

Local Area SEND Self-Evaluation

January 2025

Developing our Local Area Self-Evaluation

To start the self-evaluation, managers from across the local area partnership were asked to complete service-level self-assessments that set out a determination of the quality and impact of their services; what evidence they had used to make that determination; the impact on children and families and plans for future improvements.

Three self-evaluation workshops were held in March and April 2024 to determine the partnership's position.

- The SEND Partnership Session involved representation from the SEND Management team in Children's services, health partners and the parent carer forum
- The Schools Session (Headteacher Reference Group) explored the barriers in the system from a school's perspective with SEND headteachers.
- The Preparing for Adulthood (PfA) Session bridged the gap between Children's and Adults services with colleagues from across the 14-19 team, Adult Social Care, All Age Disability, Regeneration, Children's and Health reflecting on where the system was and wasn't working from a Preparing for Adulthood perspective.

Input and feedback from the workshops was collated and synthesised into an initial high-level draft of the Local Area Self Evaluation. This was shared at a Feedback Session with the same services and stakeholders that attended the three workshops, to ensure agreement as a partnership regarding our effectiveness in improving the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND. Further revisions were then made based on feedback gathered in the session.

Two validation sessions were held with the SEND Youth Voice Group and Parent Carer Forum (Parent Carer Participation Wirral). The purposes of the sessions was to ensure that the self-evaluation reflects the lived experience of children, young people and families experience SEND in Wirral, and to incorporate their voice and feedback before findings were refreshed and finalised.

It was agreed by the Local Area SEND Partnership Board on 10th December that the self-evaluation would be accompanied by a one-page document for stakeholders which would capture the current position statement in simple, concise terms. This document should be read in conjunction with it, the *Local Area Self-Evaluation Statements*.

Children and young people's needs are identified accurately and assessed in a timely and effective way.

Current position:

Timeliness and quality of EHCPs continues to be a challenge in Wirral with the historic trend in demand growth at 15-20% year on year growth. As a result, 20-week timeliness has sat between 15-17% throughout 2024.

Typically, the quality of our therapeutic assessments means that children and young people's health needs are identified accurately.

Feedback from parents and carers around NHS commissioned health services is generally positive and the local area continues to roll out WellComm Screening to better understand speech and communication needs in children in their early years.

The local area has struggled to meet growth and demand, and there is a high level of commissioned private assessments where we are less confident in quality.

What we have done to address weaknesses, maintain or improve good practice...

Identification

Implemented a new process for health services to inform the LA about identified SEND needs in the Early Years services with health services informing the SENIF Board (Special Educational Needs Inclusion Funding) so that targeted help can be allocated appropriately into Early Years settings and families. Reintroduction and roll out of Wellcomm screening tool for all EY children to pick up communication issues earlier.

Our revised graduated approach has been co-produced. It is available on SENDLO and a version for parents will be launched, with guidance in early 2025. Through the Delivering Better Value in SEND programme, an implementation plan is being delivered, including training, introduction of *Graduates* (champions) and quality assurance. We will continue to develop and embed the graduated approach containing tools and strategies for schools to better understand and identify accurately SEND in their pupils. The next phase of the implementation includes the local health service.

Autumn 2024 saw the launch of the Access to Education Panel and the development of a Section 19 Policy. The purpose of the policy is to provide a framework and guidance where Children are not attending school and to determine whether Section 19 duties and responsibilities apply. As part of a range of support tools for schools, this mechanism can be used to access AV1 robots to facilitate remote learning in the classroom. Wirral's commissioning of 24 AV1 Robots is part of an innovative and comprehensive approach to dealing with Emotionally Based School Avoidance in the local area.

	Our SEND Performance Dashboard allows us to track activity and monitor progress.
Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment	<p>The Local Authority has invested significantly to improve EHC needs assessments and plans (£2.8m investment for 2025-26). In May 2024 an EHCP Recovery plan was adopted by Wirral's Local Area SEND Partnership Board as a result:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A full restructure to double capacity of the SEND Referral and Assessment Team (SENDSTART) which will allow them to operate on a locality-based model and focus on relationships with schools and families. • The development, in partnership with Wirral's Parent Carer Forum, of a suite of training tools and materials for induction and ongoing training in SEND Law, co-production and working with families, Systemic Practice and professional development through NASEN. • The implementation of a new case management system (Liquid Logic EYES) which will lead to more transparency and visibility a more efficient and refined EHCNA process. • We have worked with partners to revise and streamline decision-making processes for EHC Needs Assessment, implementing a new EHC Partnership Panel which started operating in September 2024. • A new EHCP Quality Assurance Framework was launched over Summer 2024. The framework is supported through Wirral Council's commissioning of Invision 360. The QA framework has a number of strands which include: internal line manager QA and final plan sign off; Locality moderation sessions held by SENDSTART Locality Managers and chaired by the SENDSTART Manager; monthly multiagency QA workshops with partners across the system including schools and health and social care representatives.
Educational Psychology	<p>Over 2024 a significant piece of work was undertaken with Wirral's EP service to understand the local offer and the barriers it faces in getting statutory returns completed in a timely way and supporting early identification and intervention. As a result, over the last 6 months of 2024 Wirral Council has looked to grow its core EP team and significantly reduce its reliance of associate and school commissioned EP advices.</p> <p>Educational Psychologists have led on the co-production of Wirral's Emotional Based School Attendance (ESBA) Strategy and approach, working with schools to better and earlier identify the triggers for EBSA. The EBSA programme started its roll out over Autumn 2024, with Wirral's Access to Education Panel providing support and challenge to schools who have pupils not attending.</p>
Diagnostic pathways	Wirral is moving to a needs-led, rather than diagnosis-led approach. With agreement from the Local Area SEND Partnership Board to roll out the Profiling Tool, piloted in Portsmouth, it is anticipated that needs will be identified and met earlier. The phased rollout of the tool has commenced. Our Sleep Programme, delivered by Koala Northwest is an example of early intervention, demonstrating that when the correct support is provided, needs are met. The Wirral SEND partnership has put

intentional effort and energy into focussing on supporting needs as they are identified as opposed to increasing the numbers of children and young people receiving or awaiting a diagnosis. A new neurodevelopmental offer model was developed by SEND partners in 2024 and has a strong emphasis on multi-agency approach to diagnosis. There have been a number of other support strategies, including the early help pathfinder work, advice clinic and text messaging service for young people. The revised neurodevelopmental model moves away from a simple pathway to diagnosis, instead creating a robust partnership culture to support children and young people with the needs they present and reduce the requirement for both diagnosis, and medications in some circumstances. This also means that children and young people who should be on a path to medical assessment receive a less arduous journey to get the clinical consideration they require.

What we understand about the impact of our arrangements on experiences and outcomes of children, young people, and their families

We understand that the improvements we are making to our local area SEND system are not yet being felt consistently by families. That said, there have been pockets of positive practice and areas where families have fed back satisfaction on the support they have received. Parents and carers tell us that our SENDLO (local offer) website is helping them to seek the help they need in a timely way and have appreciated the updates on SEND improvements and provision. We have a QA system to help us track and monitor improvements across our EHCP provision and we are in the process of embedding our QA framework to allow us to do the same across the wider SEND service provision. The waiting list for CAMHS support has reduced over the last year from 324 - 150. Educational Psychology advice within timescales is slowly improving. The average wait for a neurodevelopmental diagnosis has reduced. Positive feedback from parent and carers related to NHS commissioned services.

Our priorities to improve outcomes and experiences of children and young people with SEND

Gain consistent feedback from children, young people and parent carers to monitor impact and experience.
Embed our QA Framework to measure quality and outcomes.
Continue to reduce waiting times and access to services across the spectrum of support.
Ensure the Graduated Approach implementation plan is fully delivered and that *Graduates* are supported to deliver their role.
Continue to deliver recovery plans for EHCPs, Speech and Language Therapy and the Neurodevelopmental pathway.
Universal roll out of WellComm screening through the Early Years Strategy to improve school readiness and progress and achievement in KS2.
Evaluate the effectiveness of the Access to Education Panel and its impact on school attendance.

Children, young people and their families participate in decision-making about their individual plans and support.

Current position:

There are pockets of good practice in involving children, young people and families in decision-making. However, this is inconsistent across the local area, and we are not content that there is a systematic approach.

We recognise the voice of children and young people was not explicit in decision-making and we are taking steps to ensure that it is at the centre of young people's plans.

Despite this, there remain many instances, particularly in the delivery of EOTAS packages, where support is specifically developed around the views and wishes of young people and families. Incorporating children, young people and family views in decision-making will be a key focus in Wirral's new 2024-8 SEND & Alternative Provision Strategy, which will focus on inclusion.

What we have done to address weaknesses, maintain or improve good practice...

Parent Carer Forum

The parent carer forum, PCPW, have "a place at the table", are embedded in the LASPB and its subgroups, and are highly valued. PCPW attendance at meetings has been steady, with only 2 months when 1 meeting has been missed. The Assistant Director for SEND attends the weekly PCPW Steering Groups, with only one meeting missed since April 2024. The Director for Children, Families and Education has attended all monthly in-person meetings of the Steering Group over the same period. Since the LASPB was launched in April 2024, the following LASPB Leaders have met with PCPW:

- Chief Executive, Paul Satoor
- Council Leader, Cllr Paul Stuart
- ICB Place Director, Simon Banks
- Director for Adult Social Care, Health and Strategic Commissioning, Sayyed Osman
- Lead Member for Children, Cllr Stephen Bennett
- Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board, Cllr Jean Robinson

Co-production

We include the parent-carer forum in our strategic developments and seek our a broader range of parents and carers for decision-making for SEND service development. We have a SEND Youth Voice Group which is actively involved in co-production activity.

We developed a Self-Evaluation and JSNA. Both required extensive engagement and production from all parties, and we developed these jointly.

Young people have also been involved in the commissioning of some of our SEND joint services, and we are committed to doing more of this.

	<p>Young people co-produced our All-Age Disability Service, they helped develop our Branch emotional wellbeing service and were involved in the creation of our SENDLO website.</p> <p>Our joint training programme has been developed with our parent carer forum, including training in SEND Law, co-production and working with families, Systemic Practice and professional development through NASEN.</p> <p>We have a Co-production Charter and training on Co-production for staff, which has been completed by 400+ staff in Children's Services.</p>
Children and young people's voices	<p>We have involved children and young people in some strategic developments but recognise we can go much further. The experience of children and young people being able to have a say about the support they receive is variable and as such the child's voice is a strategic priority as we move forward into 2025. Restructuring the Local Authority's SEND service has allowed for capacity to improve that position.</p>
Casework	<p>There are good examples of practice in the core Educational Psychology Team, with plans being informed by children and family voice.</p> <p>Staff in the Virtual School Teams can evidence how children with SEND are actively contributing to their Personal Education Plans. We see good examples of schools completing PEPs with children and young people, where their views are clear and supported.</p> <p>Our Speech and Language Therapy services routinely include young people in the creation of their plans.</p> <p>We know the experience of individual and parents/ carers are that they don't feel heard. We recognise that historically we have not provided sufficient transparency on decision-making.</p> <p>NHS Friends and Family Test (FFT) seeks to incorporate the views of children and young people by creatively and inclusively gathering their on the feedback patient experience to improve services.</p>
<p>What we understand about the impact of our arrangements on experiences and outcomes of children, young people, and their families</p>	
<p>The increase in need across SEND over the last few years has impacted on our ability to co-produce plans and routinely involve families in the decision-making process. The increased capacity in the SENDSTART Team combined with the pace of change is now allowing us to have the drive we need to ensure the involvement of our children and young people in planning, both on an individual level as well as strategic is critically important.</p> <p>Schools Involving Children & Young People in Reviews - Hayfield School Case Study</p> <p>A case study of a local specialist school, Hayfield, shows how pupils are actively involved in their annual review process. When going through EHCPs teachers will, for example, check that Section A (views and aspirations) still match and give the child the opportunity to add to this, to ensure their voice is heard on the paperwork. One teacher cited asking children to write down something nice about their peers to be included in the EHCP, modelling questions about pupil's aspirations by sharing their own experiences so that have an understanding what they can say, repeating this same process for questions around independent living and health.</p>	

Our priorities to improve outcomes and experiences of children and young people with SEND

- Implement the SEND & Alternative Provision Strategy setting out participation as a priority.
- Robust and routine monitoring of participation improvements using the QA framework.
- Continue delivering co-production training across local area organisations.
- Consistently involve children and young people in the commissioning of SEND related contracts.
- Embed Preparing for Adulthood Protocols ensuring aspirations are captured in reviews and plans.
- Provide development opportunities to support workforce with communication to ensure children and young people's experiences are heard and validated and their views acted upon.
- Develop our Participation and Engagement sub-group to have oversight of all P&E activity and improvement work across the SEND system.
- Ensure the views of young people not in education are sought and evidenced.

Children and young people receive the right help and support at the right time.

Current position:

Overall there is a strong universal offer for children, young people and families in Wirral. However, where needs require a more targeted offer and approach, evidence suggests that there is more work required to ensure that children and young people constantly receive the right help and support at the right time.

Wirral is beginning to show signs in some areas of developing strong practice around the quality of access to help and support. However, while they are reducing, waiting times are still too long in some areas and there are considerable demand issues for services.

Strategically, the understanding of need is better, and the local area has published a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for SEND which highlights areas for focus.

What we have done to address weaknesses, maintain or improve good practice...

Local Offer	A project group supported the development and launch of our new local offer website, SENDLO, which is consistently visited by 13,000 to 15,000 viewers per month. The Department for Education and NHS England agreed that sufficient progress has been made for the local offer to be moved from the WSoA improvement to <i>business as usual</i> . SENDLO Wirral live events are taking place across the borough, attended by a range of service providers and families. We are consistently receiving positive feedback on these events.
Education, Health and Care Plans	We have restructured our EHCNA referral and assessment team: SENDSTART and committed significant investment so that more children who require an EHCP are able to within the statutory timescales. We have worked with partners to revise and streamline decision making processes for EHCNA implementing a new EHC Partnership Panel which commenced in September 2024, supporting decisions for EHCNA and issuing of EHCPs. A new EHCP QA framework was launched over Summer 2024. The framework is supported through Wirral Council's commissioning of Invision 360. The QA framework has a number of strands which include: internal line manager QA and final plan sign off; Locality moderation sessions held by SENDSTART Locality Managers and chaired by the SENDSTART Manager; monthly multiagency QA workshops with partners across the system including schools and health and social care representatives.
Education, Health and Care Plan Review	A fully reviewed and relaunched annual review process provides clarity and assurance to parents and partners. Training for SENCOs and SEND staff has been delivered as their role in Annual Reviews is critical. With the new EYES System, the ability to track and monitor EHCPs and Annual Reviews will be greatly improved.

	<p>The most recent performance data reports that 33% of Annual Reviews are being completed within the 12-week timescale. The Local Area SEND Partnership Board has held a <i>Deep Dive</i> into EHCPs to better understand the challenges and blockages within the system. A detailed EHCP Recovery Plan has been implemented and is kept under constant review by the Board, which reports directly to the Health & Wellbeing Board. Scrutiny and accountability is at its strongest. The performance dashboard and service scorecards provided to the Local Area SEND Board have enabled closer scrutiny of the partnership contribution to EHCPs and Annual Reviews.</p> <p>Priority for Annual Review is given to transition points and vulnerable learners (those in care or leaving care). A recent inspection of Willowtree, the Council’s residential provision for children with complex needs, noted that Annual Reviews of EHCPs had improved since the previous visit.</p>
<p>Inclusive mainstream education provision</p>	<p>We have reviewed and published a SEND Sufficiency Strategy. A partnership Sufficiency Steering Group, which includes the parent carer forum, is regularly meeting to progress the strategy.</p> <p>We have commissioned additional Resourced Provision in mainstream primary and secondary schools which is underpinned by a Service Level agreement and specification for each provision. The overall sufficiency plan will create an additional 500 resource provision places in mainstream schools.</p> <p>In 2025, there will be significant growth of resource provision is within secondary education settings. A sector-led approach is being taken, with an experienced Resource Provision Lead working alongside the Local Authority to support implementation of new provision.</p> <p>Plans are emerging for post-16 provision suited to those young people with SEND who are more academically able. Resourced Provision details are published on SENDLO local offer website.</p> <p>We commissioned a specialist School Assurance Professional in 2023-24 to quality assure existing Resourced Provision and provide a report to the LA on best practice.</p> <p>We have commissioned a SEND consultant for 2024-25 for SEND Governor training, independent SEND reviews of specific schools, and developing cohort support networks.</p> <p>We have established an Access to Education Panel and draft Section 19 policy to ensure that resources and “support and challenge” are appropriately targeted.</p>
<p>Specialist education places and provision</p>	<p>We have commissioned short-term early intervention Inclusion Nurture Provision in mainstream primary schools for non-EHCP pupils; underpinned by a Service Level Agreement and specification for each setting. This provision is for pupils who need extensive and substantive support to meet their identified needs beyond what is ordinarily accessible in a mainstream setting.</p>

	<p>We assigned a SEND commissioning officer to each Wirral-hosted non-maintained, independent & independent special school (NMISS) for school QA and termly placement monitoring visits.</p> <p>We have worked collaboratively with Liverpool City Region commissioners for joint QA visits for out of borough NMISS. Adhered to the Wirral Quality Monitoring framework for NMISS.</p> <p>We have worked collaboratively with neighbouring LAs to establish a joined-up approach to managing uplifts requests from NMISS and ensuring clarity and transparency of costs for NMISS placements.</p>
Alternative Provision	<p>We have commissioned contracts for KS2, KS3 and KS4 Permanently excluded pupils in Wirral.</p> <p>KS4 split into 3 parts across geographical regions responding to the needs of the children in the borough.</p> <p>Half-termly quality assurance visits are taking place with commissioned schools.</p>
Health support	<p>New governance arrangements have been positive in ensuring that health agencies and the ICB understand and are fulfilling their role in SEND improvement. The Place Director for the ICB, Associate Director for Quality and Safety Improvement are fully engaged in system leadership. Introduction of a Deputy Director has helped to drive improvement at pace. DCOs have been fully engaged in the continuous improvement agenda and quality assurance activity. Despite the positive engagement of leaders at a local level, capacity for improvement at pace has been restricted due to inability of the Cheshire and Merseyside ICB to further invest in both Speech & Language and Neurodevelopmental Offer. Through the Local Area SEND Partnership Board, a evaluation of waiting times, backlog, and access to services was undertaken. This provided a series of options for the Cheshire and Merseyside ICB to tackle the issues, each requiring additional, in-year financial investment. Unfortunately, the funding agreed does not enable the recovery work to be completed at pace. A small amount has been provided and is being used to improve system and process.</p> <p>The Leader of the Council, Chief Executive, DCS and Director of Adult Health and Care Services are engaging with the Chief Executive of Cheshire and Merseyside ICB to keep this under review.</p> <p>Through the Delivering Better Value in SEND initiative, we are including health services in our Graduated Approach. This includes launching the Profiling Tool which was piloted in Portsmouth. Both practitioners and parents are positive about this tool, which will have an initial test phase of 50 children starting in January 2025, with full roll out expected by easter. The tool seeks to identify and meet need earlier and to reduce inappropriate referrals onto health pathways.</p> <p>Improvements have been made to early support in speech and language. Working with system partners in early years, Children’s Centres and settings, a co-ordinated approach is in place as part of the Graduated Approach. Moving forward, Speech and Language commissioning will be included within the Section 75 agreement, enabling a more coherent offer to be available to Wirral children.</p>

	Positive improvements have been made in assessment and access to Occupational Therapy over the previous 12 months.
Social care support	<p>We have 372 young people with SEND on a child protection plan and there are 1573 of these young people who are classed as Child In Need. Of the 2670 children and young people with SEND, 725 are children who are Looked After. We have 534 of our young people open to social care with an EHCP, which represents 20%.</p> <p>The DSCO role is being reviewed and additional capacity for strengthening the social care support in EHCPs will be made available in 2025.</p> <p>A recent meeting between the parent carer forum and Children's Services representatives focused on social care support and has identified several areas of focus.</p> <p>Children's and Adult Services are working together to develop a joined Preparation for Adulthood approach and team. The Target Operating Model is in development and is being co-produced with parent carers and young people. This will be aligned with the recently launched All Age Disability Strategy and Autism Strategy.</p>
Emotional health and wellbeing	<p>Through the joint commissioning of a new emotional health and wellbeing partnership service, <i>Branch</i>, which provides a single point of access to services by matching children and young people to appropriate support, be that self-help or professional support and the awareness of this service across families and professionals is growing.</p> <p>We have an improved offer locally as we continue to embrace our Graduated Approach and our focus on how we ensure children and young people have the right support at the right time for them. The parent-led SEND Offer delivered through the Family Hubs is having an impact and hubs are being used by parent support groups such as COSMOS to engage with their members.</p>
Early intervention	<p>Graduated Approach roll out means children have the right support at the time they need it, across the local offer.</p> <p>The launch of family hubs across the borough has enabled families to seek support at the earliest point. The SEND offer delivered via Family Hubs is co-produced, with members of parent support group, COSMOS, playing a key role.</p> <p>The launch of the SENDLO website enables families to seek out what supports suit their individual circumstances at a time they feel ready. The local offer is linked to Wirral's award-winning Family Toolbox website, promoting community-led earliest help.</p> <p>Understanding of the Local Offer across the Borough has improved.</p> <p>The universal offer includes an advice line and text service for young people; Chat Health.</p> <p>Drop-In clinics both in school and outside of school are available for children and their parent carers.</p> <p>The implementation of Branch, a single point of access for a range of resources and coordination of local services. Designed as an easily accessible front door for additional bespoke support for more complex needs. This means Children's need are identified early with the appropriate resources aligned to meet need.</p> <p>An Inclusion Team was established by the Local Authority, working closely with the SEND Service.</p>

What we understand about the impact of our arrangements on experiences and outcomes of children and young people

We have some work to do in embedding the QA framework to have an accurate measure of outcomes and impact from our offer of support. This will follow what has been transformational changes implemented within the LA SEND service (SENDSTART).

We have good oversight of the children and young people with SEND open to our social care services and the children are visible within our system, we have a number of routes to support young people and their families to share their views with us, however, on a case level basis there is room for improvement.

Joint Commissioning Enhancing Our Universal Offer

The approach to joint commissioning of speech and language through the balanced system model ensures all professionals working across the system are joined up and supporting each other. This is demonstrated through speech and language in early years and the use of the WELCOMM assessments with evidence-based resources and reach down support from the specialist service. This ensures children's needs are identified early on and ensure they receive the right support.

Neurodevelopmental Offer

A new neurodevelopmental model was developed in 2023-24, through collaboration with SEND partners, including health, education and families with lived experience. Its aim is to improve support for children and young people with neurodivergent conditions and adopt an multi-disciplinary team approach to diagnosis.

The implementation of the Portsmouth model is seen as best practice and is a move towards a needs-led approach and efforts to reduce waiting times. The focus on using multi-disciplinary teams for assessment and post diagnostic support, particularly for ADHD is in the early stages of implementation with challenges in managing rising demand and ensuring sufficient resources to meet capacity. This had led to stronger early support so children are not reliant on a diagnosis or an EHCO to get support and improved identification of needs of individual children and matching to appropriate support.

Sleep Programme, Koala Northwest

An audit undertaken in Community Paediatrics identified poor sleep to be a significant problem in patients with neurodiversity or neurodisability with 66% of patients complaining of sleep disturbance. Melatonin is used in approximately 35% of cases with suspected or confirmed diagnosis of ADHD or ASD. Koala Northwest have been delivering a Sleep Support Service since 2019 and have Sleep Practitioners trained in a specialism to support families with children who are neurodiverse. They deliver an evidence-based, non-pharmacological, sleep management approach for parents of neurodiverse children and young people. An independent evaluation carried out as part of the project found that across Wirral and Cheshire West, Koala have worked with 491 families with a child either on the pathway or diagnosed with ASD/ ADHD. 165 (33.6%) of those families reported that they reduced or stopped melatonin after having sleep support. 237 families reported that they felt they no longer needed to ask for prescription for melatonin. This equates to 48% of children who would previously have been prescribed melatonin. Wirral had 18 families on melatonin since April 2023 and 15 of those reported they have stopped using it or reduced the dosage. Out of the 200 families worked with in Wirral, 111 families that stated at the beginning of the sleep intervention they wanted to start melatonin, once they completed the course 73 stated

they felt they no longer needed melatonin. This equated to 65% of children who would previously have been prescribed melatonin. For July-Sept 2024, families that have completed the programme reported the following outcomes: 76% said that their children are sleeping better, 70% said that their children's wellbeing has improved, 88% report improved parenting and 95% stated that their mental health had improved.

Our priorities to improve outcomes and experiences of children and young people with SEND

Effective implementation and embedding of the Graduated Approach and easier access to services

Increased focus on SEND training across the local area through Family Hubs model

Identifying commissioning gaps through good data intelligence to support quality of neurodevelopmental pathway

Understand the wider regional landscape to ensure consistency of service provision

Implementation of the multi-disciplinary team model for assessments and diagnosis

Ensure the DCSSO is quality assuring and driving improvements across social care

Ensure good communication with families to enable an understanding of improvement work and the results of their feedback

Children and young people are well prepared for their next steps and achieve strong outcomes.

Current position:

Our data confirms that children and young people achieve strong outcomes compared to the national average especially in the early years and KS4 and 5 with specific programmes in place to achieve this. Data on reading, writing and maths at KS2, KS4 for EHCP, SEN Support are overall positive

Some issues continue to exist around consistency and many parents feel that their child/young person are not quite ready for their next steps. Whilst this contrasts with what young people have told us and the data evidence, we recognise that families lack confidence that young people are ready.

As an area Wirral compares favourably with statistical neighbours for SEND NEET and where innovative post 16 provision such as the supported internships scheme are in place, outcomes for those young people are better than in other areas.

Despite an employment market that is dominated with SMEs and micro businesses Wirral continues to have a larger proportion of adults with learning difficulties in employment and has maintained an upward trend since the Covid pandemic.

What we have done to address weaknesses, maintain or improve good practice...

Education and employment

Of all pupils identified as having SEND; as attending an education setting on Wirral and residing in Wirral (via the School Census), 37.5% (4,778 Children and Young People) have an EHCP, 62.5% (7,956 Children and Young People) have SEN Support. Of those pupils with an EHCP in an education setting on Wirral, the largest proportion are aged 12 years old, this equates to 10.6% of the total EHCP population and compares to the England rate, where 9.2% of the EHCP population is aged 12 years old.

For Pupils with SEN Support in an education setting on Wirral, the largest proportion are also aged 12 years old, equating to 10.8% of all pupils with SEN Support. Rates of SEN Support is lower for pupils aged 10 years and younger on Wirral compared to England and higher for those aged 11 years and older.

The most common Primary Need amongst pupils with SEND in an education setting on Wirral is Social, Emotional and Mental Health, accounting for 27.5% of all Primary Needs. This is followed by Speech, Language and Communication (23.3%) and then Specific Learning Difficulties (13.9%) of all Primary Needs.

The most common Primary Need for pupils with an EHCP in an education setting on Wirral is Social, Emotional and Mental Health, accounting for 23.7% of all Primary Needs. This is followed by Autistic Spectrum Disorder (22.9%) and Speech, Language and Communication needs (19.9%).

	<p>The most common primary need type for pupils with SEN Support in an education setting on Wirral is Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs, accounting for 29.3% of Primary needs, which compares to the rate in England at 22.3%. The largest proportion of pupils with SEND in an education setting on Wirral reside in Bidston St. James. This ward accounts for 9.0% (1,117 Children and Young People) of all those with SEND.</p> <p>For all pupils with SEND settings, the majority attend mainstream Primary, with this making up 43.3% of where all SEND pupils are educated. 37.8% in mainstream Secondary, 15.3% in a Special school and 0.8% in mainstream Nursey. Of the 15.3% in a special school, 46.0% attend secondary special school, 46.2% primary special school and 0.1% nursery special school.</p> <p>For Wirral pupils with an EHCP and in an education setting on Wirral, 51.0% are eligible for Free School Meals. This is higher than the England rate for 2023/24, which was 42.2%. For pupils with SEN Support the rate is 48.6%, compared to the England 2023/24 rate of 38.3%.</p> <p>For Academic Year 23/24 Attendance for pupils with SEND was 86.9%. For pupils with an EHCP, attendance for Academic Year 23/24 was 85.4%. Of this Primary was 89.4%, Secondary was 77.6% and Special was 86.6%. For pupils with SEN Support, Academic Year 23/24 attendance was 89.9%. Of this, Primary was 92.2%, Secondary was 86.6% and Special was 44.5%.</p> <p>For those with an EHCP, latest figures for 2024/25 shows that, those achieving the expected level of development in reading in KS1 was 11%, for writing it was 4% and maths it was 12%. For those with an SEN support, latest figures for 2024/25 shows that, those achieving the expected level of development in reading in KS1 was 33%, for writing it was 18% and maths it was 35%.</p> <p>Performance data for young people aged 18-24 with SEND in EET has improved considerably, with 71.5% being in EET against 44.8% the year before. A dedicated Career Connect Officer works with the Council and its SEND/14-19 Team to target those young people.</p> <p>September Guarantee remains a priority to assist young people with SEND having an EET destination. Focus is being given to a cohort of 42 young people who, as of November 2024, do not yet have an intended destination.</p>
<p>Friends, relationships, and community</p>	<p>The SEND Youth Voice Group is a well-established, however, its representation is limited. The group are active, hosting an annual conference and taking part in the Youth Parliament arrangements. A member of this group sits on the Liverpool City Region Young Combined Authority Group, which meets with the Metro Mayor. This has given wider access to the voice of Wirral young people with disabilities to have opinions on 5 key areas as well as engaging them in the development of employment, education, and training in LCR areas.</p> <p>The SEND Youth Voice Group has engaged with <i>Outside</i>. Run by trained facilitators, young people can have a voice on issues which affect them when in education or when with adults at home or in the community. This has been an excellent opportunity to raise issues, including hate and mate crime, grooming, drugs and alcohol and inappropriate relationships.</p>

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Working with the Council's Leisure Services, the HAF offer was improved for 2024-25 to include more opportunities for children and young people with SEND. HAF activity was assessed by young people from SEND Youth voice group- our Young Inspectors. They developed, trained, and engaged in the visits and assessed and asked questions of practitioners. This meant that they could feed back their findings on all levels of offer, duty, safeguarding, diversity, and inclusion. The Active All Sports Programme, which was jointly funded, provided activities and opportunities to engage with peers for 3,240 children and young people with SEND. Feedback from this initiative is overwhelmingly positive. In addition to this, The Hive, Wirral's Youth Zone provides an active inclusion offer. With over 30% of its 2,800 members having SEN needs, the Hive offers 2 inclusions sessions per week. This includes a weekend session for children with SEND, their siblings and parents. Attendance at this session is consistently over 100 per week. SEND specific sessions are appreciated by families, but the Hive is ensuring that all sessions are inclusive and has trained staff to deliver this.

SENDLO, our local offer website, is publishing on average 12 news stories per month, lots of which are aimed at supporting children and young people to develop friendships and engage with their local community. Recent promotions include:

- Gilmoor Recycling Discovery Centre offering relaxed SEN sessions for autistic visitors
- Floral Pavilion offering SEN friendly pantomime performances
- Creative arts sessions at the Bloom Building with The Open Door charity
- Peruvian Adventure: Our Peru Family Box Launch
- Tots to Teens SEND Fun Sessions at The Sensory Shack

Over the summer a series of events were hosted for families of children with complex needs, developed in direct response to parents and carers highlighting the lack of summer holiday provision for their children. Using a family time session, trained staff supported the children to have fun in a safe environment whilst parent/carers engaged with LA staff and helped build complex needs focussed content for the SENDLO website. Options were explored for what good holiday provision looked like and staff from health, all age disability and leisure joined sessions to listen and learn from the Parent/Carers. The pilot was a huge success and the parents all left positive feedback during the full 4-week programme. As well as contributing to future service delivery, parents made positive links and benefitted from peer support.

	<p>The influence of Senior Leadership commitment to SEND, as corporate parents, is having an impact on the wider community offer, which can be evidenced through developments such as the Floral Pavilion offering SEN friendly pantomime performances this year and Birkenhead Park Visitors Centre opening accessible changing facilities.</p>
<p>Independent living</p>	<p>In October 2024, the first <i>Preparation for Adulthood Festival</i> took place, led by the parent carer forum. More than 500 local people came along to find out about the support available for families and SEND young people across Wirral. The marketplace hosted more than 50 stalls offering a wide range of services and advice. The event was a great opportunity to network for not just parents/carers but also service providers. The festival was co-produced by Parent Carer Participation (PCPW), SENDIASS and partners at Wirral Council and the NHS. Chair of PCPW, said: "It was a true piece of co-production from the outset. It was such a positive experience and the whole journey was really enjoyable."</p> <p>"It showed us that true coproduction can't just be done in a meeting room for an hour or two. It takes time and relationship building for it to be valuable. This event gave us an example of how this can be done from the ground up."</p> <p>Wirral Council has co-produced a published a new All Age Disability Strategy. It recognises that a high proportion (22.2%) of people in Wirral live with some kind of disability (as defined by the Equality Act 2010). This is 2.8% higher than across the North West and 4.9% higher than England. This proportion is projected to increase. Delivering Better Value analysis forecasts Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) caseloads in Wirral to increase from 2,700 in 2023, to 4,200 by 2028. The All Age Disability Strategy aims to improve outcomes for the people in Wirral who have a disability. It also provides strategic direction for the next 5 years to enable the Council to plan ahead and provide improved services, across housing and employment, that support people to live as independently as possible and can prevent needs from escalating. Preventative care not only improves outcomes for residents but can reduce cost to councils across a resident's lifetime. There are five core values that underpin the strategy, they are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person-centred – 'placing the person at the heart of everything we do' • Working Together – 'Coproducting and collaborating for the best outcomes' • Advocacy – 'giving everybody the equal opportunity to have their voice heard' • Integrity – 'doing the right thing for the right reasons' • Quality – 'being outstanding in everything we do' <p>Wirral Council has co-produced an Autism Strategy. The purpose of this strategy is to ensure that there is the right support at the right time for autistic people, their carers and their families. The Vision is that autistic people of all ages in Wirral can maximise their potential and live a full and active life within a society that accepts and understands them. That they can access diagnosis and support if they need it and can depend on mainstream public services to treat them fairly as individuals. To achieve this shared vision, this strategy outlines three key priorities over the next five years which is aligned to the All Age Disability Strategy. These are:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autistic people have the right information and support • Autistic people live fulfilling lives with access to employment, volunteering and social opportunities • Autistic people are safe and protected <p>Aligned to the Autism Strategy is a new Cheshire and Merseyside Learning Difficulties and Autism Housing Strategy which seeks to ensure sufficiency of property which will enable young people to live independently or with the right levels of support in the future. Young people with SEND were involved in the development.</p> <p>Children’s and Adult Services are working more closely on these strategies and on the development of a Targeted Operating Model for Preparation for Adulthood. Co-production is at the heart of the approach and this is appreciated with one young person reflecting on their contribution, “I am so proud of myself and what I have done.”</p> <p>As above, we will focus on our transitions planning in the coming years so we are clear about what children and young people need to live with as much independence as possible. We will plan ahead for young people and listen to what their own aspirations for adulthood are.</p> <p>In November 2024, the Children, Young People and Education Committee gave approval for a review of the Home to School Transport policy. Wirral Council provides transport for 1853 children with a door to school service, this mainly support young people who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The intention is to develop a Assisted Travel Policy which will aim to promote independence through less reliance on door to school services and increased use of pick up points and travel training.</p>
Health	<p>Our partnership work has been reliant on our health partners’ contributions to transformative change and their participation in the Graduated Approach and Local Offer have meant that children and young people, particularly those with a neurodivergent profile will enter the system at the correct point and allow the reduction of waiting lists for a diagnosis where that is the correct path for them.</p>
What we understand about the impact of our arrangements on experiences and outcomes of young people	
<p>Understanding the impact of the support we offer is an area of focus for our 2024 Alternative Provision and SEND Strategy and is recognised by our SEND Partnership Board as an area of improvement. We have a strong basis from which to drive improvements, because we have made some fundamental changes to the way we work as a partnership.</p> <p>Our partnership is gaining strength as we increase the range of organisations with whom we work. This is most evident in the range of third sector organisations and new parent support groups that are using SENDLO and Family Hubs to engage.</p> <p>We can evidence increased co-production and joint approaches. New strategies are attempting to create alignment between children’s and adult services, which we hope to strengthen through a combined Preparation for Adulthood delivery model.</p>	

Supported Internships

Two thirds of young people who were engaged in supported internships in 2023/24 gained paid employment following the end of their programme. This is far higher than the national employment rate.

Preparation for Adulthood

Our 16-19 provision is established and most young people have a destination aged 16.

The Wirral Met offer post-16 offer is broad, holistic and graded 'outstanding' by Ofsted (2023).

There are settings delivering excellent practice in Preparing for Adulthood, such as Foxfield School. The school's roadmap event takes place for careers, information, advice and guidance, and was developed in partnership with Wirral Met College.

Our priorities to improve outcomes and experiences of young people with SEND

Embed a robust approach to annual reviews and monitor and track progress through our QAF framework

Whilst the quality of the 16-19 provision available within Wirral is strong, work is required to prevent young people with more complex learning needs going to Out of Borough placements through the development of local provision and improved transitions between education and employment or, where appropriate, social care packages

Further work needs to be done with schools to ensure there is a good understanding of the full post-16 offer of young people with SEND and that transition is effective and well supported.

Transitions panel is needed to improve early planning for young people coming through to adult services.

Children and young people with SEND are valued, visible and included in their communities.

Current position:

There is a good breadth of offer to ensure children and young people with SEND are valued and included.

We recognise this is an areas where further work is required to ensure this becomes a ubiquitous element of our culture.

In the best cases young people tell us that they value the range of the community offer available to them, both specialist and universal, but this is not always a consistent lived experience for many children and young people in Wirral.

What we have done to address weaknesses, maintain or improve good practice...

Friends, relationships, and community

The SEND Youth Voice Group is a well-established, however, its representation is limited. The group are active, hosting an annual conference and taking part in the Youth Parliament arrangements. A member of this group sits on the Liverpool City Region Young Combined Authority Group, which meets with the Metro Mayor. This has given wider access to the voice of Wirral young people with disabilities to have opinions on 5 key areas as well as engaging them in the development of employment, education, and training in LCR areas.

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	<p>offers 2 inclusions sessions per week. This includes a weekend session for children with SEND, their siblings and parents. Attendance at this session is consistently over 100 per week. SEND specific sessions are appreciated by families, but the Hive is ensuring that all sessions are inclusive and has trained staff to deliver this.</p> <p>SENDLO, our local offer website, is publishing on average 12 news stories per month, lots of which are aimed at supporting children and young people to develop friendships and engage with their local community. Recent promotions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gilmooss Recycling Discovery Centre offering relaxed SEN sessions for autistic visitors • Floral Pavilion offering SEN friendly pantomime performances • Creative arts sessions at the Bloom Building with The Open Door charity • Peruvian Adventure: Our Peru Family Box Launch • Tots to Teens SEND Fun Sessions at The Sensory Shack <p>Over the summer a series of events were hosted for families of children with complex needs, developed in direct response to parents and carers highlighting the lack of summer holiday provision for their children. Using a family time session, trained staff supported the children to have fun in a safe environment whilst parent/carers engaged with LA staff and helped build complex needs focussed content for the SENDLO website. Options were explored for what good holiday provision looked like and staff from health, all age disability and leisure joined sessions to listen and learn from the Parent/Carers. The pilot was a huge success and the parents all left positive feedback during the full 4-week programme. As well as contributing to future service delivery, parents made positive links and benefitted from peer support.</p> <p>The influence of Senior Leadership commitment to SEND, as corporate parents, is having an impact on the wider community offer, which can be evidenced through developments such as the Floral Pavilion offering SEN friendly pantomime performances this year and Birkenhead Park Visitors Centre opening accessible changing facilities.</p> <p>Our contextual Safeguarding approach ensures that young people with SEND, along with all other young people are seen and heard and that issues of exploitation can be spotted early by communities and practitioners alike</p>
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What we understand about the impact of our arrangements on experiences and outcomes of young people

Short Breaks Offer
 Our Short Breaks offer aims strengthen the resilience of children and young people and family capacity, therefore de-escalating the interventions that might be required for pupils at risk of moving from mainstream to specialist settings, or into care. This service is extremely valued in Wirral.

Feedback suggests that children and young people feel that their experience of Short Breaks is positive and that their voices are listened to. Children and young people influence planning and service design, and the majority will say that the service helps them to reach their potential by developing new friendships, skills, self-confidence and links to other activities. Parents and carers have said that the Short Breaks offer helps them to feel more resilient and able to deal with caring responsibilities. Parent/Carers feel that Short Breaks are paramount in ensuring families are given the correct level of support when they need it most.

Participation & Engagement Work Experience Case Study

Following concerns raised by a parent/carer around the care received by a young person with SEND, a 3-day-a-week placement was established in the Participation & Engagement Team. Using the 'ESP model' (Educational, Professional and Self-Developmental), the Participation & Engagement Team Leader worked to identify 'a rounded development of needs' matched to the placement, and established a placement plan mapped against the '4 pillars of SEND Need'. Through this placement, the young person has supported motion development work in the SEND Youth Voice Group, worked on the Wirral Cool Youth Environment group, been an ambassador at the SENDLO Parent/Carer Event and engaged in consultation on the redesign of Liverpool Waterfront. In the young person's daily reflections, they identified the development of reading, typing, time management and organisational skills, alongside learning how to plan event, speak publicly and communicate with professionals. Their overall feedback on the placement stated: 'This has been the best thing. I have been supported as a young youth worker with a disability, and have achieved things. I am so proud of myself and what I have done'

Our priorities to improve outcomes and experiences of young people with SEND

To gain a better understand how young people feel valued, visible and included

Ensure the voice and views of children and young people are central to the 2024 Alternative Provision and SEND Strategy Co-production and working together to understand better the voice of children and young people will be at the heart of our approach to improving the local offer.

Ensure data captures areas of local unmet need so steps can be taken to ensure all young people have fair access to community resources

Ensure the community voice is present within the strategic planning and development of services

Leaders are ambitious for children and young people with SEND

Current position:

Our new governance structure and improvement programme are helping to ensure leaders are actively involved and ambitious for children and young people with SEND.

We are creating a culture where we have high aspirations and that children and young people with SEND are visible, this was evident at the Council meeting of 2nd December 2024, when the Labour Group presented a motion on SEND, securing unanimous support to lobby government on behalf of children and young people with SEND and their families.

We are starting to see a difference through our Local Area SEND Partnership Board and subgroups. We still have work to do in this area and our wish is to ensure Wirral children and young people with SEND are given the support that they need to live happy, healthy lives doing the things they love.

What we have done to address weaknesses, maintain or improve good practice...

<p>Local Area SEND Partnership Board</p>	<p>The Board is chaired by the Council’s Chief Executive and attended by the Place Director of the Integrated Care Board, along with key health partners.</p> <p>Attendance records for the Local Area SEND Partnership Board demonstrate excellent attendance across stakeholder.</p> <p>There is member oversight of the Board from the leader of Wirral Borough Council, the Lead Member for Children’s Services (Chair of the Children’s Committee) and Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board</p> <p>We are starting to see progress through our SEND Board activity and related sub-groups, delivery plans and workstreams (DBV) and effectively closing actions from our Written Statement of Action and moving these actions into core business.</p> <p>In December 2024, SENDLO featured an article to introduce the Local Area SEND Partnership Board, which included pen profiles of members to help Wirral’s SEND community have a better understanding of who they are, their roles, and experience.</p>
<p>Leadership visibility</p>	<p>Leaders have increased their engagement with the Parent Carer Forum and held sessions with young people to understand their experiences and wishes for how services should be shaped as we go forward and this helps form the basis of our 2025 Alternative Provision and SEND Strategy. Since the LASPB was launched in April 2024, the following LASPB Leaders have met with PCPW:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chief Executive, Paul Satoor - Council Leader, Cllr Paul Stuart - ICB Place Director, Simon Banks

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Director for Adult Social Care, Health and Strategic Commissioning, Sayyed Osman - Lead Member for Children, Cllr Stephen Bennett - Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board, Cllr Jean Robinson <p>The SEND Partnership Board members wish to hear for themselves what work is taking place to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND. This is evidenced in the recent 'Leadership Walkabouts' which was a series of visits to frontline services to meet professionals, volunteers and service users. The walkabouts were greatly appreciated by staff across organisations, who fed back positively.</p> <p>Leaders actively invite representatives of the SEND Youth Voice Group to contribute to key Council events, for example the SEND Youth Voice Group participated in the Council's Staff Celebration Awards in December 2024.</p>
Elected Members	<p>The Children, Young People and Education Committee of Wirral Council requested that a SEND Improvement Update is provided to every committee meeting following issue of the SEND Improvement Notice. This is evidence of their determination to achieve improved outcomes and experiences for children and young people with SEND.</p> <p>At the Council meeting of 2nd December 2024, the Lead Member for Children presented a motion on SEND on behalf of the Labour Group. With unanimous support, this resulted in the Leader of the Labour Group writing to the Secretary of State on behalf of children and young people with SEND.</p> <p>An Elected Member Champion for SEND actively meets with families and attends SENDLO live events.</p>
Investment in SEND services	<p>An Assistant Director for SEND & Inclusion was introduced to the Children's Services Departmental Management Team in 2024.</p> <p>On 11th September 2024, the Council's Policy & Resources Committee agreed to an in-year investment of £1.1m in 2024-25 and £2.8m for 2025-26 onwards. This decision was taken despite their being a Council-wide spending freeze as Elected Members recognised the need for financial investment and increased capacity.</p>
What we understand about the impact of our arrangements on experiences and outcomes of young people	
<p>Recent evaluation of SEND Partnership's Board governance arrangements found that the Partnership is now able to demonstrate 'excellent oversight and governance' through high levels of attendance at the in person meetings</p> <p>Additionally, robust subgroup arrangements with timely reporting into Board was recognised, alongside 'demonstrable evidence of effective decision making'</p> <p>Frequent meetings have allowed timely consideration of key issues and created a good pace for decision making; For example, through approving an EHCP Recovery Plan, Speech and Language Recovery Plan, publishing service score cards and SENDLO for openness and transparency and endorsing the partnership's SEND Communications Strategy and 2-year SEND Sufficiency Plan.</p>	

With a significantly increased SEND assessment team, caseloads will substantially reduce meaning that children, young people and families will receive a better service from the SENDSTART Team, with improved communication and support.

Family Hubs Offer

We have now launched 11 Family Hubs in Wirral to ensure consistent access across the local area. Marketplace events at the launches of new Family Hub sites have been a great success, providing settings with valuable links within the community to help offer families a more robust support network. Through this model we have held 84 training sessions to date and trained 686 people. Feedback around SEND training provided through Family Hubs evidences increased knowledge (with knowledge scores increasing from an average of 5.6/10 to 9.1/10 before and the after the training course). Parent/Carers on the Family Hubs panel have indicated that they feel listened to and are starting to see tangible differences and changes being made. Feedback gathered from professionals who attended Family Hubs training focuses on key takeaways for how individuals can improve their support for families. This includes supporting families through the EHCP process and to improve their understanding, raising awareness of SEND, sharing and using practical tools and resources and being more compassionate and empathetic towards parents struggles. Local area leaders support and attend the Family Hubs.

Our priorities to improve outcomes and experiences of young people with SEND

Development of a young person centred Outcomes Framework – this work has begun in consultation with a range of stakeholders

Increase our investment in jointly commissioned services

Publication of a co-produced Alternative Provision and SEND Strategy



Leaders actively engage and work with children, young people and families.

Current position:

Significant progress has been made in working with children, young people and families in some areas and relationships with parents/carers is improving.

Wirral's parent carer forum is a key partner, Chairing a subgroup as well as representing the voice of parents in the partnership board.

While there is legitimate challenge in the system as parents feel exhausted by historical lack of engagement and services remain under par, there is a demonstrable joint commitment to working together to improve families' lived experience.

. As a partnership we are acutely aware there is a gap in how we incorporate children and young people's voice consistently, to inform our strategic direction.

What we have done to address weaknesses, maintain or improve good practice...

Parent carers

The partnerships' relationship with our Parent-Carer forum has improved significantly and is no longer considered 'fractured'. Parents are round the table and at the heart of strategic partnership. Membership across the subgroups for parent carers is consistent.

Chair of Parent-Carer Forum chairs the Participation and Engagement SEND Board Sub-group.

Director of Children's Services meets with the parent carer Forum, in person, every month.

The Assistant Director for SEND & Inclusion meets with the parent carer forum every week.

The Local Area SEND Partnership Board and Sub-group papers, including SEND data from the dashboard are published on SENDLO website, for parents and carers to consider.

It is recognised by the parent carer forum Chair there is tangible improvement through the new governance arrangements.

Partners across the partnership are committed to ensuring meaningful engagement with children, young people and their families on an ongoing basis, so it becomes part of everyday practice.

Requests for thematic sessions with the PCPW Steering Group have been fulfilled. A recent example relates to social care involvement, with the Steering Group meeting Assistant Director for Safeguarding, Operational Manager for the Integrated Front Door, Designated Social Care Officer, and Assessment Team Manager. At this meeting an action plan detailing areas for further discussion was produced, including Children with Disability Team and Section 17 assessment.

The online training session on parent carer forums is being rolled out across Children's Services, with the average report of increased awareness being 84%.

	On 8 th October 2024, PCPW hosted the <i>Preparation for Adulthood Festival</i> at Floral Pavilion. Funded and supported by the Local Authority, this event signalled positive cultural change with the parent carer forum taking the lead for the wider SEND system. SENDLO Live events and listening sessions take place on a regular basis, attracting steady attendance from parent carers.
Senior Leaders	<p>The Director for Children, Families and Education has met with multiple families throughout the improvement journey to understand their experiences and what needs to improve in the SEND system.</p> <p>The Director for Children, Families and Education has regular engagement with the Leaving Care Service, Youth Voice Group and SEND Youth Voice Group. Visits to providers- primary schools, secondary schools, special schools, youth services and family hubs provide opportunities for the DCS to engage with practitioners, colleagues and young people.</p> <p>Assistant Directors can evidence regular engagements with a wide range of stakeholders across settings.</p> <p>Through the Families First for Children Pathfinder, senior leaders have commissioned Wirral Mencap to co-produce social care procedures to help make them more accessible to families.</p>
Children and Young People	On 21 st January 2025, the first <i>We Are Wirral Children's Services</i> event will take place. This event will be attended by 34 young people representing their peers and specific cohorts of children, many of whom have SEN support needs or EHCPs. This event will lead to a long-term forum where young people will have the opportunity to engage with the DCS and Elected Members. Zillo Youth Awards recognises the achievements of young people. It is recognised that SENDLO's user-base is mainly parent carers and that young people are more likely to use Zillo, Wirral's bespoke website for youth services. Investment has been made in Zillo to ensure that it provides appropriate support and tools for children and young people with SEND.
What we understand about the impact of our arrangements on experiences and outcomes of young people	
<p>SENDLO Live</p> <p>In November 2023 Our SENDLO live event in November 2023 gave services & support organisations the chance speak with around 800 children and young people, their parents/carers and SEND practitioners. This was co-produced with the SEND youth voice group, who used the event to interview other young people about their experiences of SEND and gather feedback on the Graduated Approach, which was then shared with the Department for Education. Incorporating feedback gathered at the event, a number of key changes were made to improve the local offer, which has in turn led to improvement in how it is used by parents/carers of children with SEND.</p> <p>Parent/Carer Listening Event, July</p> <p>In July 2024, we held an engagement event to enable SEND services across Education, Health and Social Care attended by approximately 60 parents and carers of children and young people with SEND. The event provided the opportunity for a range of key services to share plans, capture the concerns, fears and frustrations of parents and carers, support their understanding of process and services, and help to answer questions and log issues that need addressing. Parents fed back that they were pleased they had come along, felt listened to and left with a better understanding of process and challenges. Both parent/carers and professional feedback indicates that there is an enthusiasm for these to become regular events</p>	

across Wirral. Through the oversight of the Participation and Engagement Subgroup of the LASPB this will be built into the forward engagement plan for the 2024/25 Academic year.

Our priorities to improve outcomes and experiences of young people with SEND

Increase engagement with children and young people through the quality assurance framework.

Wider engagement across our system so we have a representative view.

Ensure feedback loop and communications with young people and families so they can see the outcome of their inputs.

Support parent carer groups such as COSMOS to embed in the local area partnership arrangements.

Continue working with the parent carer community to extend the parent-led offer through Family Hubs.

Leaders have an accurate, shared understanding of the needs of children and young people in the local area.

Current position:

Leaders at a strategic level are better informed at an earlier stage about the emerging needs of children and young people with SEND, with this information being used to inform practice.

Work is needed to ensure data and recording systems are used effectively to meet these needs at the right time and with the right support consistently.

New governance arrangements and performance reporting from the SEND Dashboard and Scorecards are driving tangible improvements in shared understanding since last inspection. As a partnership our understanding of the key issues and challenges as well as the emerging good practice is much improved and increasingly we know ourselves better.

Whilst we acknowledge that things aren't quite right, and changes yet to be felt by families, we know what needs to be done and by how much through having a complete picture and strategic oversight and the partnership is well placed to steer the strategic direction of improvements needed.

What we have done to address weaknesses, maintain or improve good practice...

Local Area SEND Partnership Board

We have improved the quality of our reporting to better highlight and understanding of risk. A Risk Register is presented at every meeting of the Local Area SEND Partnership Board, with appropriate risk mitigation being put in place. An Executive Group of the Local Area SEND Partnership Board meets before and after board meetings, to ensure that actions are delegated and activity completed within the required timeframes.

Where there have been issues identified by the Local Area SEND Partnership Board, actions have been agreed, leading to further reports/updates and Deep Dive, thematic sessions. Deep Dives on EHCPs have been undertaken and an example of how this leads to change is evident in the autumn term when the Chair of the Board requested that a report on potential opportunities to accelerate improvement was presented. This was discussed in detail at the December meeting, with board members agreeing on action to be taken following the meeting.

The Local Area SEND Partnership Board receives a monthly SEND Dashboard report from the Strategic Performance Subgroup. In addition to the Dashboard there is a suite of Performance Scorecards which can be viewed by board members and the public via the SENDLO website.

Sub-groups, feed progress of improvements/ activity up to the Local Area SEND Partnership Board. The board reports to the Health & Wellbeing Board via the DCS.

Through the Local Area SEND Partnership Board inductions, Deep Dives and thematic sessions, members are better informed about the needs of children and young people in the local area.

	DfE have recognised how the revised governance arrangements are impacting on improvement, agreeing that the related WSoA priority can be moved to 'business-as-usual'. This is confirmed in the Improvement Notice Review Feedback letter.
Performance Framework	<p>A Performance Framework is well established by the Local Area SEND Partnership Board. With key performance indicators from across services, board members are appraised of detailed and overarching performance. The framework consists of a 4-weekly cycle, involving practitioners from all levels of the hierarchy. Responsibility for performance is shared by the Local Area SEND Partnership Board.</p> <p>In the autumn a report was presented to the Local Area SEND Partnership Board on the effectiveness of performance reporting. It found that systems and processes were effective. This was supported by board members who feedback that they felt well-informed about performance, effectiveness and need. DfE have recognised how the revised performance reporting arrangements are impacting on improvement, agreeing that the related WSoA priority can be moved to 'business-as-usual'. This is confirmed in the Improvement Notice Review Feedback letter.</p>
Joint Strategic Needs Assessment	The Local Area SEND Partnership Board commissioned an update of the JSNA for SEND. This has given senior leaders a comprehensive understanding of need in the local area and enhanced. There is evidence that the JSNA is informing system developments such as commissioning of resource provision in secondary schools and initiating the Emotionally Based School Avoidance pilot and strategy. Stakeholders across the system report being better informed.
What we understand about the impact of our arrangements on experiences and outcomes of young people	
<p>Improved Strategic Oversight</p> <p>Steps taken to improve SEND Services demonstrated at July LASPB by Department for Education (DfE) Adviser for SEND, who stated that where there had previously been a 'lack of effective strategic oversight', this felt to be no longer the case and the necessary steps had been taken to strengthen governance.</p> <p>SEND Quality Monitoring Framework</p> <p>The commissioning team have implemented a SEND Quality Monitoring Framework to support the effective monitoring of the quality of provision and the wellbeing and support of individual young people attending non-maintained, independent and independent special provision.</p>	
Our priorities to improve outcomes and experiences of young people with SEND	
<p>Keep our local JSNA up to date and ensure it provides a clear picture of needs, which continues to inform sufficiency planning and service delivery. Regularly share data and intelligence to the Board and other leaders Ensure that joint commissioning is informed by intelligence in Wirral and can meet the needs of children and young people with SEND New Sufficiency Strategy will help meet the demand identified in the JSNA and plan the right support and provision Ensure that all children and young people with SEND have their needs met and that support is not higher in some areas than others Continuing to work with DBV to ensure transformation happens equitably</p>	

Leaders commission services and provision to meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people.

Current position:

Since 2021, notable progress has been achieved in the area of joint commissioning, marked by the appointment of a joint commissioning lead and the establishment of a joint commissioning forum in 2022.

A clear programme of priorities was developed based on the newly developed Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). SEND and mental health were identified as priorities within the Health and Care Plan 2023-24.

These priorities are overseen by the Strategic Transformation Board to ensure accountability, whilst the Joint Health and Care Commissioning Executive Group provide commissioning oversight. Specific areas of improvement include speech and language, neurodevelopment and care for children with complex needs. A position statement on progress was published on SENDLO in November 2023.

What we have done to address weaknesses, maintain or improve good practice...

Partnership Working

Joint commissioning is well established with clear responsibilities. These responsibilities include shared specifications and joint funding agreements.

Section 75 arrangements incorporate packages of care for children with continuing care needs.

New, coproduced transformative models for mental health and neurodevelopment reflect a collaborative approach.

The speech and language specialist service has seen improvements from short term resource to address waiting times.

The neurodevelopment model remains under resourced and has limited capacity and so a particular focus on enhancing early support in the Graduated Approach with the introduction of the Portsmouth Profiling Tool and an improved health delivery model backed by the DFE's Delivering Better Value Programme has allowed us to address this.

A joint commissioning position statement 23/24 was published on the SENDLO website setting out the approach to joint commissioning, clear priorities for progress and related milestones. This was delivered in 2023-24, and a revised position statement has been produced, which will inform the SEND Strategy and lead to a full joint commissioning strategy.

Education settings are now engaging with the local area health and local authority services to consider jointly commissioning services such as speech and language therapy.

	<p>Juno, an initiative for care provision that is not-for-profit, has been established and is providing residential care for young people within the borough, several of whom have SEND. This is a bold initiative, which has recently been visited by the Minister for Children.</p> <p>Through the Joint Health and Care Commissioning Group and the Appropriate Places of Care Group, plans are in development for additional care provision for children with complex needs.</p> <p>The jointly delivered WALK Team are providing Key Worker support for young people with ASD in order to avoid Tier 4 admissions. This service is having a positive impact and receives good feedback from those who use it.</p>
<p>Children and young people</p>	<p>There has been a slight increase in the number of children and young people receiving jointly commissioned packages of care. The SEND Sufficiency Strategy Group meets on a regular basis, Chaired by the Assistant Director for Education. Resource Provision for secondary school pupils is being developed to ensure that children and young people are able to learn within a mainstream environment.</p> <p>Consideration is currently being given to post-16 options as it is recognised that there are less opportunities available locally for those older learners who are academically able.</p> <p>Branch, the new emotional health and wellbeing service launched in autumn 2024. The design for the service was informed by the views of young people and the service will provide a broader range of early intervention and support, as well as access to specialist pathways.</p>
<p>What we understand about the impact of our arrangements on experiences and outcomes of young people</p>	
<p>A joint commissioning forum drew together commissioners and providers, using data to inform the position statement and was self-assessed against best practice in joint commissioning</p> <p>SNA identifies current and future needs in the local area to inform commissioning priorities</p> <p>Speech and Language steering group established to bring partners together from across the system to manage capacity and demand</p> <p>Joint working has created opportunities for early intervention working in family hubs and nursery settings, impacting waiting lists for specialist services increasing confidence of professionals, parents and carers.</p> <p>The development of the SEND dashboard now published on the SENDLO website gives transparency of specialist services waiting lists and informing commissioning activity</p> <p>Increased focus on support not diagnosis will see children receive the support they need to enable educational and social progress</p> <p>Children and families are being supported whilst waiting and having choice of a range of mental health and wellbeing services matched to need</p> <p>Reduced number of referrals for CAMHS</p> <p>Reduced prescribing of medication</p> <p>Transparency of specialist service waiting lists</p> <p>Improved insight and oversight of professionals and parents/carers across a range of areas.</p>	

Branch

The development of 'Branch' the single point of access for mental health and wellbeing needs aligned to CAMHs ensuring all children receive a service matched to their needs. The commissioned offer will ensure improved coordination of all services with investment in self-help resources and crisis support that will see a decrease in waiting times for CAMHs, supported by care navigators for every child. Complex children in crisis and at risk of presenting at hospital or social care are supported by multi-agency arrangements through the Dynamic Support Register and mental health gateway panels ensuring a joined-up response and appropriate provision.

Our priorities to improve outcomes and experiences of young people with SEND

Whilst the transformation and investment in mental health has led to reduced waiting times, aided by 'waiting well' initiatives, the overall impact is uneven across different services which we need to remedy.

Roll out and embed the Graduated Approach with a clear health offer within each tier to ensure early and timely interventions and appropriate referrals to specialist service that will enable children to have their needs met

The new model for neurodevelopment developed by key stakeholders with input from children and families with lived experience will see an increased support offer pre diagnosis to ensure children's needs are met without the need for a diagnosis

Commissioned support for sleep difficulties should see reduced prescribing of medication

Jointly commissioned services with shared specifications and funding allocations will be part of section 75 arrangements in 2025 thereby cementing joint commissioning arrangements for children's services.

Development of an outcomes framework to inform future commissioning intentions with a focus on achieving long term outcomes.

Leaders evaluate services and make improvements.

Current position:

The work that has been put in place to ensure performance reporting is of a consistently high quality is beginning to enable leaders to identify trends in services, investigate the stories behind the data to fully understand the issues and make the required improvements.

Over the last year leaders have engaged in and instigated a range of service evaluations and conversations with individual services and teams including around Education Health and Care Plans, the Neurodevelopmental Pathway and Speech and Language Therapy Services.

While the partnership is confident that it is taking the correct approach, the impact of the improvements that joint evaluation has led to still needs to be shown more consistently. And felt more consistently by families.

What we have done to address weaknesses, maintain or improve good practice...

Continuous Improvement Subgroup	<p>We have a commitment to keeping the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment as a dynamic document which is updated regularly to inform our areas of focus and improvement.</p> <p>Improved joint strategic understanding of the current position and areas of improvement.</p> <p>Continuing to embed new approaches and grow capacity, all contributing towards a change in culture</p> <p>New practice models are discussed and overseen by the Continuous Improvement Subgroup. With representation from across the partnership this has enabled improvements in single agency working, such as through recovery plans and in joint working, for example requirements for partnership training.</p>
Performance Subgroup	<p>Improved performance, governance and accountability through the revised partnership arrangements and subgroup.</p> <p>SEND Dashboard and Performance Scorecards allows us to better understand impact. It also enables more effective deployment of improvement activity as leaders are better informed as to areas of weakness.</p>
WSoA Impact Group	<p>The WSoA Impact Group has overseen delivery of the revised SEND Improvement Plan. It was recognised at the 6-monthly review that there was a need for the reports to focus more explicitly on the impact of work on the experiences of children, young people and families. A recommendation was approved by the Local Area SEND Partnership Board to adapt the reporting template to include a specific section on impact for children and families.</p>
Parent Carer Forum	<p>The parent carer forum have been pivotal in ensuring that the improvements being addressed by the Local Area SEND Partnership Board are those which have the most significant impact on families. As a direct result of their input to the partnership, action such as increasing the commission to SENDIASS, have been delivered.</p>

What we understand about the impact of our arrangements on experiences and outcomes of young people

Development of the Wirral approach to rolling out the Plymouth profiling tool will lead to earlier intervention for children and young people to support their SEND needs.

Additional commissioning of Speech and Language Therapy Services has resulted from service evaluations, under the direction of the Local Area SEND Partnership Board.

Improved early identification process in the early years services and settings.

Opportunities to accelerate EHCP Recovery Plan identified through the Local Area SEND Partnership Board.

Delays and backlog in the neurodevelopmental pathway have been discussed at length, with the ICB ensuring that the commissioned provider can put in place a recovery plan which will improve access to services for children and young people. This has included participation of stakeholders in the redesign of the offer.

Case studies discussed at the Local Area SEND Partnership Board have enabled robust testing of partnership data.

Both the parent carer forum and SENDIASS representatives attending the Local Area SEND Partnership Board are recognised to have an impact in raising views and experiences of young people and families.

Through robust governance arrangements, the Local Area SEND Partnership Board can evidence a track record of decision making and action taken. The action log, reported at each meeting, details all decision made and actions completed.

Our priorities to improve outcomes and experiences of young people with SEND

Embed the new reporting templates which focus on impact for children, young people and families.

Deliver the series of Deep Dives and training sessions requested by the parent carer forum.

Introduce more regular case studies and lived-experience to the Local Area SEND partnership Board meetings.

Develop board level experience of evidence-based evaluation.