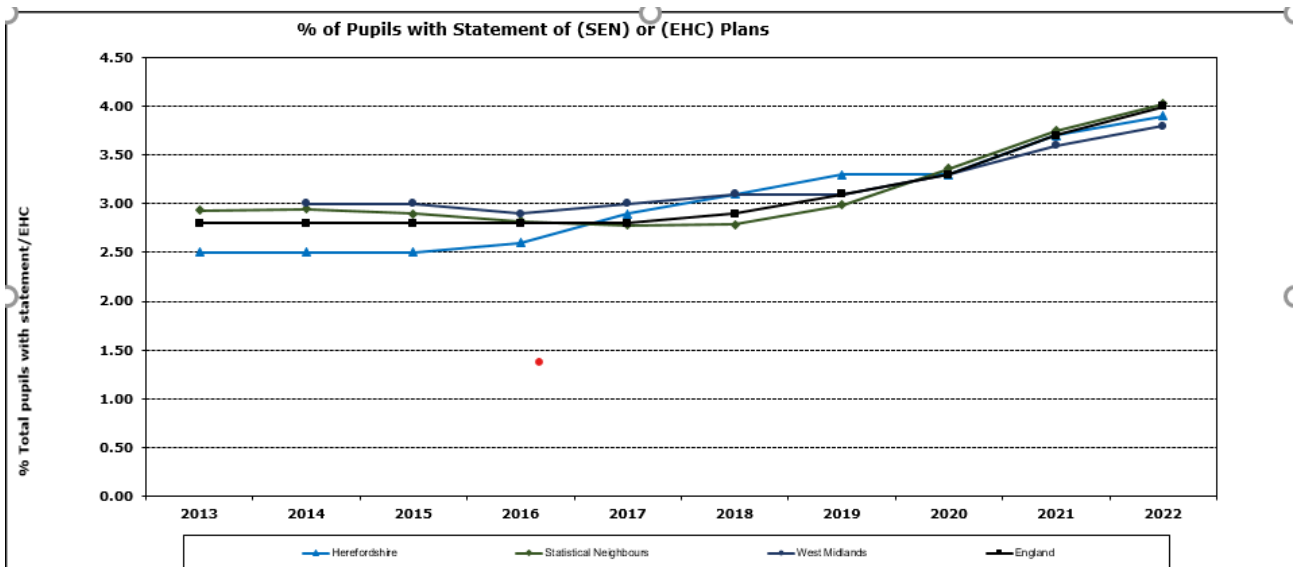
5.2 The table below shows that there are currently just under 4.427 of you who attend one of our schools in Herefordshire.

School Aged Children and Young People with SEND in Herefordshire						
	Children on roll in maintained schools in Herefordshire ¹	Children on roll in maintained schools in Herefordshire with SEND ²	Children on roll in maintained schools in Herefordshire receiving SEND Support ²	Children on roll in maintained schools in England receiving SEND Support ²	Children on roll in maintained schools in Herefordshire with an EHC Plan ²	Children on roll in maintained schools in England with an EHC Plan ²
2022/2023*	23,666	4,427	3,526		901	
		18.7%	14.9%		3.8%	
2021/2022	23,585	4,451	3,543		908	
		18.9%	15.0%	12.4%	3.9%	3.9%
2020/2021	23,574	4,255	3,418		837	
		18.1%	14.5%	12.0%	3.6%	3.6%

- Autumn 2022 school census
- 1. Schools, pupils and their characteristics: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>
- 2. Special Educational Needs in England: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england-january-2022> excludes independent and non-maintained special schools

5.3. If you have an EHC plan in Herefordshire, you are more likely to be educated in a mainstream school than would be expected nationally. Some of you attend one of our special schools, and a significant proportion of you attend an ‘out of county’ special schools. Herefordshire currently has three special schools in the 2-16 age range catering for Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) and profound and multiple difficulties (PMLD) and one for social emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. We have also recently opened a college for 16-19 year olds for SLD/PMLD and autism. In addition, the county has two resourced provision bases for autism in mainstream schools (one primary and one secondary). Our SEND Capital Investment Strategy highlights that we need increase our provision for pupils with autism and learning difficulties.

5.4 Over the last two years, the increase in the proportion of EHC plans issued in Herefordshire mirrors that seen nationally (3.9% compared to 4% nationally). There has been a steep increase.



5.5 We are seeing an increasing proportion of plans issued for pre-school children. Our data tells us there is an increasing demand on services and support networks within Early Years, such as Portage (tailored support for pre-school children with SEND).

6. Progress and Forward Plans

6.1 The development of this strategy has taken place at a time of great change. Resource and effort have been focused on the delivery of the actions identified this academic year, in part as a result of the LGA review. It has also been a time of change because a new Service Director for Education, Learning and Skills took up post in September 2022. Additionally, the local authority has been working with greater intensity alongside the Children's Commissioner and the DFE Improvement Advisor as a result of the ILACs inspection.

6.2 Much of what we have already done has been co-produced. Details of how parent carer voice has influenced services can be found in the ['You Said, We Did' report](#).

6.3 The sections under the headings '*What else do you want us to change?*' for each outcome shown below will be taken forward with a detailed annual action plan. We know that we have a lot of things to improve and this will take several years. By 2026, we know that we will have made a difference.

6.4 To check on the difference we are making, we have identified ways in which we will measure our impact. We have co-produced a SEND data dashboard that helps us all keep track of our progress towards our ambition.

6.5 Immediately following the LGA review we set about making sustainable change. So far, we have:

- Made plans to prioritise receiving your views by developing our participation and engagement strategy. This is so we make sure we listen and respond to what you are telling us. We have timetabled a variety of regular activities to regularly engage with you and gather your views.
- We have committed to publishing regular newsletters with updates on our improvement work. We have started to use social media to advertise events and to share information.
- We have refined and strengthened our quality assurance process for EHC plans so to improve the quality and consistency of plans across the county. We have completed some audits already this year so we can learn how to improve our work further.
- We have made sure that if you are in a transition year, your EHC plan annual review takes place on time so that you are able to secure the right next step for you.
- We have increased the proportion of new EHC plans that are issued on time. We remain above the rates seen nationally. We are proud of this.
- We are working more closely with our schools to expand our specialist intervention and support. The number of places available should increase in September 2023.
- We have welcomed support to help us move improvement at pace. For example, we are working with our partners in Bedford to look at how we can develop inclusive practice within our schools.
- We have strengthened our IT systems and are developing a multi-disciplinary dashboard. This will help those who hold us to account ask the right questions at the right time.

6.6 We have also made progress against our **core aims** but we want to do even better for you. We have outlined how we will improve and how we will measure how well we are doing.

Outcome 1. Your needs are identified and assessed in a timely and effective way

What we have done so far:

- ✓ Restructured the family conversation form and delivered training to SENCOs on how to engage families with this part of the EHC plan process
- ✓ SENCOs, parent carers and Educational Psychology team worked together to co-produce a new EHC Plan format
- ✓ Changed process for the children with disabilities social care team to make an assessment for a short break
- ✓ Made an agreement between the council and health partners making it easier to share appropriate information to meet our legal duties
- ✓ Put in place a social care screening process so that all EHC referrals have an active early help assessment as part of the EHC assessment

What else are we going to change:

- ✓ Reduce portage waiting times by expanding our team so that you and your family receive home-based, early intervention and support.
- ✓ Work together so that we make sure your EHC plan is issued on time. We will make sure that professionals who contribute advice to your EHC plan submit it on time.
- ✓ Co-produce clear pathways for autism and ADHD
- ✓ Reduce waiting times for children's therapies and community paediatrics so that it is easier to access a service when you need it.
- ✓ Extend speech and language therapy so that this service is available to you if you attend a secondary school.

We will measure how well we are doing by:

- ✓ EHCP issue timeliness
- ✓ We will reduce waiting times for children's therapies to within national expectations (18 weeks) by continuing to work with teams in the health service as part of the 'balanced approach'
- ✓ We will reduce portage waiting times (by expanding our team) and ensure that all children and families receive home-based, early intervention and support.
- ✓ Proportion of EHC Plans written within the national timescales
- ✓ (For each health service) the proportion of CYP seen within 18 weeks
- ✓ Reduce waiting lists for portage services

Outcome 2: You and your family's voices are heard and this makes a difference

What we have done so far:

- ✓ Met regularly to review the success of co-production in Herefordshire based on:-
 - Do we welcome and show care?
 - Do we value and include everyone?
 - Do we communicate respectfully?
 - How well do we work in partnership?
- ✓ Co-produced the third annual parent carer survey and received more than 100 responses
- ✓ Co-produced the most recent SEND Summits where parent carers and professionals meet as equal partners
- ✓ Added to the membership of the SEND Partnership Group to make it more inclusive and reflective of your lived experience

What else are we going to change:

- ✓ Gather your views, and those of your family in a wide range of ways on matters that are important to you. We will find different ways to listen to the voices of all children and young people so we can hear what you have to say; we will make sure there are chances for you to be involved in the way you want to be. About the things that matter to you and at a time and place that works for you.
- ✓ We will co-produce a participation and engagement strategy that tells everyone what we will be doing and when. This is so you, and your parent carers, can be involved as much, or as little, as you want to. Helping us plan what we need to do and seeing if this has made a difference.
- ✓ Grow our partnership work with you and your family so that feel that your views are listened to as much as the views of 'experts'
- ✓ We will make sure that all the work we do, the plans we make and the services we review includes you and your parent carers from the start.
- ✓ Make sure you only have to tell your story once.

We will measure how well we are doing by:

- ✓ Proportion of CYP with SEND who report that the people who look after them care about their opinion
- ✓ Proportion of EHC plans that were reviewed by the child and their parent/carer, or the young person
- ✓ Proportion of CYP with SEND and their families who report that they received feedback on how their views have been used

Outcome 3: You receive the right help at the right time

What we have done so far:

- ✓ Changed the criteria for a service from the children with disabilities team so that it does not exclude particular types of need such as autism
- ✓ Published a SEND Capital Investment Strategy in 2021 setting out ambitious plans for improving all of the buildings used for specialist SEND work
- ✓ Beacon College was opened for students with severe learning difficulty and/or autism in September 2021 following a successful bid to the Department for Education
- ✓ The Local Offer of SEND information is steadily improving and a Facebook page was published in October 2022. You are now able to find local events, activities and services are promoted through the platform
- ✓ The continence service have introduced greater flexibility into their product offer following feedback from parent carers

What else are we going to change:

- ✓ Redesign our graduated response approach to make it easier for parents and carers to understand what a school should be offering; and easier for our schools to use
- ✓ Further improve the methods for predicting how many specialist educational places are needed so that the number and type of specialist educational places is sufficient and mitigates having to travel long distances
- ✓ Extend the content and improve the usability of the Local Offer
- ✓ Improve the EHC plan process including the timeliness of annual reviews, simplify the application process and improve the quality of plans
- ✓ Improve your access to health services and reduce waiting times including for therapies and community paediatrician appointments
- ✓ Agree what we want to do with families and how we will work together in the future to change things. We will help other people supporting you to know how to get the help you need;

We will measure how well we are doing by:

- ✓ Proportion of CYP with SEND who report that they have the support they need to cope when life feels hard
- ✓ Proportion of CYP who give a high rating to the support they have received
- ✓ Proportion CYP who report that they know where to go to get help and support about their (physical or mental) health needs or disabilities
- ✓ Proportion of parent carers who stated that they know who to contact to get the support they need for their child
- ✓ Proportion of Parent Carers who report that the professionals who care for their child safely meet their health needs (e.g. epilepsy, allergy, safely moving etc.)

Outcome 4: You are well prepared for your next steps in life and achieve well

What we have done so far:

- ✓ Made sure that the correct steps are taken when you are getting ready for adulthood so that you have something positive to move on to
- ✓ Organised monthly tracking meetings for professionals to make sure that all of you have a positive transition to adulthood
- ✓ Arranged a careers fair for you
- ✓ Provided independent travel training for those of you who would benefit whatever your age

What else you want us to do:

- ✓ Respond promptly so that you do not feel ignored.
- ✓ Make sure your annual EHC plan annual review takes place on time and that we let you know how we will change the plan soon after the review, especially if you are about to change schools.
- ✓ Provide information so people supporting you (including in schools and colleges and your family) can start to talk to you about your future and what could be possible. We will improve the range of training and job opportunities including offering supported internships with job coaches to help you.
- ✓ Change the way in which activities are offered to young people to allow more opportunity for a social life.

What else are we going to change:

- ✓ Proportion CYP with SEND who report that most of the time, they enjoy life
- ✓ Proportion of young people with SEND (18-25) in employment
- ✓ Proportion of young people with SEND (16-25) undertaking a supported internship or apprenticeship
- ✓ Proportion of CYP with SEND who are able to safely and confidently access public transport
- ✓ Proportion of children of children and young people with SEND report that they are involved in a club, group or hobby they enjoy

Outcome 5: For you to feel valued, visible and included

What we have done so far:

- ✓ Agreed a 'Co-production Charter' where which all of us have signed up to core values that promote a culture of working together.
- ✓ Employed a SEND Engagement and Market Development Officer to prioritise closer working relationships. We write to you regularly with our SEND newsletter so that we share what we are doing, what is support is available to you and to help you and your family know how to get involved
- ✓ Looked at school websites to make sure they are welcoming and cover all the required information
- ✓ Introduced an allowance to give a wide range of you a short break without a social work assessment
- ✓ Adapted the 'quality of life' survey designed for all children and used this to gather your views if you attend one of our special schools

What else you want us to do:

- ✓ We will make sure that partnership working groups meet more regularly and always adhere to the culture of co-production which includes you and your parent and carers from the start
- ✓ We will build on the work of the Engagement Officer to improve communication across all partners and hear from you more regularly. We value what you want to tell us.
- ✓ We will develop better ways of challenging practice that is not inclusive wherever we find it
- ✓ We will increase the number of activities available to give you and your family a short break especially those with other children

We will measure how well we are doing by:

- ✓ Proportion of CYP with EHC plans who said they are accessing short break activities
- ✓ Proportion of CYP with SEND who report that they feel safe and they belong in their local community
- ✓ Proportion of CYP with SEND who report that they feel safe and like they belong in their education setting

It is our intention to build on this progress. A detailed action plan will be developed as part of this strategy. The strategy will be regularly reviewed and updated as appropriate in response to changes in local needs and issues.

7. Appendix

A full list of people involved in the Herefordshire SEND Partnership Group can be found here. At the heart of our partnership is a group of people who are working to make things better for you in Herefordshire. They also want to make things better for your families.

The Herefordshire SEND Partnership Group includes the following roles:-

Herefordshire Council

- Service Director for Education, Development & Skills
- Head of Additional Needs & SEND
- Head of the Virtual School
- Post 16 Senior Advisor
- SEN Team Manager
- Children with Disabilities Manager
- Senior All Ages Commissioning Officer
- Children's Commissioning
- Engagement Officer
- Public Health Officer
- Early Years SEND Manager
- Manager for SENDIASS

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care System

- Lead Commissioner Children, Young People & Maternity
- Senior Manager for SEND
- Designated Clinical Officer

Education

Special School Head Teacher Representative

Wye Valley Health Trust

- General Manager - Acute and countywide services, Integrated Care Division
- Children's Community Nursing
- Consultant Community Paediatrician & Medical Adviser for A&F, Community Paediatrics
- Clinical Manager, Therapy Services
- Clinical Manager Specialist Community Services

Youth Offending Service

Voluntary and Community Services

- Co-chairs Parent Carer Voice Herefordshire
- Healthwatch representative
- Manager for the services at Wye Valley Trust and ... CAMHS trust
- Managers from NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire (Integrated Care System) responsible for deciding what is needed and paying for the right health services for children.
- National Autistic Society Herefordshire