

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Improving Lives Select Commission – 10 December 2024

Report Title

SEND Strategy Update

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Nicola Curley – Strategic Director, Children & Young Peoples Service

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The report outlines the results following the public consultation on the proposed SEND Strategy.

Recommendations

For ILSC to consider the contents of the report.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 – Amended draft SEND Strategy

Appendix 2 – Consultation Summary

Background Papers

None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

SEND Strategy Update

1. Background

- 1.1 Nationally, the White Paper on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan published in March 2023 has identified the key pressures on the SEND System nationally. This has been confirmed by the more recent National Audit Office report in October 2024. These papers consistently find that the SEND system is dealing with a level of volume for which it was not designed with insufficient resources. This has resulted in a loss of parental confidence, poor outcomes for children and young people and large amounts of debt. Local government has the responsibility to commission and shape local provision yet lacks the powers to develop and change systems.
- 1.2 Locally, Rotherham is not immune from these national challenges. The Rotherham joint local area SEND inspection in July 2021, while identifying some strengths, required the local area to produce a written statement of action prioritising the following four areas for action:
- Quality of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)
 - Communication of Local Offer
 - Preparation for Adulthood
 - Graduated Response
- 1.3 In September 2023 the Improving Lives Select Commission noted the feedback from advisors (DfE & NHSE) and successful achievement of the required improvements in the WSOA & successful discharge of priority actions.
- 1.4 The October 2024 Ofsted Area SEND Inspection of Rotherham Local Area Partnership found that children and young people typically have positive experiences and outcomes. Where there was a need for further development the local area partnership was judged as taking appropriate actions. This Ofsted evaluation placed the Rotherham area partnership among the highest performing areas nationally. However, significant national and local challenges remain.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 Local authorities are required to have strategic plans for SEND. Our existing SEND Strategy was launched in 2020. Since then, the local area has had two SEND inspections, has undertaken a Safety Valve agreement. The nature of the demands and priorities children and young people experience has continued to evolve following the national lockdowns.
- 2.2 It is important that a refreshed vision and co-produced strategy for SEND services in the Rotherham Borough is developed to reflect the changing environment, feedback from inspections and the current priorities for children, young people, parent/ carers, and families in Rotherham.

- 2.3 Approval for the consultation on the SEND Strategy was given by Cabinet on the 10th June 2024.
- 2.4 Co-production workshops and engagement with young people has highlighted the need for the new Rotherham SEND Strategy to be written in a format that enables the children and young people to see how it will impact their lives. The outcome of the co-produced development is reflected in the language used to in the 7 outcome statements:
1. I have a voice, and this is listened to and respected.
 2. I am as healthy as possible.
 3. I feel safe.
 4. I have help and support in a way that suits me.
 5. I have adults in my life who are supported to help me.
 6. I am supported to be as independent as possible and have a purposeful life.
 7. I belong and feel valued.
- 2.5 The key performance indicators have been developed to ensure all key partners are active participants in the delivery of the SEND Strategy. The Strategy key performance indicators ensure the participation and engagement of the key partners are measured and evaluated and used to develop Service and practise across the Rotherham Borough.
- 2.6 Evidence from Rotherham Borough data and feedback from local area inspections has identified five areas that continue to have a significant impact on the health, well-being and educational access for Rotherham children and young people. It is proposed they will become the focus of priorities within the SEND Strategy and will be referred to as **commitments**.

The following five commitments have been identified as priority areas of development and monitoring:

1. The number of permanent exclusions and part time timetables for children and young people with special educational needs.
2. The number of disabled children and young people and those with special educational needs missing school due to health concerns, including mental health.
3. Having a clear process for engagement with children and young people, by promoting the engagement through Young Peoples Voice and participation Groups. Development of an engagement process with mainstream and special schools is currently underway, this will include the use of multimedia platforms as well as in person sessions.
4. To continue to improve the quality of EHC plans to ensure that:
 - a. there is consistent and clear information from health, education and social care;

- b. all EHC plans reflect the views of children, young people and their families;
 - c. EHC plans contain the support that the child or young person needs to prepare for adulthood; and
 - d. all outcomes include detail and are measurable so that children and young people receive consistent support.
 5. Leaders across the partnership will continue to strengthen their work to reduce the long waits for neurodevelopmental assessment pathways. In addition, leaders will intensify service improvements for occupational therapy and speech and language therapy at a universal and targeted level to reduce waiting times. This will ensure that children and young people receive support at the right time.
- 2.7 The refreshed vision and Strategy (appendix 1) will also complement and support delivery of both Council and partner strategic priorities including the Council Plan, Year Ahead Delivery Plan, and the Rotherham Place Plan.
- 2.8 As agreed by Cabinet, a public consultation has taken place to seek the views of stakeholders, parents/carers, the general public and anyone who may be affected by the Strategy, such as schools, the young people themselves, and groups representing the voices of families, including the Parent Carer Forum.
- 2.9 In order to ensure a good level of engagement in the consultation, officers have undertaken a range of targeted exercises, which have directly engaged with over 289 families, young people, and school staff across 13 different face-to-face group sessions. In addition to direct engagement, a public consultation has been openly available and promoted through digital media and press releases, reaching further audiences.
- 2.10 The responses and in person feedback received have been positive with the majority of responses strongly supporting or supporting the Strategy. response summary is detailed within Appendix 2.
- 2.11 The consultation has taken the form of discussions, presentations, and meetings with:
- Council Members.
 - Members of the Public.
 - Parents / Carers.
 - Parent Carer Forum.
 - Groups representing young people and the impact upon people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), people with social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) considerations and other appropriate groups.
 - Schools whose pupils will be affected by any proposed changes, including those located in other local authority areas, and the local authorities themselves.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 Option One – Continue with the existing strategy.

This option would seek to retain the existing SEND Strategy. However, this option is not perceived to be viable as the current Strategy does not reflect the current regulatory and legislative landscape, feedback from local area inspections, nor the transformed Place partnership arrangements as part of the Integrated Care System.

3.2 Furthermore, this option does not reflect the current voice of children, young people, parents/ carers, and families.

3.3 Option Two – Adopt the refreshed Rotherham SEND Strategy (2024-2028)

Option 2 is the preferred option as it would seek to develop a refreshed vision and strategy for SEND services. The Strategy would cover a 4-year term from late 2024. The Strategy would provide clarity about the co-produced vision and future priorities for SEND services, including the 'obsessions' for practice development. The co-produced outcomes framework will enable children, young people, and families to understand the proposed impact of our actions and how this will be measured.

3.4 The Council develops its strategies and delivery plans in partnership with local people and ensures that they reflect the voices of our residents. This is integral to the expectations set by the regulatory framework.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 The refreshed vision and Strategy (appendix 1) will also complement and support delivery of both Council and partner strategic priorities including the Council Plan, Year Ahead Delivery Plan, and the Rotherham Place Plan.

4.2 As agreed by Cabinet, a public consultation has taken place to seek the views of stakeholders, parents/carers, the general public and anyone who may be affected by the Strategy, such as schools, the young people themselves, and groups representing the voices of families, including the Parent Carer Forum.

4.3 In order to ensure a good level of engagement in the consultation, officers have undertaken a range of targeted exercises, which have directly engaged with families, young people, or school staff across 13 different face- to-face group sessions. In addition to direct engagement, a public consultation has been openly available and promoted through digital media and press releases, reaching further audiences.

4.4 The consultation has taken the form of discussions, presentations, and meetings with:

- Council Members.
- Members of the Public.
- Parents / Carers.
- Parent Carer Forum.

- Groups representing young people and the impact upon people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), people with social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) considerations and other appropriate groups.
- Schools whose pupils will be affected by any proposed changes, including those located in other local authority areas, and the local authorities themselves.

4.5 Improving Lives Select Commission provide a key element of the engagement and consultation process enabling effective scrutiny on behalf of residents to shape and influence the priorities, principles and outcomes in the Strategy. The recommendations will be incorporated into the development of the Strategy and associated governance arrangements.

4.6 The responses and in person feedback received have been positive with the majority of responses strongly supporting or supporting the Strategy. Response summary is detailed within Appendix 2

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 Consultation Events September 2024

- September 2024 Strategy Workstream develop Priority Action Plans
- October 2024 work stream action plans shared with SEND Partnership Board
- November 2024 Summary of Consultation to SEND Partnership Board
- December 2024 Summary of Consultation and proposals to Improving Lives Select Commission
- December 2024 Return to Cabinet with consultation amendments

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 There are no additional direct financial implications linked to this report.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 There are no direct Legal implications linked to this report.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 There are no direct HR implications linked to this report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) provision within the Borough will give more children and young people the opportunity to access high quality provision and support.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 There are no direct implications linked to this report.

10.2 A full Equality Impact Assessment will be completed when the SEND Strategy goes to Cabinet for approval.

11. Implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 There are no direct implications linked to this report.

11.2 A full Carbon Impact Assessment will be completed when the SEND Strategy goes to Cabinet for approval.

12. Implications for Partners

12.1 The SEND Strategy development has been co-produced with all the relevant partners and voluntary sectors.

- Rotherham Parent Carer Forum
- SENDIAS
- Genuine partnerships
- Special School representatives
- Designated Medical Officer.
- Social care and early help representatives
- Mainstream School representatives.
- Commissioners

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 Lack on response to the engagement and consultation activity.

13.2 Relevant stakeholders do not support or engage in the action plan development and implementation.

Cary-Anne Sykes – Head of SEND
Approvals obtained on behalf of:

	Name	Date
The Strategic Director with responsibility for this report	Niall Devlin (On behalf of Nicola Curley)	08/11/24
Consultation undertaken with the relevant Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People - Councillor Cusworth	13/11/24

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