

Warrington's strategy for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)



Making Warrington a SEND Confident Town



WARRINGTON
Borough Council



Cheshire and Merseyside

1. Foreword

I am delighted to introduce Warrington's new strategy for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Since 2018, we have made good progress against the priorities set out in our last strategy and partners have worked together to make a real difference to the lives of children and young people with SEND living in Warrington by:

Increasing notifications to the Council about younger children with additional needs who require help and support.

Creating more specialist education placements at Woolston Learning Village and in our Designated Provisions so that more children with Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans can access local education provision in Warrington.

Strengthening the scrutiny of SEND practice in all Warrington settings and schools and in the independent and non-maintained schools.

Investing in specialist services, such as Occupational Therapy, so that children are not waiting too long to access services.

We have also recently appointed a Designated Social Care Officer and increased the capacity of the Designated Clinical Officer Team who are charged with assuring the health and care advice in EHC Plans.

However, in Warrington we are not complacent and recognise that there is still much more to do.

In March 2022, we held a Strategy Development Session with families and partners from education, health and social care and listened to the experiences of children and young people with SEND; their families and professionals working in the SEND system, including those who act as advocates on behalf of children and their families.

We acknowledge that there are still significant challenges that children and their families continue to face and what you have told us, along with intelligence collected from our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Self-Evaluation, has helped Warrington's SEND Partnership to establish six priorities to make this change happen, improving local services and outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

Our ambition is for Warrington to be one of the best places to live if you are a child with SEND – we want Warrington to be a **SEND Confident Town**.

We will do this by identifying the **Right Children** at the **Right Time** and providing the **Right Services** to meet their needs. If we can do this, we will create better futures for the children and young people with SEND living in Warrington.

Councillor Sarah Hall

Cabinet member for children's services



Chair of Warrington parents and carers forum

Warrington Parents and Carers Forum (WarrPAC) welcomes the Revised SEND strategy which has been produced after a considerable investment in time, effort and energy from all partners in Warrington.

It sets out priorities that should make a positive difference to the lives of children, young people and their families living who live with SEND.

WarrPAC have been integral in shaping a new way forward in this document. We have helped service providers and commissioners to understand from a parental perspective what our families' priorities are. Views about what inclusion feels like, looks like and sounds like has helped to shape this strategy.

We have developed a new and stronger voice for Warrington parents and carers and will hold the local area partners to account for delivering on the promises they make in this strategy.

WarrPAC have identified different ways of operating and how new arrangements could be delivered to better effect. As a result, this strategy is one which belongs to all parents, carers, young people and partners in Warrington and will help to develop a shared understanding of the journey ahead and the part that they are all expected to play in bringing about the necessary change.

Co-production

WarrPAC believe that working together delivers better outcomes, we need each other to achieve success. We also believe that WarrPAC, parents, carers, children and young people should continue to be valued, respected and treated as equal partners.

We are committed to making sure that Warrington's children, young people, parents and carers continue to be a part of the decision-making process, not only for their own care and support, but as part of our partnership as we continue to strive to make significant improvements to all services in Warrington.

Jean Fitzpatrick



2. Children and young people with SEND

Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) can affect a child or young person's ability to learn. It can also affect their:

- Ability to communicate and interact with other people
- Reading and writing
- Ability to understand things
- Concentration levels
- Physical ability
- Emotional and mental health and in turn their behaviour.

Children with SEND may be able to access:

- [SEN Support](#) - extra help given in nursery, school or college above what is normally provided to other pupils in schools. This may include changes to the way the curriculum is taught and the physical space in a school so that the child can access the same teaching and learning opportunities as their peers.
- An [Education, Health and Care \(EHC\) Plan](#) - a formal assessment of the child's or young person's education, health and care needs may take place for those who have more complex SEND. After consultation with education, health and care specialists, if an EHC Plan is necessary then one is put in place describing the extra help the child should receive to meet their education, health and care needs.

There is an expectation that professionals will take a 'graduated response' when meeting to children's needs and SEN support will be put in place first.

Warrington CAN (Children with Additional Needs)

When we spoke to our families they told us that they did not like word 'SEND' because all too often there was a focus on what their child **can't do** rather than what they **can do**. They preferred the term CAN - children with additional needs.

In Warrington we are committed to changing this mind-set and so we are looking first at the child's abilities so that they are seen as more than just the sum of their 'needs'. This means putting the

child at the centre of our work, identifying what matters most to them and how best to achieve their education, health and care outcomes.

Changing our mind-set

We will change our mind-set from:

- Focusing on what a child or young person can't do
- Assessments which focus on eligibility for services
- Low expectations
- A one size fits all approach.

We will change our mind-set to:

- Focusing on what a child or young person can do
- Assessments which focus on the abilities and needs of the child, including strengths, resources and assets that contribute to supporting the child
- Positive expectations and celebration of achievements
- Bespoke adaptations which support the successful development of the child.

To make change happen and get us where we want to be, we have taken the feedback from the Strategy Development Session and put in place a shared set of values and standards which the SEND Workforce will demonstrate in their day to day working interactions with children, young people and their families, as well as other professionals.

Our values

- Ownership and support of coproduction by all
- A commitment to sharing power and decisions with service users
- Children and families are at the centre of our work
- All people are valued and included regardless of their needs.

Our behaviours

1. We have good and timely communication

- We share information in a timely way.
- We keep people informed, no matter what progress we have made.
- We change how we communicate to fit the needs of children and families.
- We check that children and families understand the information we are sharing.
- We use language that is accessible and non-judgemental.
- We listen carefully to the experiences of others.
- We are honest and transparent.

2. We work together

- We invest time and effort into building effective relationships with others.

- We work across departmental and organisational boundaries.
- We cooperate with each other willingly.
- We seek out, listen to, and learn from different perspectives.
- We act together in the best interests of children and families.

3. We are solution focused

- We are always looking to learn, and to find better ways to do things.
- We are open to change and encourage this in others.
- We focus on what we can do, rather than what we can't do.
- We are flexible and innovative.

Our values

We have listened and responded to what you have told us about our vision for children and young people with SEND and changed it so it is inclusive of all those with SEND.

We want all children and young people with SEND to:

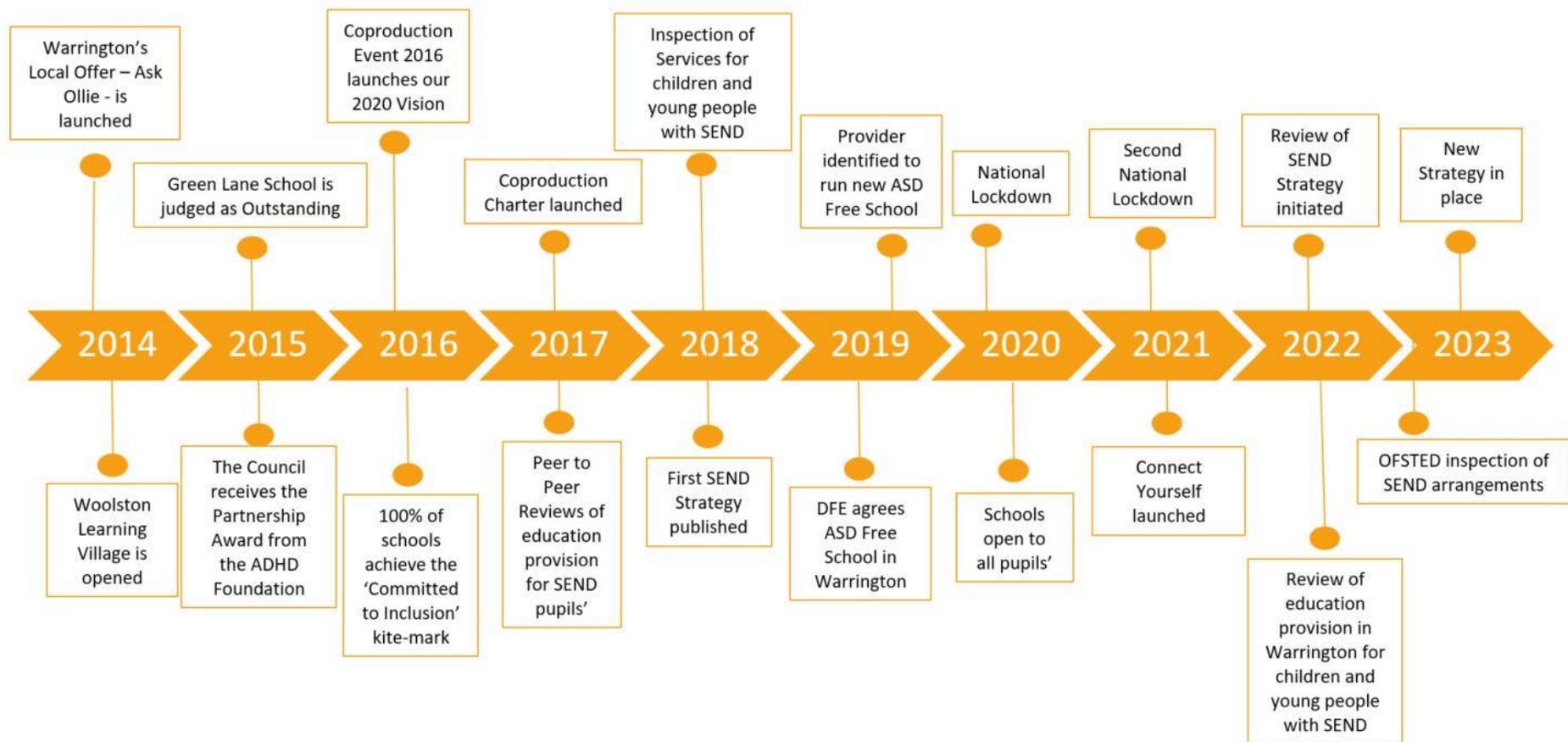
- Do their best at nursery, school and college
- Have greater control over the support they receive
- Feel valued and included in their local communities
- Achieve meaningful occupations in their adult lives
- Lead happy and fulfilled lives.

Warrington SEND Partnership Board

The SEND Partnership Board is responsible for overseeing the delivery of Warrington's change programme and holding partner organisations to account for improving services for children and young people with SEND. The key organisations involved in the SEND Partnership Board and the development of this strategy are:

- Warrington Borough Council – Early Help Services, SEND Service, Education Services, Children's and Adult Social Care
- Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board (health commissioner)
- Bridgewater Community HealthCare NHS Foundation Trust (community health provider)
- Mersey Care NHS Trust (mental health provider)
- Representatives from mainstream schools, designated provisions and special schools
- Warrington Parent and Carers Forum (WarrPAC) and Warrington Speak Up.

Our journey so far



About children and young people with SEND living in Warrington

As of January 2022, in Warrington there were:

- 1,878 children and young people 0-25 years with an EHC Plan maintained by the Council and of these 63.7% were for school aged children and young people.
- 525 children and young people with a primary need of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) with an EHC Plan.
- 4,781 pupils with SEND attending a Warrington state-funded school - of these 26% had an EHC Plan and the remainder received SEN Support.
- 108 pupils with SEND attending a Warrington state funded Warrington with a physical disability.
- 144 children and young people with a hearing impairment supported by the Sensory Support Service.
- 89 pupils with SEND attending a Warrington state funded school with a Visual Impairment.
- 73 children and young people up to 16 years old attending an independent or non-maintained school because their needs could not be met in a state funded school in Warrington.
- 66 children and young people up to the age of 24 years registered on their GP's learning disabilities register.
- 25 children and young people 0-17 years eligible for continuing care funding.
- 5 children and young people 0-17 years in receipt of health funding to support their individual needs.
- 19 children and young people 0-25 years with an active diagnosis of epilepsy and currently treated with medication.



3. Inspection of Warrington’s arrangements for children and young people with SEND

About the inspection

Between the 23 January and the 10 February 2023, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission jointly inspected arrangements across education, health and care services to understand how well members of Warrington’s Partnership work together to improve the experiences of children and young people with SEND.

The inspection highlighted that senior leaders across Warrington Partnership are ambitious for children and young people with SEND and that most children and young people with SEND living in Warrington benefit from:

- The effective identification of their special educational needs.
- Effective careers education information advice and guidance in school.
- Valuable work experience and supported internship programmes which prepares them well for the future.
- A wide range of inclusive leisure activities which offer dedicated sessions for them to attend.
- Support from a trusted adult – this means that their voices matter and they take part in decision-making about the support they receive.

A full copy of the report can be viewed at: reports.ofsted.gov.uk

Warrington’s inspection outcome

The inspection team found that Warrington’s arrangements lead to inconsistent experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND and have asked the partnership to work together to address the following areas for improvement:

- Leaders across health, education and social care must improve the efficiency and quality of their information gathering processes so that that children's and young people's assessments are coordinated across providers and services.

- Leaders across the partnership should ensure that assessments for EHC plans are completed within the statutory timeframes.
- Health commissioners and providers should ensure that children and young people receive health services in line with area plans and that service specifications better meet children's and young people's needs in Warrington.
- Leaders across health, social care and education should ensure that they have effective systems to share information about children and young people's needs in a more useful, timely and effective way.

What we are going to do to address these areas for improvement have been included in Warrington SEND Strategic Delivery Plan, attached at the end of this document.

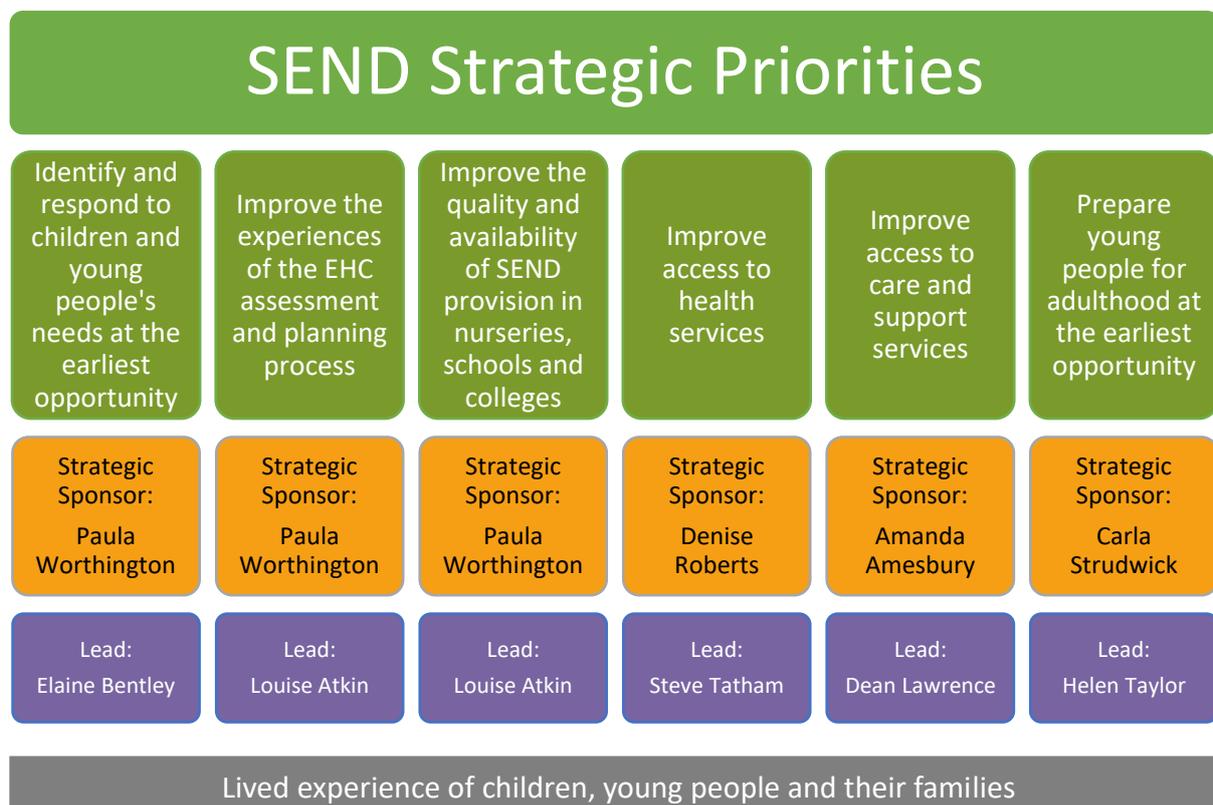
We have developed a SEND Strategic Delivery Plan to address these areas of improvement which is available online at warrington.gov.uk.



4. Making it happen – our priorities

We have used information from a number of sources to inform the development of our strategic priorities for SEND. The sources include:

- The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) of children and young people’s special educational needs and/or disabilities
- Our self-evaluation of local partnership arrangements and the impact of services for children and young people with SEND
- Our performance against a range of key indicators
- Intelligence gathered by WarrPAC, SEND Information, Advice and Support Services and Warrington Speak Up about children’s and parents/carers experiences
- The SEND Strategy Development Session and Short Breaks Consultation.



Priority 1: Identify and respond to children and young people's needs at the earliest opportunity

When we get this right:

Children and young people have access to the right services at the right time so that they make progress and achieve their full potential.

Key facts and figures:

In Warrington:

- There were 274 Early Health Notifications to the Council about younger children with additional needs in 2022.
- 75% of children at two and a half years old were making the expected level of progress across the five key areas of development.
- 14% of children's communication skills at two and half years old were below age related expectations.
- 13% of children's personal and social skills at two and a half years old were below age related expectations.

What children and families say

- I don't have enough information about what I could do to support my child or where to go to find the support I need.
- We need help sooner so we don't struggle as much.
- We wait too long to be seen by services.
- Services don't keep us informed about what's going on.

What we will do:

We will:

- Share information about children and young people's needs with professionals in a more useful, timely and effective way.
- Improve access to information, advice and guidance so that children, young people and their families are able to find the support they need.
- Establish a 'once-only' framework so that parents do not have to tell their story repeatedly.
- Improve the quality and timeliness of contact with children and families by adopting the values and behaviours set out in this strategy.
- Undertake assessments of children's needs as soon as they are identified so that plans are put in place and revisited to support a growing understanding of their needs.
- Review and redesign the speech and language pathway to take account of more children presenting with communication needs.
- Increase the number of children and young people with SEND and their families accessing the early help offer.

Priority 2: Improve the experience of the EHC assessment, plan and review process

When we get this right:

Children and young people and their parents and carers are actively involved in the assessment process and the production of their EHC Plans. They understand the process, how their needs will be met and which services will contribute to the delivery of their EHC Plan.

Key facts and figures:

- The number of initial requests for EHC Assessments increased by 92.5% from 174 in 2020 to 335 in 2022.
- 220 new EHC Plans were issued in 2022 and of these 25.5% were made for children under five years.
- Of the new EHC Plans issued 48.2% were issued in the 20 week timescale.
- 41.9% of children and young people with EHC Plans were educated in mainstream provision
- 27.6 of children and young people with EHC Plans were educated in a special school
- The Council maintained 1,878 EHC Plans for children and young people living in Warrington.

What children and families say

- EHC Plans do not take into account my views.
- Better communication is needed with families.
- EHC needs assessments are not completed in a timely way.

What we will do:

We will:

- Strengthen the oversight of the EHC assessment process so that managers are able to identify and resolve delays in the process to improve compliance with the 20 week timescale.
- Make sure that our services have the right capacity to meet the demand for EHC assessments.
- Strengthen the Annual Review process so that EHC Plans recognise the changing needs of children and young people.
- Improve our information gathering processes so that that children's and young people's assessments are coordinated across providers and services.
- Establish meaningful participation with parents/carers and children/young people in the assessment and planning process.
- Make sure that the new Quality Assurance Framework supports ongoing improvement and satisfaction with the quality of EHC Plans.

Priority 3: Improve the quality and availability of SEND provision in nurseries, schools and colleges

When we get this right:

Children and young people receive the help and support they need to do their best at school.

Key facts and figures:

- As of January 2022, there were 4,781 pupils in state funded schools with SEND – 1,244 had an EHC Plan and 3,537 required SEN Support.
- The number of pupils with EHC Plans in state funded primary and secondary schools reduced marginally between 2021 and 2022 from 746 to 744. Over the same timeframe, the number of pupils in special schools increased from 373 to 388, in non-maintained schools from 33 to 38 and in the independent sector from 58 to 68.
- Since the Woolston Learning Village opened in 2014, the site has been expanded to increase place numbers in Green Lane from 135 to 220 and Fox Wood from 77 to 124 (up to Key Stage 5).
- Place occupancy in the Designated Provisions for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs and Cognition and Learning needs has increased to 212.

What children and families say

- There needs to be better understanding of mental health conditions in schools and what they can do to help.
- School leadership teams need to improve their understanding of SEND and how to be inclusive.
- There should be a shared understanding of what 'reasonable' adaptations can and should be made for our children.
- There needs to be a better geographical spread and more specialist SEND provision across the town, especially for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD).
- My child waited too long to receive the specialist equipment they needed at school.
- There is not enough school transport and we wait too long for this to be organised.

What we will do:

We will:

- Scrutinise whether schools are effectively employing the Graduated Response in the peer to peer review process so that pupils are identified at the earliest opportunity and targeted support is put in place to prevent the escalation of need.
- Strengthen the Committed to Inclusion Kite-mark so that schools are inclusive of children and young people's SEND.
- Continue to review the quality of SEND provision in Warrington and for those who are placed in out of borough schools.
- Mobilise support for schools and pupils with ASD and SEMH needs as part of phase 2 of the Autism in Schools project.
- Keep under review the demand for school places and out in place longer term plans to establish enough local school places for pupils with SEND.
- Find alternative ways to support pupils destined for ASD free school which has been delayed until 2024.

- Move forward with proposals to relocate the sixth form provision from Woolston Learning Village to a new site which will enable the local further education offer for young people post 16 years and post 19 years to expand further.
- Collaborate with health commissioners and partners to review Specialist Nursing Provision in schools so the pupils have access to the help and support they need.
- Work alongside our school leaders to review approaches to supporting pupils with Speech, Language and Communication Needs in schools so that there is a graduated approach which includes whole school approaches as well as targeted and specialist interventions.
- Adopt a borough wide approach to children's equipment and moving and handling of disabled pupils so that there is consistency in the offer to pupils with physical disabilities.
- Review our approaches to the provision of home to school transport for pupils with SEND to tackle the shortage in licensed vehicles in the borough.

Priority 4: Improve access to health services

When we get this right:

Children and young people are provided with the help and support they need when they need it and in a way which improves the quality of their life.

Key facts and figures:

- The uptake of annual health checks with GPs for those with SEND aged between 14 and 17 years has again reduced from 42% in 2019/20 to 31% in 2020/21
- The average number of referrals (per month) to the Community Paediatric Service has increased from 51 in 2019/20 to 87 in 2021/22 and as a result the number of children waiting over 18 weeks to be seen has increased month on month from 148 in September 2021 to 492 in September 2022.
- The number of children waiting to be seen has also increased for Paediatric Speech and Language Services from 164 in September 2021 to 504 in September 2022.

What children and families say

- We waited too long to get the help and support we needed.
- We need better support for my child's mental health.
- I want to see more involvement in the health workforce delivering therapies and treatment to my child.
- GPs need to have a better understanding of children with SEND and how to support us.

What we will do:

We will:

- Increase the number of young people on the Learning Disabilities Register.
- Increase the take up of Annual Health Checks by promoting this in the EHC Annual Review Process.
- Improve the early diagnosis of children and young people with a learning difficulty and/or disability.
- Increase capacity in the Community Paediatric Service to facilitate additional appointments for children and young people and review our approach so that the right children and young people move onto the diagnostic pathway.
- Promote children and young people's mental health and wellbeing, so that they have access to the help and support they need to improve their mental health and wellbeing.
- Improve the quality of information provided as part of the EHC Assessment and planning process so that young people have access to the help and support they need from health services.
- Reduce wait times for health services, including Speech and Language, the Neurodevelopment Pathway and Child and Adolescent Mental Health services.
- Review and refresh service specifications for health and therapy services so that service delivery continues for young people until they reach 18 years.
- Improve our communication with parents and carers who are waiting to be assessed on the neurodevelopment pathway.
- Increase the number of parents and carers accessing personal health budgets.

Priority 5: Improve access to care and support services

When we get this right:

Children, young people and their families get the help they need at the right time.

Key facts and figures:

- 89 young people in receipt of home tuition because of a either physical or mental health need – 33 of these have an EHC Plan.
- 174 young people are eligible for adult services.
- 171 people took up a personal budget to support their care needs.

What children and families say

- I want more things to do and places to go.
- We need more respite as we feel constantly exhausted.
- There are not enough holiday clubs before and after school and in the school holidays that can meet the needs of my child.
- Our named social worker keeps changing which means that we go backwards rather than forwards.
- Planning is disjointed for children with disabilities and health are not always visible in children in need (CIN) meetings.
- We have experienced lots of problems recruiting personal assistants and so we don't get the help we need.
- There is too much uncertainty when our children when they become adults.
- Adult Social Care are not visible in planning for our child's future.

What we will do:

We will:

- Strengthen the short breaks offer working alongside our families so that we learn from their experiences.
- Focus on recruiting permanent social work staff into the team to improve consistency for children and their families.
- Improve the social care contributions to EHC Plans and align Annual Review meetings with other team around the family meetings (i.e. CIN and Care Planning meetings) in line with our "tell it once" approach.
- Make sure that the Children with Disabilities Operating Protocol clearly defines how children and families access services from Early Help and Children's Social Care.
- Work in an integrated way across departmental and organisation organisational boundaries.
- Establish a recruitment strategy to increase the number of Personal Assistants in Warrington.

Priority 6: Prepare young people for adulthood at the earliest opportunity

When we get this right:

Young adults will have the knowledge and skills the needs to successfully move into work, lead healthy lives, be active members of their local community and live as independently as possible.

Key facts and figures:

- The percentage of the EHC Plan Key Stage 4 cohort in a sustained participation in an education, employment or training destination at 17 years increased to 93.1% for those with an EHC Plan in 2020/21. Similarly, participation for those requiring SEN Support has increased 91.7%.
- The most recent data from the 2022 SEN 2 return shows that those not in education, employment and training has increased from 82 in 2021 to 102 - this equates to 5.9% of those with EHC Plan and is higher than the national average of 2.6%.
- The attainment of Level 2 qualification by the age of 19 years for those pupils requiring SEN Support was good in 2020/21 - 49.1% compared to an average of 40.5% across England. Attainment for those with an EHC Plan was also above the national average of 16.6% at 20.4%.
- Attainment of a Level 3 qualification by the age of 19 years was also higher for both the SEN Support and EHC Plan cohorts compared to the national average - 43.2% for those with SEN Support (EA 35.8%) and 18.6% for those with an EHC Plan (EA 14.7%).
- The proportion of adults with a learning disability in paid employment has for the first time since 2014/15 increased from an all-time low of 0.9% in 2018/19 to 3.1% in 202/21.
- The Council has made a significant investment buying properties to support adults to live in supported accommodation and the proportion of adults with learning difficulties in settled accommodation is well above and has increased for the fifth consecutive year from 77.7% in 2014/15 to 89.6% in 2019/20.

What children and families say

- We want good quality careers advice for our children.
- We want more vocational pathways for our children.
- We want transition planning to start sooner so we know that our children will be well supported when they become adults.
- I want more jobs to be available for us.
- I want an employer to understand the help and support I need when I'm at work.

What we will do:

We will:

- Clarify the entitlement to education post 19 so that parents and young people understand the offer, including how and when further education will cease.
- Widen the social care offer for young people as they approach adulthood and as education ceases so that young people continue to have their care and support needs met.
- Review the pathways, processes and support mechanisms for a managing transition to Adult Services, enabling young with SEND to access the support that meets their needs in health and social care.
- Improve the information on the Local Offer so that young people and parents know how to access the help and support they need as they move into adulthood.

- Increase capacity in the adult social work team to keep pace with the rise in number of young people requiring support from adult social care.



5. SEND Workforce Development

To create a knowledgeable workforce and support for children and families which is centred on their needs we will:

- Increase opportunities to share information and best practice across organisations working with children with SEND.
- Put in place training, resources and information that improves the knowledge and skills of our workforce.
- Improve staff retention and recruitment so that children with SEND have access to a high-quality workforce with the right skills and abilities.
- Continue to improve practice so that Education, Health and Social Care services, are compliant with the SEND Code of Practice and responsive to the needs of our children and their families.

The SEND Workforce are:

- Early years workers in childcare settings
- Early help and youth workers
- Leaders, teachers, teaching assistants and support staff working in our schools
- Health commissioners and providers
- Social workers, including those based in children's and adult social care
- Front line youth justice workers
- Workers in SEND Support Service across the Council and in other organisations across Warrington.

Workforce	Training programme
Leaders and managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEND Leadership Programme • Warrington Borough Council Leadership Programme • Warrington Borough Council New Managers Programme • IPSEA SEND Law • IPSEA SEND Law and Decision Making.
Staff involved in the preparation of EHC Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IPSEA Producing Legally Compliant EHC Plans • IPSEA SEND Law • Council for Disabled Children Holistic Outcomes in EHC Plans • Warrington Borough Council Writing Outcome Focused EHC Plans

Workforce	Training programme
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council for Disabled Children Delivering Quality Annual Reviews • NASEN SEND Caseworker Training • Council for Disabled Children Information, Advice and Support.
Whole SEND Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council for Disabled Children SEND Basic Awareness 1 • Council for Disabled Children SEND Basic Awareness 2.
Early help, social care and youth justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council for Disabled Children Social Care and SEND • IPSEA SEND Law • Council for Disabled Children Information, Advice and Support.
Health workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council for Disabled Children Focus on Health Advice • Council for Disabled Children The role of CAMHs in the EHC Plan process • IPSEA SEND Law.
School based staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council for Disabled Children SEND Basic Awareness 1 • Council for Disabled Children SEND Basic Awareness 2 • NASEN SENDCo Training • Ambition for All SENDCo Mentoring Programme • Committed to Inclusion Training programme.
Parents and carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council for Disabled Children SEND Basic Awareness 1 • Council for Disabled Children SEND Basic Awareness 2 • Warrington Borough Council Autism in Schools • Warrington Borough Council Managing challenging behaviour in the home.



6. Next steps

The SEND Partnership Board is responsible for overseeing the changes set out in this strategy and challenging senior officers where it is identified that progress has not been made in line with the timescales set out in the SEND Strategic Delivery Plan.

The SEND Partnership Board is accountable to the Starting Well Programme Board and ultimately Warrington Together Partnership Board as set out below.

Warrington Together provides strategic direction to a wide range of organisations so that Warrington is a place where we work together to create stronger neighbourhoods, healthier people and greater equality for our residents.

Governance arrangements

