



Walsall Council

Working together for better SEND and Alternative Provision (AP)

Special Educational Needs, Disability and Alternative
Provision Strategy **2023-2028**



This document represents **Version 2 of the Strategy following the Ofsted and CQC Area SEND Inspection** undertaken in Walsall between 8–12 December 2025.

Foreword

We are proud of the progress we have made together as a local area in improving the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and those accessing alternative provision (AP) in Walsall.

Over recent years, our partnership has delivered significant and sustained improvement. Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan timeliness now consistently exceeds 95%, co-production has been consistently highlighted as a local strength and quality assurance activity demonstrates that plans and provision are increasingly clear, consistent, and outcome focused.

This Strategy has been updated in response to the findings of the Ofsted and CQC Area SEND Inspection (December 2025). The inspection recognised the significant progress made by the Walsall local area partnership and highlighted how systems have strengthened to improve support for children and young people with SEND. The partnership also recognises that, while progress has been made, children and young people with SEND continue to experience some variability in the timeliness, consistency and impact of support across education, health and care.

This Strategy sets out how the partnership will address the key areas for improvement identified through inspection, specifically:

- Strengthening joint commissioning arrangements across education, health and care
- Establishing a shared SEND data dashboard with agreed metrics to measure impact
- Improving information sharing across services, including access to Education, Health and Care plans
- Reducing waiting times and increasing capacity across key health services
- Improving the consistency of experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND

These priorities are embedded throughout this Strategy and will be delivered through detailed partnership action planning and governance oversight.

More children and young people are receiving the right help, in the right place, at the right time. Our improvement journey has been shaped by the lived experiences of children, young people, and families in Walsall. Their voices continue to guide our priorities, influence decision-making and shape the services that support them.

We've built on a period of strong improvement and are now focused on sustaining progress and consistency. The strong foundations we've established mean that partners work with a clear sense of purpose and a shared understanding of what good looks like for children and families in Walsall. Our focus remains on maintaining quality and ensuring that support continues to improve across education, health and care.

Our partnership now extends across the whole local area, bringing together colleagues from education, health, care and the wider community. Together we are building an inclusive system that identifies need early, responds quickly and celebrates progress. A key part of this ambition is ensuring that early years settings, schools and colleges across Walsall continue to strengthen their inclusive practice. Education settings play a central role in identifying and meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND through high-quality teaching, strong ordinarily available provision and an effective graduated response. Our partnership will support settings to develop consistently inclusive environments where more children and young people can have their needs identified and met within their local community wherever possible. Specialist provision remains an essential part of the local SEND system, supporting children and young people with the most complex needs and providing specialist learning environments where this is the most appropriate provision.

This Strategy draws directly from the evidence within our Self-Evaluation Framework and the updated SEND Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). It recognises the progress made across the Walsall local area partnership and sets out how we will sustain and deepen improvement over the coming years. This version of the Strategy also acknowledges the publication of the Government's Schools White Paper, Opportunity for All: Strong Schools with Great Teachers for Your Child, and the wider programme of national SEND reform. As further detail and implementation timelines emerge, the Strategy will be reviewed through future versions to ensure Walsall continues to align with national policy developments and reform milestones.

Together, we remain committed to inclusion, collaboration, and delivering the very best outcomes for Walsall's children and young people.

Our vision

Our vision is a consistently inclusive system where all children and young people with SEND in Walsall have their needs identified early and met effectively, enabling them to attend, achieve and thrive within their local community.

We believe that every child and young person deserves, and should receive, an excellent education and the opportunity to fulfil their potential. This means having access to the right support, in the right place, at the right time.

This strategy sets out how Walsall's partnership will continue to develop and improve services for children and young people aged 0–25 years with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and for those accessing alternative provision (AP).

A child or young person has special educational needs and disabilities if they have a learning difficulty or disability that means they need additional education, care or health support.

Alternative provision supports children and young people who need extra help to stay engaged in learning, or who benefit from support outside of their mainstream school or setting. We recognise that many children and young people who access alternative provision may also have SEND, and that their needs are best met through one joined-up approach.

We want every child and young person to feel that they belong, are valued, and are supported to be the best they can be. Our ambition is that all children and young people experience belonging in their education setting, when accessing health and care services, and in their wider community.

Our approach is aligned with Walsall's Belonging Strategy, which recognises that children and young people thrive when they feel safe, valued, heard and connected to their communities. Across education, health and care, we are committed to creating inclusive environments where every child and young person feels safe, supported and able to thrive, with a genuine sense of belonging.

This Strategy, *Working together for better SEND and Alternative Provision (AP)*, has been co-produced with parents, carers and families (including FACE, Walsall's Parent Carer Forum); children and young people with lived experience; early years settings, schools and colleges; frontline practitioners; the voluntary and community sector; the Local Area Inclusion Board (LAIB); and the NHS Black Country Integrated Care Board (ICB).

As we continue this work, we recognise that, despite improvements, children and young people's experiences are not yet consistently strong across all services and pathways. A central ambition of this Strategy is therefore to reduce variability and ensure that all children and young people with SEND receive a consistently high-quality experience, regardless of where they live, learn or access support.



What has changed and what we will do next

Over recent years, the Walsall SEND partnership has strengthened significantly. Inspection evidence highlights improvements in key areas, including the timeliness of Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessments, the increasing quality of EHC plans, and strong co-production with children, young people and families. There is a well-established partnership approach across education, health and care, alongside increasing clarity for schools about the support available and how to access it.

These improvements mean that the foundations of an effective and inclusive local SEND system are now firmly in place.

The Area SEND Inspection (December 2025) recognised this progress and highlighted that these improvements are not yet consistently experienced across all services and pathways. In particular, there remains variation in how quickly support is accessed, how consistently it is delivered, and the difference it makes to outcomes.

The inspection also identified opportunities to strengthen how the system works together, including joint commissioning across education, health and care, the use of shared data to understand impact, and improving how information is shared between services. While there are examples of effective joint working and improving access to support, delays in access to some specialist health services continue to affect how quickly children and young people receive the help they need.

Since the inspection, the partnership has already begun to take this work forward. Priority areas have been translated into focused workstreams, bringing together partners from education, health and care to develop and deliver solutions, including strengthening joint commissioning arrangements, improving understanding of demand and access to services, and developing more consistent approaches across the system.

As a result, this Strategy marks the next phase of our improvement journey, focusing on ensuring that the progress made to date is experienced consistently across the system. We will build on our strong foundations by strengthening how services are planned and delivered together, improving the flow of information between professionals, using data more effectively to drive improvement, and increasing capacity in key areas of need.

In practice, this means that:

- children, young people and families will have clearer and more consistent routes to access support, regardless of where they live or attend education
- practitioners across education, health and care will have better access to shared information, enabling more joined-up decision making
- services will be planned and delivered more collaboratively across the partnership, improving how resources are used and reducing duplication
- children and young people will receive more timely and effective support, particularly where specialist health input is required

Through this, we will ensure that all children and young people receive the support they need to thrive, and that their experience is consistently strong across Walsall.



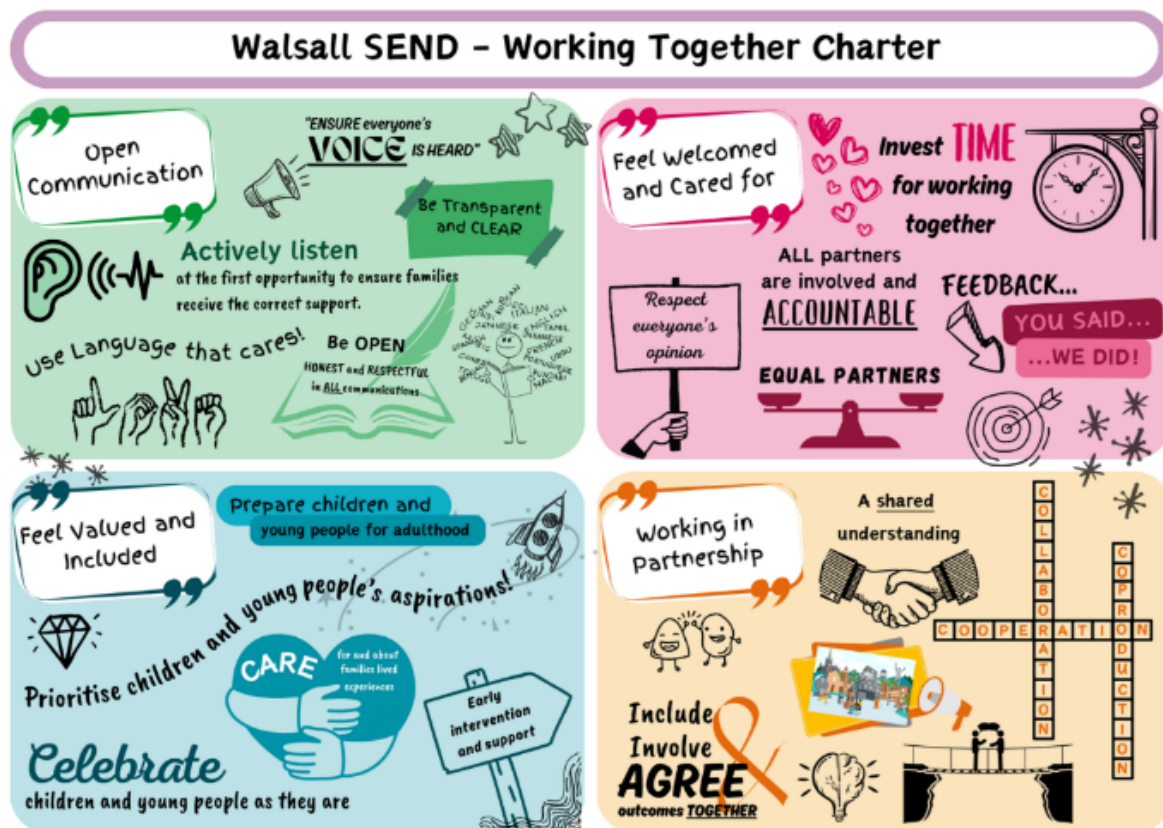
Working together

The lived experience of children, young people and their families with SEND is central to everything we do. Co-production is fundamental to our ongoing improvement and shapes the way we design, deliver and review services.

This reflects our shared commitment, alongside the Walsall Belonging Strategy, to work in a respectful and inclusive way, building positive relationships with children, young people and families.

We value and listen to the voices of children, young people and families, and use what they tell us to inform our decisions and drive change. By working together in partnership, we can provide the right support at the right time for all children and young people with SEND across Walsall, ensuring that services respond to individual needs and lead to the best possible outcomes.

Our co-produced Walsall SEND Working Together Charter sets out the principles that guide how we work with children, young people and families. Alongside our SEND Co-production and Engagement Agreement and In Our Hands Engagement and Participation Framework, it provides the foundation for how we will continue to strengthen our culture of collaboration and inclusion.



In Walsall, lived experience shapes how we design, deliver and improve services, ensuring they reflect what really matters to children, young people and families.

Understanding SEND

A child or young person is considered to have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) if they have a learning difficulty or disability that requires additional educational, health or care support. This is defined in law under Section 20 of the Children and Families Act 2014 and Section 312 of the 1996 Education Act.

Children and young people are identified as having a learning difficulty or disability if they:

- Have significantly greater difficulty learning than others of the same age.
- Have a disability that prevents or hinders them from making use of the educational facilities generally available to others of the same age in mainstream schools or post-16 settings.
- Are under compulsory school age and would meet one of the above definitions if special educational provision were not made for them.

It is important to note that children whose main difficulty arises from their home language being different from the language of instruction are not regarded as having a learning difficulty. Special educational provision refers to support that is additional to or different from that made generally for other children or young people of the same age in mainstream settings.

For children aged two years and older, this means educational provision that goes beyond what is usually available in mainstream schools and early years settings within the local authority area. For children under two years, it refers to any form of educational provision.

The SEND Code of Practice (2015) identifies four broad areas of need which help in planning and reviewing provision:

- Communication and interaction
- Cognition and learning
- Social, emotional and mental health difficulties
- Sensory and physical needs

These areas often overlap, and children and young people may have needs that fall within more than one category. What matters most is that we understand each child as an individual and ensure that support is coordinated, consistent and effective.

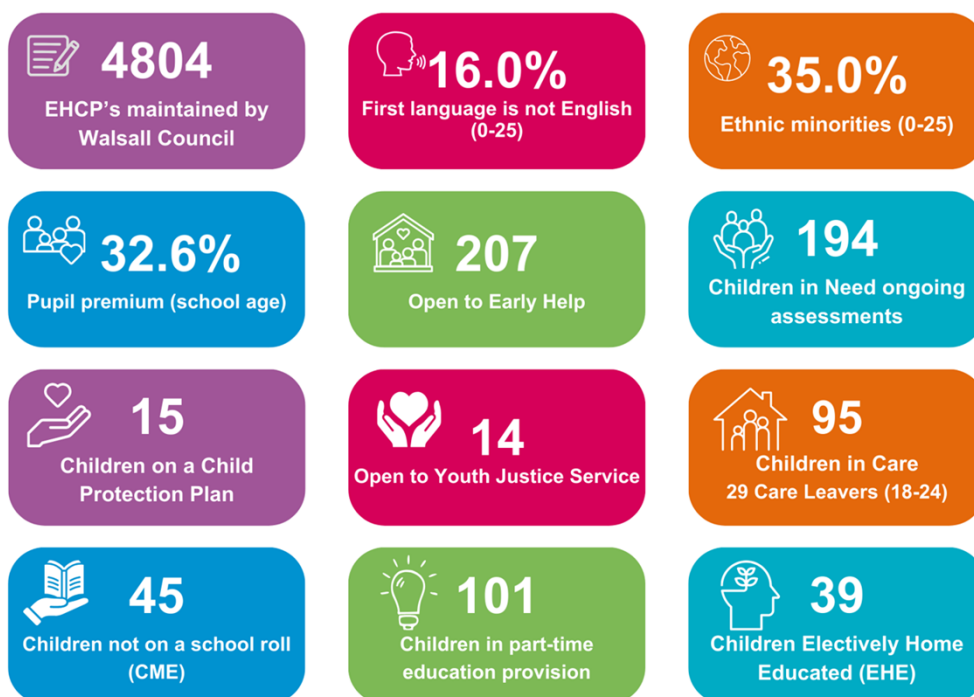


For further information, see Sections 6.28 to 6.35 of the 2015 SEND Code of Practice.

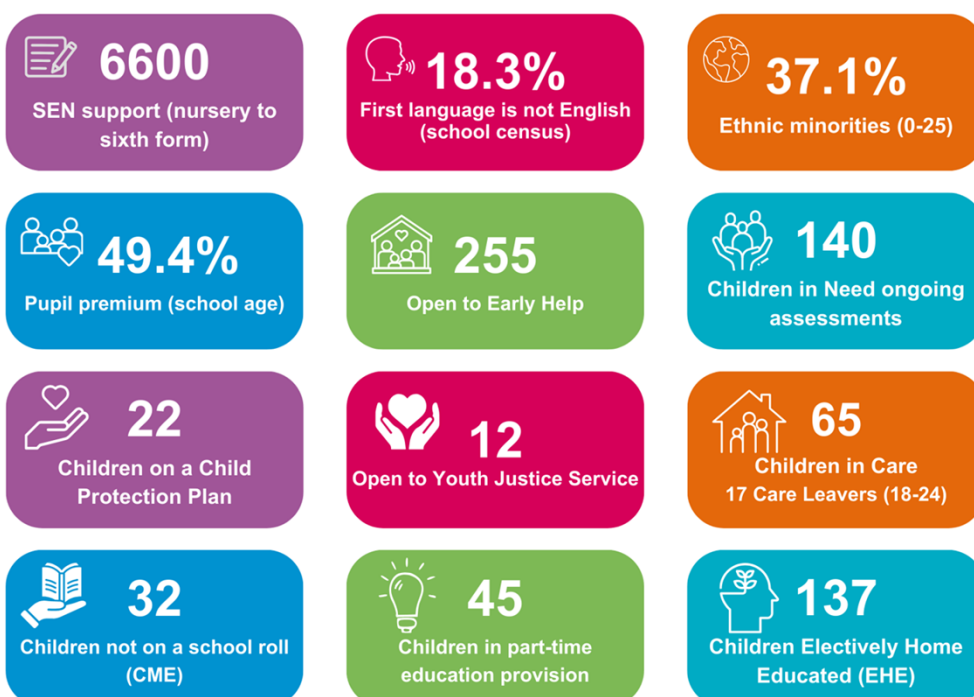
Understanding SEND in Walsall

Understanding what SEND looks like in Walsall helps us to plan services that meet local need and celebrate inclusion across all phases of education. The following information gives an overview of the children and young people supported through Education, Health and Care Plans and those receiving SEN Support within our schools and settings.

Children and Young People in Walsall with an EHCP



Children and Young People in Walsall with SEN Support



Updated July 2025

Understanding changing needs and future demand

Walsall's population of children and young people is projected to increase steadily over the next five years, with the number of Education, Health and Care Plans expected to rise from around 4,700 in 2025 to over 6,800 by 2030. The number of pupils supported at SEN Support level is also predicted to grow by around 250 each year. This rising demand highlights the importance of sustained investment in early identification, inclusive mainstream provision, and workforce development to ensure that children and young people continue to receive timely and effective support close to home.

Our shared priorities for children, young people and families

These priorities set out how Walsall's SEND and Alternative Provision Partnership will continue to improve experiences and outcomes for children and young people.

They reflect the evidence and learning captured through our Self-Evaluation Framework and the findings of the Ofsted and CQC Area SEND Inspection (December 2025) and align with the national SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan. Each priority describes our shared ambition, the actions we will take, and how we will measure the difference this makes for children, young people and families.

These priorities provide a clear framework for how the Walsall SEND Partnership will work collectively to strengthen inclusion, improve experiences and deliver better outcomes for children and young people with SEND.



Priority 1: Localised high-quality provision



Priority 2: Early identification and help



Priority 3: Participate in decisions



Priority 4: Supportive alternative provision offer



Priority 5: Children and young people feel valued and visible in their community



Priority 6: Successful Transitions and Preparation for Adulthood



Priority 7: Joint commissioning





Priority 1: Localised high-quality provision

Our aspiration...

To provide a strong continuum of high-quality, local provision across education, health and care in Walsall that meets the needs of children and young people with SEND and those requiring Alternative Provision.

We will work collectively as a partnership to ensure that sufficient capacity exists across education, health and care services so that children and young people receive timely, effective and needs-led support.

Our aim is that children and young people can access the right support as close to home as possible, experience a genuine sense of belonging, and achieve their ambitions within inclusive, well-supported local settings.

We will...

- Strengthen inclusive practice in all early years settings, schools and colleges through consistent use of the Ordinarily Available Provision guidance, Early Inclusion Framework and effective partnership working across education, health and care.
- Continue to expand the range and quality of local specialist provision, reducing the need for children and young people to be educated outside of Walsall.
- Ensure every child and young person experiences a positive and inclusive learning environment where they are valued, supported and inspired to succeed.
- Further develop the local health offer to ensure timely access to assessments, therapies and ongoing support for children and young people with SEND, working with health partners to support sufficient clinical capacity in specialist health services.
- Work with health partners to address delays where children and young people who require essential specialist assessment and treatment for eating and drinking difficulties are waiting too long. Some are experiencing a deterioration in their health while waiting. Leaders have been aware of the risks to children and young people with SEND and are undertaking a harm review of those who have experienced delays.
- Work with health partners to address delays where many children and young people requiring specialist speech and language therapy intervention to support them with stammering or speech disorders are waiting too long to access this support. For some, this impacts on aspects of their lives, including social interaction and emotional wellbeing.
- Work with health partners to address delays where children and young people with SEND face long waits to be assessed and receive support from the dietetics service, meaning some are not getting the timely specialist nutrition advice they need to maintain their health and to thrive.
- Work with health partners to improve access to CAMHS therapy for children and young people with a learning disability, and those children in care with SEND, who currently wait too long for CAMHS therapy following an assessment. For some children, this leads to an increase in their mental health difficulties and poorer outcomes.
- Ensure that the impact of waiting times on children and young people is understood and actively managed through partnership oversight, including the use of the Dynamic Support Register and targeted intervention where delays present a risk to outcomes.
- Build workforce confidence and consistency through joint training, professional networks and shared learning across education, health and care.
- Celebrate and share good practice from schools, settings and services that demonstrate inclusive and high-quality provision.
- Strengthen links between mainstream, specialist and alternative provision to create a coherent local system of support that meets a wide range of needs.
- Continue to prioritise the development of high-quality local provision for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) and those with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs.

- Monitor and address disproportionality across our SEND system to ensure that identification, support and outcomes are equitable for all children and young people, regardless of background, ethnicity, gender or social circumstance.

How we know we have made a difference...

- More children and young people with SEND will successfully attend and thrive in their local mainstream schools and settings.
- Children and young people who need additional support through Alternative Provision will be supported to re-engage in learning and, where appropriate, to return successfully to their local mainstream provision.
- An increasing proportion of children and young people with SEND will have their needs met within local provision in Walsall, reducing reliance on out-of-area placements.
- Attendance for children and young people with SEND will improve, and the number of suspensions and permanent exclusions will reduce.
- Quality first teaching and access to an inclusive curriculum will ensure that the majority of children and young people with SEND make expected or better progress from their starting points.
- More young people with SEND will move successfully through each phase of education, health and care with continuity of support, achieving positive outcomes in further education, training, employment or independent adulthood.
- Children and young people with SEND will experience more timely access to specialist health services, including speech and language therapy, dietetics, eating and drinking assessments and CAMHS support, helping them to maintain their health, wellbeing and development.
- Workforce confidence and consistency will improve, evidenced through quality assurance activity and feedback, resulting in more consistent and effective support for children and young people with SEND.
- Evidence of effective inclusive practice will be reflected in improved outcomes for children and young people, as identified through quality assurance and shared across the partnership.
- Data across the SEND system will demonstrate improved equity in identification, support and outcomes, helping to reduce disproportionality for children and young people with SEND from different backgrounds and communities.



Priority 2: Early identification and help

Our aspiration...

We will identify needs early and deliver the right support, in the right place, at the right time. Through strong partnership working across education, health and care, we will ensure that children and young people receive timely and effective help that promotes inclusion and prevents escalation of need. This priority aligns with Walsall's Best Start in Life approach, recognising the critical importance of early childhood in identifying need, strengthening universal support and preventing escalation through coordinated support.

We will...

- Promote consistent and effective early identification through the Graduated Approach and the Early Inclusion Framework, supporting education settings to embed inclusive practice.
- Strengthen early identification and support in the early years through the Family Hub network, ensuring families can access coordinated help and advice from birth. As children enter early education, we will embed the Early Inclusion Framework to promote inclusive practice and early intervention. We will build on the Best Start for Life approach and work with Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) partners to ensure families receive consistent, timely and joined-up support during the earliest stages of development.

- Improving early years outcomes and school readiness is a key priority for Walsall, recognising the importance of strong early development, communication and emotional wellbeing in enabling children to be ready to learn and thrive. In line with the government's national ambition for 75% of children to achieve a Good Level of Development (GLD) by 2028, we have initiated a focused programme of work across the local authority and wider early years system to strengthen outcomes for all children. This work is being developed in partnership with colleagues across education, health, social care and SEND to ensure a coherent and inclusive approach. Children with SEND are a central part of this work, ensuring early years development supports every child to make the best possible start.
- Ensure that the Local Offer clearly signposts information, guidance and services for families and professionals, helping them to access the right support early.
- Build a confident, skilled and resilient workforce to support early identification and intervention, through targeted professional development and shared learning across education, health and care.
- Continue to improve the quality and timeliness of Education, Health and Care (EHC) assessments and plans.
- Develop stronger systems for monitoring SEN Support to ensure children's needs are identified, planned for and reviewed effectively.
- Ensure that children and young people who may require alternative provision are identified early and supported through multi-agency planning and review.
- Celebrate and share good practice from schools, settings and services that demonstrate effective early identification and intervention.
- Focus our early identification work on the areas of greatest growth, particularly communication and interaction and social, emotional and mental health needs. We will ensure that staff have the confidence, tools and training to recognise and respond effectively to these needs at the earliest opportunity.
- with partners to address delays where children and young people with SEND experience lengthy waiting times for neurodevelopmental assessment pathways.
- Ensure that children and young people awaiting assessment or intervention receive appropriate interim support, so that needs are understood and responded to while they wait, reducing the risk of escalation and poorer outcomes.
- Strengthen the support offer for parents and carers of children and young people who are on paediatric waiting lists, including those awaiting autism or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder assessments, ensuring that families are able to access support and that children's needs are understood and supported while they wait.

How we know we have made a difference...

- There will be a measurable increase in the number of children and young people whose needs are identified early and supported effectively at SEN Support, reducing escalation to more intensive intervention. More staff across education, health and care will feel confident and equipped to identify and respond to needs early through consistent use of the Graduated Approach and inclusive practice.
- Parents and carers will report increased confidence that their child's needs are understood and that early intervention is making a positive difference.
- Families will be able to find and engage with the right services through an accessible and well-used Local Offer.
- Decision-making and assessment processes, including requests for Education, Health and Care plans, will remain timely and based on clear, evidence-led practice.
- Young people will have greater confidence that their aspirations are understood and that they are being well prepared for adulthood through early, coordinated planning.
- Children and young people will experience improved access to neurodevelopmental assessment pathways, with clearer and more coordinated support while they wait for assessment.

- Parents and carers of children and young people who are on paediatric waiting lists will report that they are able to access support and that their child's needs are better understood and responded to while they wait.
- Children and young people who require additional support through alternative provision will be identified earlier and supported through coordinated multi-agency planning and review.
- Schools and settings will demonstrate stronger and more consistent SEN Support practice through effective use of the Graduated Approach and regular review of support plans, resulting in improved progress and outcomes for children and young people with SEND.



Priority 3: Participate in decisions

Our aspiration...

We will continue to build trust and strengthen co-production across Walsall. By listening to lived experience and acting on what children, young people, parents, carers and partners tell us, we will shape services that are responsive, inclusive and focused on improving long-term outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

We will...

- Embed the Walsall SEND Working Together Charter so that children, young people and families are confident their voices are valued and acted upon.
- Ensure that children, young people and families are central to decision-making at individual, service and strategic levels.
- Use the SEND Co-production and Engagement Agreement and In Our Hands Engagement and Participation Strategy to guide how we listen, respond and communicate.
- Facilitate regular workshops and feedback sessions with children, young people, parents and carers to shape priorities and co-design improvements.
- Create and promote safe spaces for children and young people to share their views and experiences, supported by trusted adults who know and understand them. We will ensure participation opportunities are inclusive, accessible, and reflect the diverse ways children and young people choose to communicate.
- Strengthen the Local Offer as a shared space for information, feedback and celebrating co-produced developments.
- Continue to use evidence from compliments, complaints and engagement activity to drive continuous learning and improvement.
- Share outcomes and progress regularly through accessible updates and 'you said, we did' communications.
- Strengthen engagement with parents and carers of children and young people with SEND, recognising that there is more work needed to ensure families are able to access support and feel confident that their children are receiving the help they need from education, health and social care services.
- Strengthen our approach to communication, transparency and responsiveness improving how the partnership communicates with and engages parents and carers of children and young people who are on paediatric waiting lists, ensuring that more families are aware of and able to access the support offer available to them.

How we know we have made a difference...

- More children, young people and families will tell us that they feel listened to, respected and involved in decisions about their support.
- There will be clear and increasing evidence of co-production in action, with children, young people and parents influencing strategic planning, service design and quality assurance activity, leading to changes in services and support.

- Feedback gathered through the Working Together Charter, the Local Offer and participation forums will show improved satisfaction and trust in how the local area listens and responds.
- Practitioners will demonstrate increased confidence in communicating with children, young people and families, resulting in more effective engagement and more personalised support that reflects individual preferences and needs.
- Data from dispute resolution, mediation and tribunals will show fewer escalations and more positive early resolution of concerns.
- Co-production activity will be visible and regularly shared through 'you said, we did' updates, demonstrating how feedback has directly led to changes in services and support.
- More parents and carers of children and young people with SEND will report that they are able to access the support available to them, including when their child is on a paediatric waiting list for assessment or services, and that their views are listened to and acted upon by education, health and social care partners.



Priority 4: Supportive alternative provision offer

Our aspiration...

We will continue to develop a coherent and high-quality continuum of support that includes outreach, targeted intervention and local alternative provision. Our aim is to ensure that children and young people receive the right support at the right time, remain connected to their education, and are well prepared for their next steps in learning and life.

We will...

- Strengthen the range and quality of alternative provision options available, including in-house provision and external providers, so that every child and young person can access appropriate and effective support.
- Implement partnership quality assurance processes to monitor the impact of alternative provision on attendance, engagement, progress and outcomes.
- Build on the strong partnership oversight of alternative provision recognised through the Area SEND Inspection, ensuring that provision continues to be rigorously quality assured and that children and young people benefit from high-quality support while remaining connected to their mainstream school where appropriate.
- Support smooth and well-planned transitions into and out of alternative provision, ensuring that young people are prepared for successful reintegration to mainstream settings or progression to further education, training or employment.
- Prioritise the safeguarding, wellbeing and personal development of children and young people in alternative provision, ensuring timely access to the support and services they need.
- Strengthen collaboration between schools, colleges, providers, local authority teams and other agencies to coordinate a joined-up approach to inclusion and alternative provision.
- Promote the active engagement and participation of children, young people and families in shaping and evaluating alternative provision services, ensuring their voices influence design and improvement.

How we know we have made a difference...

- Children and young people will access alternative provision and support more quickly through a clear and consistent system, ensuring needs are met at the earliest opportunity.
- Children, young people and their families will tell us that they have been able to access the right type of support at the right time, and that their experiences in alternative provision are positive, inclusive and focused on their progress.

- Schools will demonstrate increased confidence in identifying when alternative provision is appropriate and in supporting reintegration, resulting in more timely and effective decision-making for children and young people.
- Quality assurance activity will evidence improved consistency across alternative provision, highlighting good practice and addressing areas for development through partnership improvement planning.
- There will be a measurable reduction in suspensions, permanent exclusions and reduced timetables.
- More children and young people will successfully reintegrate into mainstream education or move on to suitable post-16 pathways, training or employment.
- Attainment and progress for pupils in alternative provision will improve, and achievements will be celebrated by children, young people, families and providers.
- Quality assurance activity will demonstrate that alternative provision across Walsall consistently provides safe, inclusive and high-quality support for children and young people.



Priority 5: Children and young people feel valued and visible in their community

Our aspiration...

We want every child and young person with SEND, including those in alternative provision, to feel valued, included and visible within their local community. They should experience a sense of belonging, be able to participate fully in community life, and have the same opportunities as their peers to learn, contribute and succeed. This priority is closely aligned with the Walsall Belonging Strategy and our shared ambition to ensure that all children and young people feel safe, included and part of their education settings and wider community.

We will...

- Work with schools, settings, post-16 providers, health and social care teams and community organisations to strengthen inclusive practice and promote belonging for all children and young people.
- Support children and young people to express their views and communicate in the way that feels right for them, ensuring their voices shape local planning and delivery.
- Work with schools, settings and community partners to provide safe, welcoming environments where children and young people can build trusted relationships with adults who listen, understand and advocate for them. These connections will help young people feel secure, confident and able to participate fully in community life.
- Ensure that children and young people with SEND are considered in all local initiatives, events and opportunities across Walsall's communities.
- Continue to collaborate with community partners to raise awareness of SEND and promote inclusive participation.
- Strengthen work with charities, voluntary organisations and local businesses to expand access to high-quality inclusive and specialist activities in the community.
- Further develop opportunities that prepare children and young people for adulthood, including independence, friendships and employment.
- Work with partners across education, health, social care and the community to increase the range, accessibility and visibility of opportunities for older children and young people with SEND, ensuring that they feel safe, included and able to participate confidently in their communities, recognising the impact this has on their social development and their confidence about becoming independent.
- Celebrate inclusion, equality and diversity through our local communications, campaigns and events, ensuring that children and young people with SEND are visible and represented.

How we know we have made a difference...

- Children, young people and families will tell us that their experiences in local schools are positive and that they feel included, that they belong and that they are listened to.
- There will be an increase in the number of young people with SEND who progress to higher education, apprenticeships, traineeships, supported internships and employment.
- An increasing proportion of children and young people with SEND will have their needs met within their local community, reducing the need to travel out of area for education, health and care support.
- There will be an increase in positive feedback from children, young people and their families telling us that they learn, contribute to, and take part in all aspects of setting/school/college life.
- There will be an increase in the number of children and young people with SEND accessing community-based activities and initiatives, demonstrating improved participation and inclusion.
- Older children and young people with SEND will tell us that there are more opportunities and events tailored to their needs and that they feel safer out in the community, supporting their social development and their confidence about becoming independent.
- Children and young people with SEND will feel increasingly visible, valued and represented across community initiatives, events and local communications.



Priority 6: Successful Transitions and Preparation for Adulthood

Our aspiration...

Children and young people with SEND experience smooth, well-planned transitions at every stage of their journey, from home to early education, between schools, across phases of learning, and into adulthood. Every transition will be supported, coordinated and centred on the child or young person's strengths, aspirations and independence.

In Walsall, we are building on established approaches to preparation for adulthood, including early transition planning, supported internships, travel training and strong multi-agency working, which are already supporting young people to develop independence and access education, employment and training. We will continue to strengthen how preparation for adulthood is considered from the earliest stages, ensuring children and young people are supported to develop the skills, confidence and aspirations they need for adult life.

We will make sure that children are well prepared for their next stage of learning, and that schools, settings and services are equally ready to receive and support them. This includes strengthening pathways across the four key areas of Preparation for Adulthood: Employment, Independent Living, Community Inclusion and Good Health, ensuring that all partners across education, health, social care and the wider community work together to support young people to achieve positive outcomes in adult life.

We will...

- Strengthen transition planning across early years, school, college and adult services to ensure continuity of support and consistent communication with families.
- Embed the Early Inclusion Framework and Family Hub approach to help children with SEND make confident and successful starts in early education.
- Ensure timely information sharing and joint planning between education, health and care teams for all key transition points, including those into post-16 provision and adult services.
- Build young people's independence, confidence and life skills through clear preparation for adulthood (PfA) pathways focused on employment, community participation, independent living and good health.
- Use transition reviews (including Year 9 onwards) to embed PfA outcomes early, supported by clear health and social care pathways into adulthood.

- Strengthen the quality and consistency of Preparation for Adulthood within Education, Health and Care plans, ensuring that outcomes are specific, measurable and consistently informed by the views, wishes and aspirations of children and young people.
- Ensure that Preparation for Adulthood is embedded in the quality assurance framework across all services and that planning leads to improved outcomes in employment, independent living, community inclusion and health
- Provide accessible information and support for families to understand what to expect at each stage of transition and who to contact for help.
- Celebrate young people's achievements and successes as they move through different phases of education, training and life.
- Improve how information is shared between and within services that work with children and young people with SEND to ensure that there is a shared understanding of their education, health and social care needs. This will include working across the partnership to strengthen digital and system-level solutions that support information sharing, recognising that this is critical to improving consistency of support and outcomes in the absence of a single patient record and ensuring that all practitioners working with a child or young person have easy access to their EHC plan.

How we know we have made a difference...

- Families will tell us transitions are timely, clear and well supported.
- There will be a reduction in the number of young people experiencing gaps in support when moving between phases or services, demonstrating improved continuity of support.
- More young people with SEND will sustain education, employment or training beyond age 18 and move towards independent living and adult life.
- Early years transition data, including measures of school readiness, will show improved outcomes for children with SEND.
- Annual review and PfA data will demonstrate that preparation for adulthood outcomes are consistently embedded and delivered across all services, and that Education, Health and Care plans lead to improved outcomes in Employment, Independent Living, Community Inclusion and Good Health.
- Improved information sharing between services will result in more coordinated planning and support, with practitioners having timely access to EHC plans and a shared understanding of children and young people's needs.



Priority 7: Joint commissioning

Our aspiration...

Through strengthened joint commissioning arrangements, we will deliver a fully integrated system that plans, commissions and reviews services collectively across education, health and care. By working together with children, young people and their families, we will ensure that services are inclusive, efficient and based on a shared understanding of local needs. Our approach will reduce duplication, strengthen early identification and prevention, and improve outcomes through coordinated, outcome-focused delivery.

We will...

- Establish and implement a clearly defined joint commissioning approach across the partnership, ensuring that education, health and care services are planned and delivered in a coordinated and outcome-focused way.
- Co-produce and publish a joint commissioning strategy that sets out shared priorities, responsibilities and approaches to resource allocation across the partnership.
- Use joint data, intelligence and lived experience to inform commissioning decisions and ensure resources are directed where they will have the greatest impact. We will develop and embed a shared SEND data dashboard with agreed key performance indicators that enable leaders to measure impact, identify variation and drive improvement across the partnership.

- Plan and commission services together based on local data and future demand. We will use shared information to make sure resources are used wisely, avoid duplication, and focus on the areas that make the biggest difference for children and young people. This work will address the need for stronger joint commissioning arrangements and improved use of shared data, as identified through the Area SEND Inspection.
- Strengthen alignment between SEND and wider inclusion, early help, and health commissioning to deliver seamless support for children and young people.
- Embed governance and accountability arrangements through the Local Area Inclusion Board and relevant sub-groups to monitor delivery and impact.
- Evaluate commissioned services through shared quality assurance and performance frameworks, ensuring that outcomes and value for money are regularly reviewed.

How we know we have made a difference...

- Children and young people with SEND will experience more timely and coordinated access to services across education, health and care, reflecting improved joint commissioning arrangements.
- There will be a measurable reduction in duplication across services and improved use of resources, demonstrated through joint commissioning activity and financial monitoring.
- An increasing proportion of children and young people with SEND will have their needs met within local provision, supported by more effective commissioning and sufficiency planning.
- Leaders across the partnership will use shared SEND data and agreed key metrics to demonstrate improved outcomes, reduced variation and more effective targeting of resources.
- Commissioned services will demonstrate improved outcomes and value for money through joint quality assurance and performance monitoring.
- Joint commissioning arrangements will be clearly evidenced through a co-produced strategy, shared governance and regular review of impact across education, health and care.





How we will deliver our priorities

Strategic delivery...

Across Walsall, delivery of this Strategy is underpinned by shared ownership and partnership accountability. Professionals work together to ensure that support for children and families is cohesive, holistic and centred on each child and young person's aspirations and needs.

This approach reflects our commitment to working as one system, aligning our SEND and Alternative Provision priorities with wider partnership strategies to ensure children and young people receive consistent, inclusive and effective support from the earliest years.

Delivery of this Strategy will be organised through a set of clearly defined partnership workstreams, aligned to our strategic priorities. Each workstream will have identified lead partners from education, health and care, with clear roles and responsibilities for driving progress. Delivery will be phased over time, with a clear focus on early priorities and measurable progress in the first year, supported by longer-term planning to sustain improvement.

The partnership will adopt a shared set of key performance indicators to measure progress against this Strategy. These will include measures relating to timeliness, access to services, outcomes, and the experiences of children, young people and families, ensuring a clear and consistent understanding of impact across the system.

Our focus is on embedding this Strategy into day-to-day practice, ensuring that the priorities of *Working Together for Better SEND and Alternative Provision* are reflected in service plans, commissioning activity and workforce development across education, health and care.

Delivery will be supported by a culture of shared learning, reflective practice and mutual accountability, where all partners understand their role in delivering inclusive, high-quality support. Through joint training, professional networks and leadership development, we will build a confident, connected and resilient workforce that models collaborative and inclusive practice at every level.

Local area partnership governance...

The SEND Partnership Operational Group (POG), with representation from parents and carers, the local authority, schools, settings, and health and social care partners, is responsible for overseeing the delivery of this Strategy and its associated action plans, ensuring progress is monitored and actions are implemented.

The Local Area Inclusion Board (LAIB), with representatives from FACE, SENDIASS, Education, Health and Social Care, provides strategic oversight, challenge and assurance, holding partners to account for delivery and impact.

Both groups work alongside the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Walsall Learning Alliance to ensure coherence with wider local priorities and strategies.

Together, these governance arrangements provide clear lines of accountability, enable co-production at every level, and maintain a consistent focus on improving experiences and outcomes for children and young people.

Reviewing and monitoring

Progress will be monitored through regular partnership review and reporting, supported by shared data, performance information and feedback from children, young people and families.

We will continue to strengthen our shared understanding of local need through the development of joint data and intelligence systems across education, health and care. This will include a shared SEND data

dashboard and integrated performance reporting, helping partners to track outcomes, identify emerging trends and use evidence to shape ongoing improvement.

The development of a shared SEND data dashboard will enable leaders to monitor performance across the system, identify variation and take timely action to address areas of concern.

This will support a more consistent and evidence-informed approach to improvement across the partnership.

Action plans will be updated as priorities evolve to reflect progress, learning and emerging needs across the partnership. The Walsall SEND and Alternative Provision Self-Evaluation Framework (SEF) will continue to inform this process, ensuring that evidence from data, audits and lived experience shapes our ongoing improvement.

We recognise that national policy for SEND and education is continuing to evolve, including through the Government's recent white paper and wider SEND reform programme. As further detail and implementation expectations emerge, this Strategy will be reviewed and updated through our established partnership governance arrangements to ensure continued alignment with national direction while maintaining focus on local priorities and needs.

We will maintain open and transparent communication, using the 'You said, we did' approach to evidence how feedback leads to change. This commitment to reflection, accountability and co-production will ensure that the strategy remains a living document, driving sustained improvement across Walsall.

Together, we will continue to build an inclusive Walsall where every child and young person with SEND can learn, achieve and thrive.

