



Shropshire SEND & Alternative Provision (AP) Strategy 2024 - 2029

This strategy sets the direction and commitment from the Shropshire Area SEND and AP Partnership to develop an inclusive system where everyone can thrive. We are committed to improving outcomes for children and young people aged 0-25 in Shropshire with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and those accessing alternative provision (AP). It builds upon the SEND Strategy co-produced with children, young people, families and professionals in 2021, incorporates feedback from the Ofsted/CQC Area SEND re-visit inspection from November 2022, the work completed to date through the Accelerated Progress Plan (APP), the national SEND and AP Improvement Plan published March 2023 and the learning from the national SEND and AP Change Programme.

A wide variety of engagement and development sessions during 2023 included Developing Inclusive Practice days, Headteacher Briefing Sessions, Early Help drop-in sessions, direct feedback from children, young people and families to services, 24 hours of self-evaluation focus group activity and a final self-evaluation session with SEND and AP Partnership Board members in January 2024.

We recognise that many children and young people who access AP will have SEND, and we have, therefore, included AP within this strategy. Our commitment is to create a well-integrated, complementary and effective SEND and AP system in Shropshire.

Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

Children and young people with SEN all have learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for them to learn than most children and young people of the same age. These children and young people may need extra or different help from that given to others.

Alternative Provision (AP)

Alternative provision helps children who need extra help to stay in and enjoy learning at their mainstream school or provides specialist places and support for those who would benefit from spending time away from their mainstream school.

Our Shared Commitment



Cllr Andy Hall
Portfolio Holder
Education and
Children



Cllr Ruth Houghton
Portfolio Holder for
Social Care



Cllr Bernie Bentick
Portfolio Holder for Health
and Public Protection



Rachel Robinson
Executive Director
Health Wellbeing and
Prevention



Tanya Miles
Executive Director (DASS)



David Shaw
Director of Children's
Services



Vanessa Whatley
NHS ICB Executive
Lead for SEND

The SEND and AP Partnership Board have developed this strategy and outcomes framework to support the very best outcomes for children, young people and their families to achieve their best life.

We know that nationally there is the need to improve provision for children and young people with SEND, and those who access AP. This is challenging within a local context. We have made many improvements to the provision for children and young people with SEND, but we recognise the need to strive further to secure the best possible outcomes for children and young people.

This work begins to define the strategic aims for SEND and AP in Shropshire and will be further developed through the identification of more precise outcomes measures. This will provide a coherent and consistent direction for practitioners, providers and those who support children and young people and support accountability.

To develop this strategy, we have sought to build and improve on the previous SEND strategy, acknowledging the changes in the current landscape and the impact that this has on children, young people and their families and practitioners seeking to support them. The current strategy was redrafted and consulted on, providing the wider community with the opportunity to feedback.

The SEND and AP Partnership Board recognise this is the beginning of a process. This strategy and outcomes framework will be the starting point for future work. It provides the foundations for further strengthening partnership working and co-production to enable children and young people and their families to thrive. We will need to create opportunities for honest conversations where improvements are needed and further develop a culture of trust and support where critical and constructive challenge is valued.

The strategy will be supported by the outcomes framework which describes how those working to support children and young people and their families can deliver the very best outcomes. This will need to be periodically reviewed and in order for this to be successful, it will need to be quality assured, updated and improved. This process is ongoing and informed by a regular programme of engagement with partners and the SEND community. Future actions will engage partners in developing a robust and measurable framework for SEND and AP and will set the agenda for future engagement.

To be successful, this strategy will support the full engagement of practitioners, families, children and young people. This will enable children, young people and their families to live their best life in line with the Shropshire Plan.



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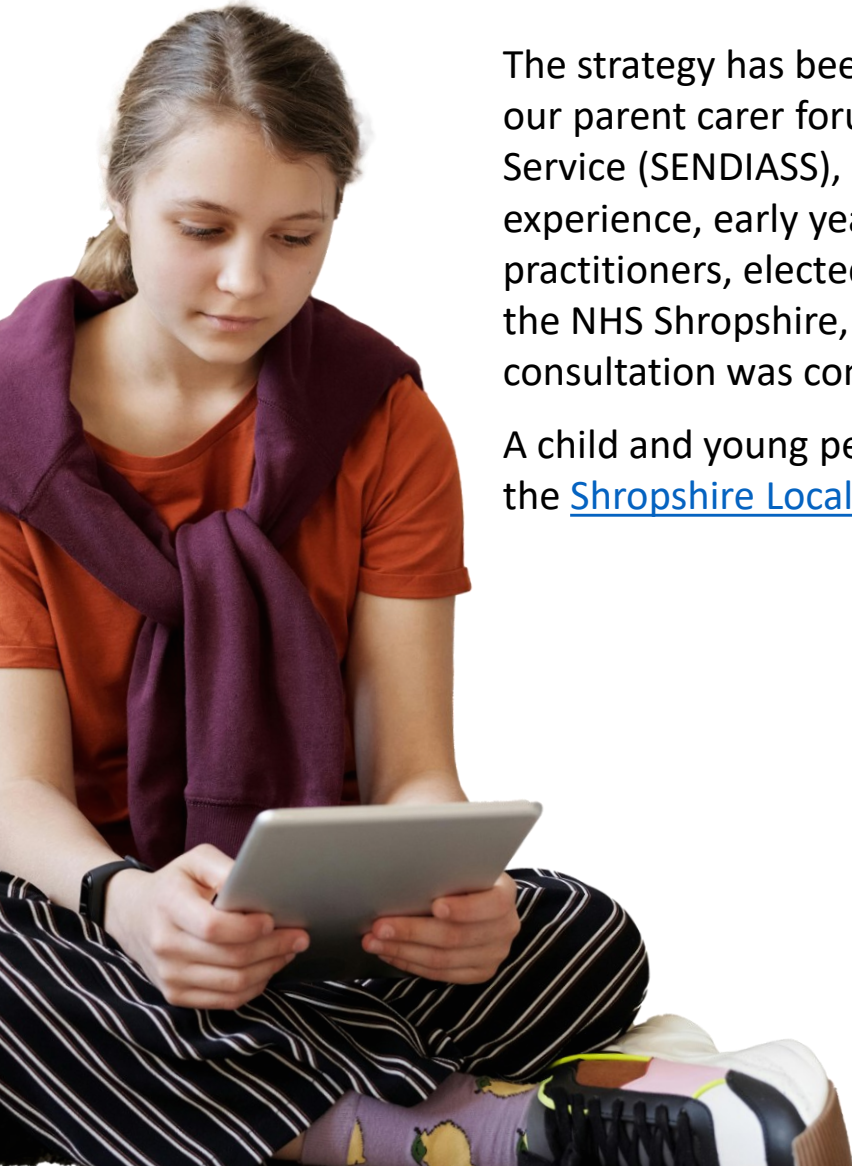
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Our strategy

How have we developed our strategy and outcomes framework?

The strategy has been developed with the Parent and Carer Council (PACC) our parent carer forum, SEND Independent Advice Support Service (SENDIASS), alongside children, young people and families with lived experience, early years settings, schools, colleges, frontline practitioners, elected members, the voluntary and community sector, and the NHS Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Integrated Care System. Public consultation was completed between October and December 2024.

A child and young person guide to the strategy can be found on the [Shropshire Local Offer](#) and will be available in an easy read format.



How have we developed our strategy and outcomes framework?

August 2023 to January 2024

- Partnership Local Area Self evaluation (SEF) consultation meetings
- Review and consideration of over 2000 responses from young people (11-18) around youth services in Shropshire. c.10% of young people who responded identified that they had a disability.

March 2024

- Consideration of national SEND and AP Improvement Plan, including learning from participation in the SEND and AP Change Programme
- Draft Outcomes Framework V1 presented to Partnership Board
- Local Area SEF findings feed into development of SEND & AP Strategy and actions prioritised

May 2024

- Draft Local Area SEF presented to SEND & AP Partnership Board and shared with DfE/NHSE
- Early draft SEND and AP Strategy and Outcomes Framework presented to SEND & AP Partnership Board

June to August 2024

- Local Area SEF finalised and shared with SEND & AP Partnership Board
- Draft SEND and AP Strategy and Outcomes Framework revisited with Partner representatives and prepared for public consultation

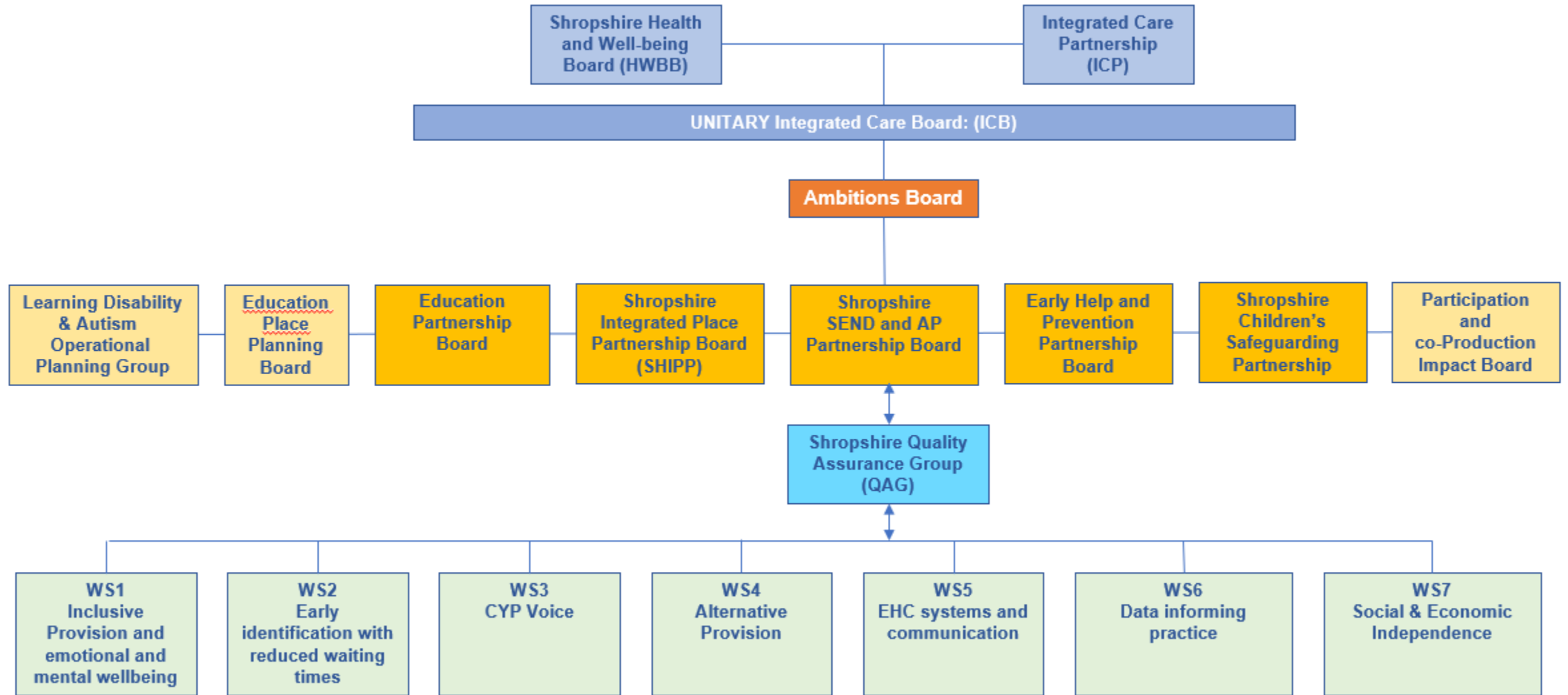
September to December 2024

- Updated Draft SEND and AP Strategy and Outcomes Framework shared with SEND & AP Partnership Board in preparation for public consultation
- Public Consultation (7th October to 6th December)

January to June 2025

- Update and refinement of the Local Area SEF
- Engagement work to develop the final SEND and AP Strategy and Outcomes Framework based upon findings from consultation, work with education settings, health and care professionals and Parent Carers.

Governance



Our local context

Local details/national comparison

Shropshire data on school age population with SEND.

Data correct September 2024 unless otherwise stated.

Education health and care plan (**EHCP**)
Special educational needs and disability (**SEND**)
Children and young people (**CYP**)

83,145

CYP 0-25
25.7% of the population
(census 2023)

8,069

With SEND
18.4% of pupils
18% national figure

6,044

SEND support
13.5% of pupils
13.6% national figure

3,027

EHC plans
(May 2025)

2,504

Children with SEND
known to children's social care.
704 with EHCP

26%

Looked after Children
(LAC) have EHCPs (pre-
school to end of KS5)

37,720

In schools

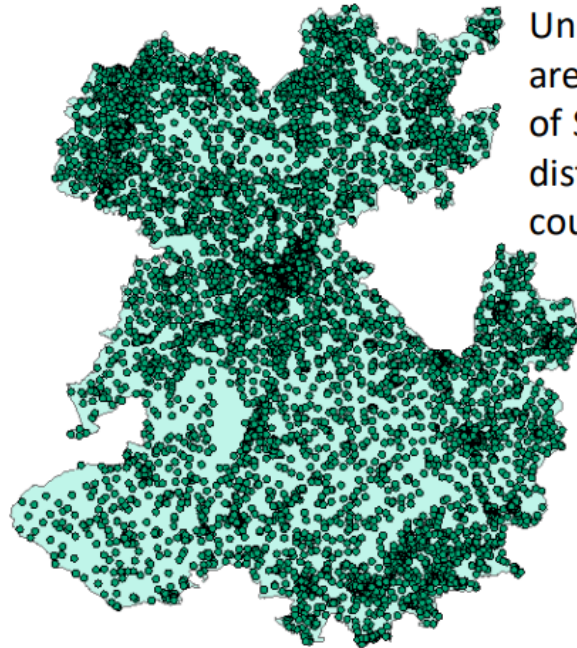
45.7%

CYP with an EHCP placed in
mainstream provision
43.6% nationally
(2024 EHCP Return)

Challenges of Rurality

Shropshire Residential Postcodes

Shropshire Residential Postcode Units

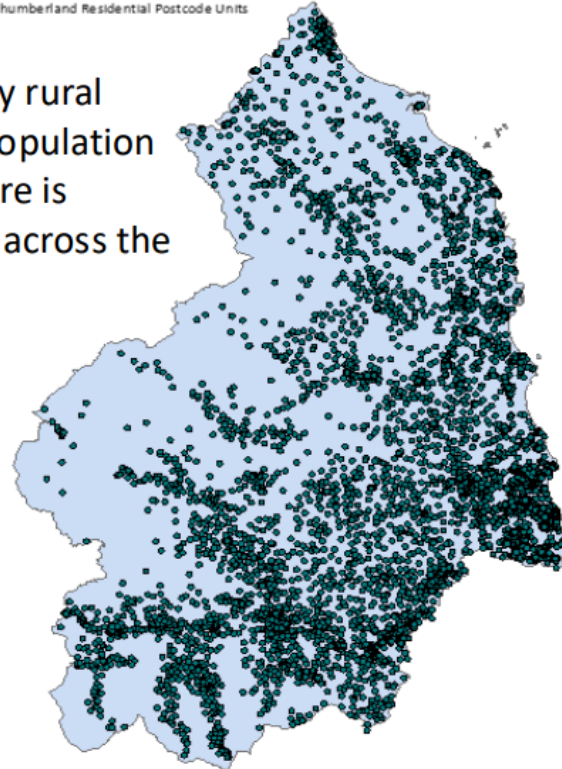


© Crown copyright 2019 OS 100049049
Contains OS, Ordnance Survey
Each Postcode Unit contains an average of 15 adjoining addresses.

Scale: 1:308,289

Northumberland Residential Postcodes

Northumberland Residential Postcode Units



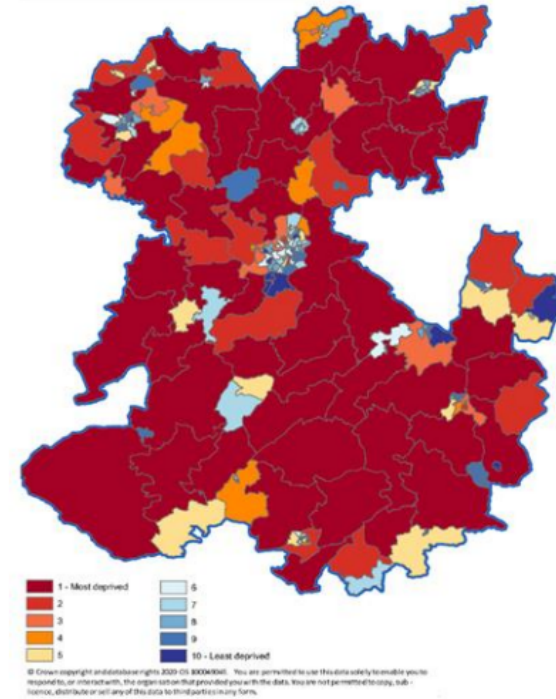
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Contains OS, Ordnance Survey
Each Postcode Unit contains an average of 15 adjoining addresses.

Scale: 1:308,289

Unlike many rural areas the population of Shropshire is distributed across the county

Making Shropshire one of the most deprived counties for access to services

IMD - Barriers to Housing & Services - National Decile



6,100 pupils transported to school each day

Using 140 operators

At a cost of £18,000,000 per year



98% of land is rural



3,240 miles of road.
91% rural roads



57.2% live in rural areas



Our shared commitment to the SEND and AP Vision

“Shropshire children and young people with SEND to be healthy, happy and safe, and able to achieve their potential to lead a fulfilling life.

We want them to have, and to expect, the same opportunities in life as other children and young people.

We want them to thrive and live their best life.”





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Our priorities

The draft proposed system wide priorities will enable the implementation of our vision and address the themes emerging from our self-evaluation;

1. Develop local, high quality, inclusive provision across the system. Including strengthening the graduated response and Shropshire Inclusive Practice Guidance whilst ensuring consistency and effectiveness of the emotional health and mental wellbeing offer in mainstream education settings, across all phases.
2. Enable early identification and the right help at the right time, including reducing waiting times for speech and language therapy and neurodiversity assessments.
3. Enable children and young people to communicate confidently, contribute to decisions, and feel visible and valued members of their community.
4. Develop a proactive, supportive and clear alternative provision offer.
5. Develop a system that makes sense and works together, improving co-production, communication and engagement with families and professionals from all services. Including improving the quality and timeliness of EHC plans, annual reviews and transition pathways.
6. Develop a data informed and intelligence rich approach.
7. Enable children and young people to feel visible and valued members of their community, ensuring they are supported to be as socially and economically independent as possible to achieve their next steps in life.

Priority 1

Develop local, high quality, inclusive provision across the system. Including strengthening the graduated response and Shropshire Inclusive Practice Guidance whilst ensuring consistency and effectiveness of the emotional health and mental wellbeing offer in mainstream education settings, across all phases.

Ambition

We will develop a continuum of high-quality local provision in Shropshire across education, health and social care, to better meet the needs of children and young people with SEND and those requiring AP.

Delivery

- We will continue to develop a continuum of provision to integrate skills and knowledge between mainstream and special schools, including further development of SEND hubs in mainstream schools. This will include early years, schools and post 16.
- We will focus on building capacity within provisions to strengthen children and young people's participation in decision making. This will involve a focus on supporting mainstream provision to keep children and young people in their local communities through wrap around health and care support.
- We will maximise outreach and community services, such as those from alternative providers, special schools or community organisations, to strengthen our local provision offer.
- We will develop our social prescribing and other community support offers for families to support early identification, inclusion and participation, building on the development of the Early Help Hubs across Shropshire.
- We will build a thriving market for short break provision and encourage the use of personal budgets to support respite opportunities.
- We will establish a multi-agency forum to share best practice around inclusive education, health and care. This will include high quality professional development for staff.
- We will develop the Shropshire inclusive mainstream provision from early years, schools and Post 16 so that all education professionals and families know what will be universally available for children and young people with SEND, wherever you live in Shropshire. This will enable all education providers to play a key role in ensuring all children and young people with SEND are able to access excellent provision delivering a broad and balanced curriculum.

Impact

- Most children and young people with SEND will successfully and regularly attend mainstream school. There will be further reduction in persistent/severe absence and a reduction in suspensions and exclusions. Children and young people in need of additional support from AP will be supported in mainstream, or return to and be successful in, mainstream provision.
- Fewer children and young people are placed out of Shropshire for their education placement because their education, health and care needs are met locally.
- There will be an increase in the proportion of providers rated outstanding or retaining good judgements from Ofsted.
- We will ensure specialist and alternative provision is in the right locations, high quality and accessible across Shropshire without long journey times.
- More early years settings, schools and Post 16 providers will have a consistent and effective emotional health and mental wellbeing offer, including a trained Senior Mental Health Lead in their senior leadership teams.
- There will be an improvement in attainment and progress outcomes across all phases, as high-quality teaching, curriculum and inclusion enable children and young people's needs to be met whichever mainstream early years, school or post 16 setting they attend in Shropshire.

Priority 2

Enable early identification and the right help at the right time, including reducing waiting times for speech and language therapy and neurodiversity assessments.

Ambition

We will work in partnership across education, health and care to provide the right help at the right time to prevent challenges escalating.

Delivery

- We will work with early years settings and schools to support the earliest identification of SEND, including supporting them to utilise evidence-based strategies to confidently and effectively meet the presenting needs of children and young people with SEND in mainstream. We will enhance the community and early help offer to complement this work.
- We will work together, guided by our Integration Model, to coordinate our support offers and direct responses with all relevant partner agencies to support children, young people and families. We will work together to deliver the Early Help strategy consistently across Shropshire, so that we are focussed on a 'family approach' to support.
- We will provide access to a high-quality training and professional development offer for our workforce, including early years settings, schools and Post 16 providers.
- We will support a well-integrated local public health and primary care network, including strengthening good health promotion and disease prevention. We will work with early years settings, schools and Post 16 providers to promote a consistent and effective emotional health and mental wellbeing offer, ensuring there is a trained Senior Mental Health Lead in all schools.
- We will work together to ensure children and young people with SEND and those in AP are appropriately protected from safeguarding risks, whilst also building capacity to self-manage/reduce risk to themselves, particularly around exploitation. We will develop the capacity of short break offers with a particular focus on Personal Assistants (PAs) to enable access to a wider range of offers.
- We will ensure that our Local Offer website helps children, young people and their families find the local information and support they need, whether online or face to face.

Impact

- Children and young people with SEND will experience equitable opportunities to lead healthy lives. There will be full access to health services and support to maintain good physical and mental health.
- Children and young people with SEND are provided with appropriate personalised support at all stages of need and at key transition points.
- More mainstream early years, school and post 16 settings will be confident that they can meet the presenting needs of children and young people with SEND. Children and young people whose needs do not require an education, health and care plan (EHCP) receive high quality SEND Support whichever early years setting, school or Post 16 provider they attend.
- More families, children and young people with SEND tell us they are able to find and engage with services through better online local offer 'self-support' advice or face to face where necessary.
- There will be fewer admissions into A&E for mental health support. There will be a reduction in referrals to specialist service pathways, e.g. respite/short breaks, therapies especially SALT, ASD/ADHD with their needs being met through early intervention.

Priority 2

Enable early identification and the right help at the right time, including reducing waiting times for speech and language therapy and neurodiversity assessments.

Shropshire's Integration Model

Strengths based (people and communities).

Initial focus on supporting people to help themselves

Supported by :-

- high quality, integrated, easily understood universal services for people to access when they need it
- high quality, integrated, easily understood specialist services available when they are needed.



Priority 3

Enable children and young people to communicate confidently, contribute to decisions, and feel visible and valued members of their community.

Ambition

We will enable all children and young people to communicate confidently to the very best of their ability, build trust in sharing their lived experiences, encourage innovative ideas from them and their families to shape and improve long term outcomes for children and young people with SEND across Shropshire.

Delivery

- We will ensure that early identification of communication needs will be supported with timely access to evidence informed strategies, interventions and advice to reduce the longer-term impact of communication needs. This will include early years, schools and Post 16 providers. Supporting parents, carers, settings and schools to provide support at the earliest opportunity.
- We will use creative approaches to listen to the voices of children, young people and families so we know whether we are making a difference. Acting on this feedback to plan, develop, redesign and commission services. Utilising the 'you said we did' feature of the local offer.
- We will co-produce, implement and embed a participation strategy to ensure that the views of children and young people are routinely incorporated into the decision-making processes across the SEND Area Partnership.
- Communicate effectively with families via newsletters, social media and ensuring the local offer is up to date.
- We will support all early years settings, education and Post 16 provisions to adopt a total communication approach.

Impact

- Children and young people with SEND will have the skills and opportunities needed to confidently communicate to the very best of their ability and influence decisions on the support they receive as an individual.
- The SEND workforce and providers, including mainstream early years and post 16 settings and schools, will have the skills to co-produce with children, young people and their families so that they influence commissioning and support decisions.
- The views and direct input from children, young people and families are involved in the decision-making processes across the SEND Area Partnership, including strategic, operational and individual co-production. There is even stronger engagement and communication with families, supported by representative groups including PACC and SENDIASS, who routinely participate in strategic activity on behalf of families.
- Evidence and lessons learned from complaints/disagreements will inform feedback and training to the workforce. This will enable a reduction in conflict and tribunal action with families as evidenced through dispute resolution and mediation.
- Feedback from children, young people and families will show improvement in satisfaction rates for our communication, engagement in influencing decision making and quality of our services.

Priority 4

Develop a proactive, supportive, and clear alternative provision offer.

Ambition

We will develop a continuum of support, including targeted support in mainstream schools, local AP and time limited intervention placements, to enable those young people to be successful in mainstream schools or secure a sustained post-16 destination.

Delivery

- We will develop a well-integrated, complementary and effective SEND and AP system, including mainstream education, outreach services, SEND Hubs, specialist provision, early help, social care and local health services. This will form part of the Local Area Inclusion Plan to ensure AP providers are responsive to need Shropshire wide, through the AP Improvement Plan.
- We will work with schools to develop a complementary continuum of AP and/or intervention offers, including increasing the resilience of mainstream schools within the local area to effectively identify and meet SEND need at the earliest opportunity. This will include an expectation that 'targeted support in mainstream' is available and used before placement into AP.
- We will work with early years settings, schools and Post 16 providers to support the development of relational/restorative approaches, including behaviour policies, in addition to high quality teaching, to effectively meet the needs of all children and young people in mainstream provision.
- We will ensure transparent accountability for the outcomes, mobility and destinations of individual pupils, including equitable access to AP, oversight and quality assurance of this provision across Shropshire.

Impact

- Targeted support in mainstream schools will be available across early years, primary and secondary phases, including access to this before AP placement is used. Children and young people accessing AP on time limited placements will successfully return to mainstream school and/or secure a sustained Post-16 destination.
- More children and young people are supported effectively in mainstream provision, achieve well and progress successfully into employment, further education or training.
- There will be a reduction in the rising number of children and young people accessing home education, particularly at secondary.
- Most children and young people with SEND will successfully and regularly attend mainstream school.
- There will be a reduction in persistent/severe absence and a reduction in suspensions and exclusions, particularly at secondary and for those supported through SEND Support.

Priority 5

Develop a system that makes sense and works together, improving co-production, communication and engagement with families and professionals from all services. Including Improving the quality and timeliness of EHC plans, annual reviews, and transition pathways.

Ambition

We want our children, young people and their families to have a positive experience when navigating our services provided by our area SEND and AP partnership.

Delivery

- We will ensure that joint commissioning underpins our work. This includes a robust needs assessment and demonstrates an understanding of how the whole system is working collectively to meet families' needs as early as possible while also supporting the management of long-term conditions.
- We will strengthen our local practice and across services recognising the value of the voluntary and community sector and maximising the opportunity to address contextual safeguarding needs for children and young people with SEND. This means clarifying how to access services and ensuring high quality information and advice is available to all families regardless of whether their child has an emerging or identified need. It means a dedicated support pathway for children and young people that are vulnerable and struggling to access education, a support offer for needs relating to neurodevelopmental and speech and language issues that is needs-led and that support should be available pre, during or post diagnosis, if diagnosis is sought at all.
- We will clarify and better communicate the criteria for access to services and support from the local offer.
- We will develop, implement and embed rigorous quality assurance processes to ensure that service provision is consistent across Shropshire and meets the needs of children and young people. This includes the quality and timeliness of producing new EHC plans and completing annual reviews.
- We will focus on coherent communications and approach to all interactions with families and each other; further developing a culture of effective listening and talking between professionals and families.
- We will deliver the actions identified in the Accelerated Action Plan (APP) and the wider SEND Action plan approved by the SEND & AP Partnership Board.
- All staff across our SEND Area Partnership will know and understand their role in supporting children and young people with SEND, and the role of other professionals in the partnership.

Impact

- Children, young people and their families will tell us that we have a clear and well networked system of consistent and easy to access support services across education, health and care.
- All Shropshire professionals will be able to and be encouraged to access online and face to face learning programmes focusing on inclusion.
- Children and young people and their families tell us that things are improving for them and that our plans to support them are of a good quality, meet their needs and are jointly produced with them. New EHC plans are produced on time, to a good quality and annual reviews are completed and updated/acted upon.
- We will receive positive feedback on the Local Offer.
- Where specialist services are required, they are accessed within the required timescale dependent on need.

Priority 6

Develop a data informed and intelligence rich approach

Ambition

We will ensure that data systems enable key information (outcomes, waiting times, compliance, etc to be available to all partner services to inform forecasting and commissioning decisions, understand gaps in services and improve quality and performance where necessary.

Delivery

- We will implement robust tracking and data systems to ensure that provision evolves with changing cohorts and that we are at the forefront of strategic planning.
- We will develop our SEND and AP Data Dashboard that will draw on robust multi-agency data to help leaders across the SEND Area Partnership make better decisions and put our seven outcomes at the heart of strategic planning and review. We will generate and share reports so that all stakeholders better understand local need.
- We will co-produce and publish a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), aligned to the SEND and AP Strategy and Shropshire Plan, and regularly report on progress against these, so that we know that we are making a difference.
- We will work towards integrating data from the NHS Dynamic Support Register and Care (Education) Treatment Reviews to make sure our health and care services support people with a learning disability (and autistic people), so they are only admitted to hospital if they really need to.
- Our multi agency approach will link information from education, social care and NHS management information systems to better protect our children and young people with SEND who are vulnerable.

Impact

- Our SEND Partnership service providers will tell us that they are secure in their use of evidence; which will inform the forecasting and commissioning of provision and/or services for our children and young people with SEND and those accessing AP.
- Our stakeholders help develop the data dashboard to ensure it is fit for purpose.
- We will have a data dashboard that we can use to report to our stakeholders and governance bodies on our performance and forecast future trends.
- There is clear evidence that data is being used for forecasting joint commissioning requirements; recognising changing needs of the population.
- Our data dashboard indicates that performance across partner services is improving (outcomes, waiting times, compliance, etc...) and is better than national benchmarks.

Priority 7

Enable children and young people to feel visible and valued members of their community, ensuring they are supported to be as socially and economically independent as possible to achieve their next steps in life.

Ambition

We want all children and young people with SEND and those in AP settings to feel welcomed, valued and well supported by their education setting, including preparing well for adulthood and being able to live independently, where possible, in their communities.

Delivery

- We will ensure that the needs of children and young people with SEND are always considered in local initiatives such as transport, sports facilities, public buildings and swimming pools. Engaging children and young people with SEND so they are confident to socialise, be as independent as possible and enjoy their recreation time.
- We will build on the work of the Shropshire Virtual School to develop a strategy that encourages effective relational practice and belonging in all education settings so that the vision of 'strong schools, built on love' is realised for all children and young people, including those with SEND or accessing AP.
- We will strengthen our work with charities and voluntary organisations, such as PACC, Actio and the Shropshire Youth Association (SYA), to ensure there is a vibrant range of high quality specialist activities and facilities in the community, for example local social care short breaks activities, local inclusive swimming lessons, horse riding and other opportunities for children and young people with SEND in the community, wherever you live in Shropshire. Supporting young people with SEND to develop a network of friends so they are confident to socialise and enjoy their recreation time.
- We will ensure that facilities across Shropshire are working to be more accessible for a range of physical and sensory needs.
- We will encourage and empower our children and young people to increase their independence, listening to families and young people as we further develop our preparation for adulthood offer. This could include increasing the use of personal transport budgets, independent travel training or practical activities to prepare them for living independently.
- We will work with young people, local businesses, training providers, colleges and schools to create opportunities to experience the world of work with the long-term aim of securing employment and/or meaningful work-related activity. Increasing participation in Supported Internships that lead to paid employment and/or meaningful work.

Impact

- Children and young people with SEND tell us that they have developed a network of friends and they are confident to socialise and enjoy their recreation time.
- Children and young people with SEND, including their families, tell us that their experiences in mainstream schools are positive; they feel welcomed, valued and well supported.
- Increasing participation in Supported Internships that lead to paid employment and/or meaningful work. More young people with SEND progress to further and higher education, employment, training or meaningful work
- More children and young people remain in Shropshire, including accessing more local provision that retains their connections with their community.
- Children and young people, where appropriate, participate in all aspects of early years settings, schools or Post 16, including spending most or all of their time learning in mainstream activities with their peers.
- Young people tell us their choices have been heard so that they can live in sustainable, safe and appropriate accommodation and, where possible, live independently.



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Outcomes

Outcomes Framework

There are two reasons to develop an agreed outcomes framework.

1. We need to measure our performance by focusing clearly on how our work is impacting on outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
2. We need to ensure that we have a framework of consistent, regular measurements that we can apply year on year to see how our impact on children and young people is changing over time.

Each of the top-level outcomes on the right is broken down to reflect what good looks like in each area, where applicable, for children and young people, parent carers and professionals.

For each of these, we aim to devise a measure to track progress towards these good outcomes.





Children and Young People with SEND

Early years,
school and FE
Settings

