

Warwickshire SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2024 – 2029



Introduction

Welcome to the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2029 for Warwickshire.

This strategy has been coproduced by partners from across health, education and social care including Warwickshire County Council, Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care Board, the parent carer forum - Warwickshire Parent Carer Voice (WPCV), IMPACT (the young people's forum for SEND) and schools.

It sets out our collective ambition for the next five years to improve life opportunities and outcomes for children and young people with SEND, by supporting a strong early start, quality education and a positive transition into adulthood.

Aiming to meet the requirements of the Children and Families Act 2014, the strategy is ambitious, inclusive, and realistic in the challenging financial context seen nationally amongst local authorities and the NHS.

The financial challenges of maintaining sustainable SEND provision are well-recognised, as highlighted in recent reports from the National Audit Office, the Local Government Association, and the County Council Network. These challenges extend beyond education to include related expenses, such as home-to-school transportation. The County Council remains committed to operating within its available resources while advocating for additional government funding to address growing demands.

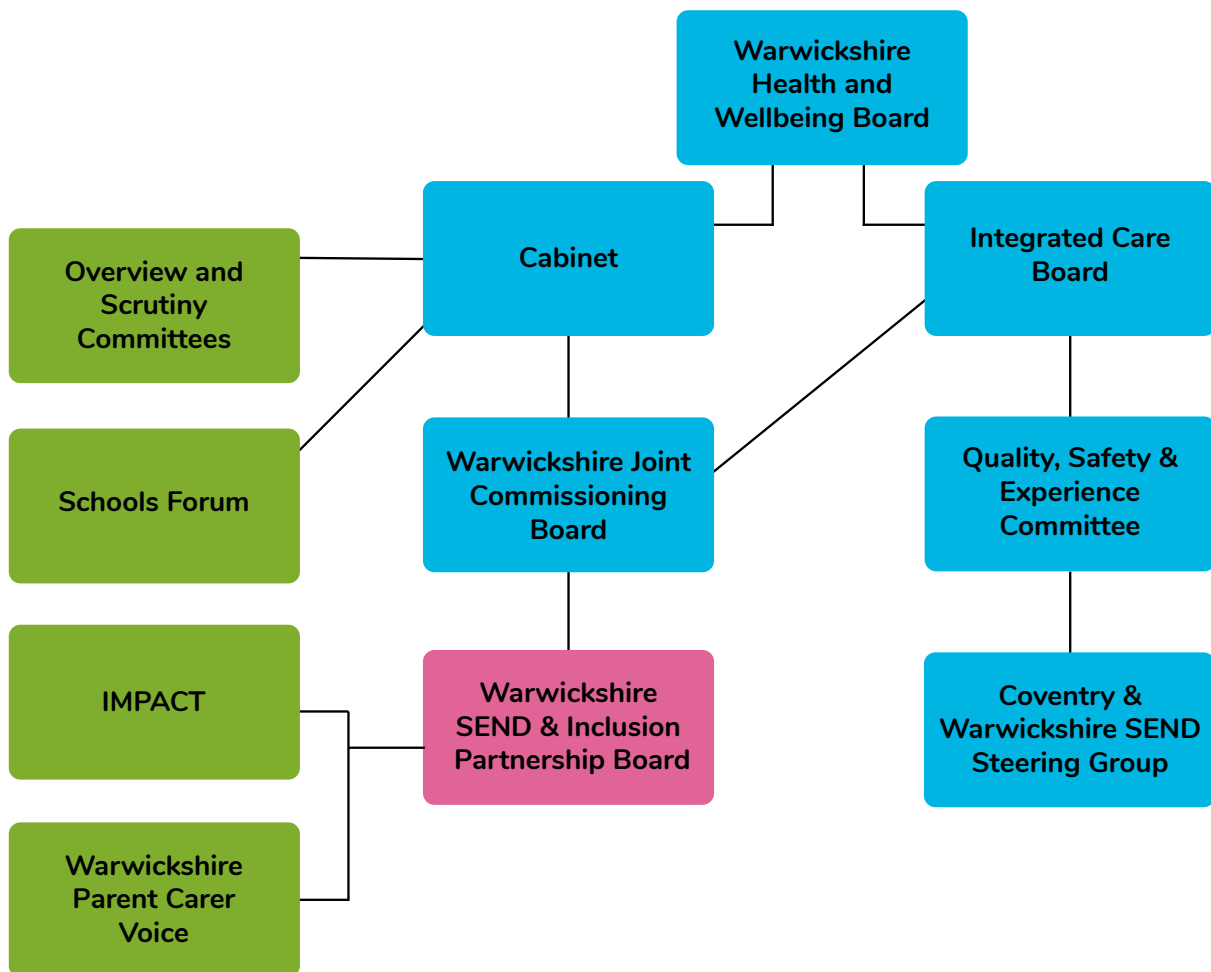
The key priorities have been informed by our coproduction and engagement activity, and we have listened to the views and experience of parents, carers and children and young people to understand their needs. Our previous Local Area Inspection and Self-Evaluation have also guided the priorities that will inform our Delivery and Improvement Plan.

The coordination and delivery of the strategy's priorities will require ongoing collaborative working with children and young people, parents and carers, schools and partner agencies. This will be guided by Warwickshire's Working Together Charter and the Schools' Inclusion Charter.

Oversight, accountability, and progress tracking of the strategy’s priorities will be managed by the SEND and Inclusion Partnership Board, which includes representatives from all partners. This will ensure a coordinated, system-wide effort to improve outcomes for children, young people, and families so they can be the best they can be, in a county where they are skilled, safe, heard, healthy and happy.

SEND and Inclusion governance

The flow chart below illustrates how we will work together with stakeholders to deliver on our ambition set out in the SEND and Inclusion Strategy, who will make decisions and who we will engage with.



● Partnership Accountability
 ● Partnership Decision Maker
 ● Engagement Groups

Purpose

Our aim is for Warwickshire to be a Child Friendly County where all children should be skilled, safe, heard, healthy and happy and we are committed to working together as a system to deliver this vision.

We'll do this by working restoratively and embedding how we work with families by developing and nurturing the four cornerstones of:

- Welcome and care
- Value and include
- Communicate
- Work in partnership to develop trust

This approach aims to develop trust with a focus on:

- Multi-agency working
- Family networks
- Inclusive practice
- The right support and services available at the right time
- Developing a skilled workforce
- Enhancing family voice

We will encourage ambition, create opportunity, and support learners to be the best that they can be.

This strategy sets out how partners across education, health and social care will work together to deliver services to support and continue to make improvements to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.

**We will encourage
ambition, create
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Our children and young people have told us how important it is that all services have an inclusive approach and that they listen, communicate and work in partnership with them, so that there is a trusting and safe environment for them to learn.

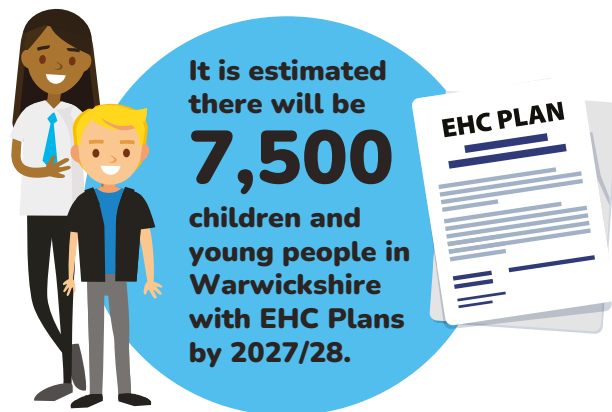
Our Partnership Board is committed to ensuring that the views and wishes of children and young people with SEND and their parents and carers will be heard. We will continue working together in partnership to improve our SEND provision and ensure parents have reason to trust local providers to meet their children’s needs.

Our plans need to reflect the growth in numbers of children and young people with Education and Health Care (EHC) Plans, which highlights greater need across the County.

Growth is predicted to rise to approximately 7,500 children and young people with EHC Plans by 2027/28.



As a system, Warwickshire has sought to increase the number of children with EHC Plans who are effectively supported within mainstream provision. These numbers have increased from 1,430 children and young people in 2021 to 2,132 in 2024; the number of children within special school settings has increased from 1,544 to 1,723 for the same period.



The number of children in independent provision has decreased but is rising again in 2024.



This Strategy must take account of the financial implications on the Council of meeting our statutory duties.

Our approach

This strategy aims to develop the system-wide commitment to inclusion and to make Warwickshire’s ambition to be a Child Friendly County a reality for children, young people and families with SEND.

Children and young people have shared that if they don’t feel safe, they can’t be expected to learn. Creating a sense of safety is important to enable children and young people to lead a fulfilling life and be part of their community. Safety can be measured by the presence of trust and where there is trust, children and young people will feel welcome, valued, included and supported.



To support the development of collaborative working, the local area worked with Genuine Partnerships and coproduced the **Working Together Charter**.

This Charter sets out a commitment for how partners across the local area will work together to build trust and brings together the four cornerstones of inclusion & coproduction:



This charter also identifies Warwickshire Parent Carer Voice (WPCV) and IMPACT as strategic partners for children, young people and families' voices for SEND. They are both represented on the SEND and Inclusion Partnership Board and SEND Members Panel to ensure that they have an influence at the highest level.

Children and young people repeatedly highlight that experience in school is a significant priority which is why we have coproduced the Schools' Inclusion Charter with schools, young people and families. This sets out the minimum expectations on all schools based on the SEND Code of Practice.

Both Charters are based on inclusion and coproduction, two key principles that will be increasingly embedded within our ways of working. The Working Together Charter will also be adopted across the wider Children and Families Service.



Working Together Charter:
www.warwickshire.gov.uk/sendcharter

Schools' Inclusion Charter:
www.warwickshire.gov.uk/inclusioncharter

Our community said

In developing our SEND and Inclusion Strategy we have engaged with a number of stakeholders in our community including Warwickshire Parent Carer Voice, the SEND Community Forum, the young people's forum, IMPACT, and schools (both SENCos and head teachers).

A summary of their feedback is below:

Feedback from children and young people with SEND

- Mental health and experience in school is a significant concern and priority for young people with SEND.
- They would like to see increased awareness and reduced stigma around SEND.
- In a video created by IMPACT entitled '[Wrong Size Fits All](#)', young people said:

“If we don't feel safe, we can't be expected to learn. Small things make a big difference. Every interaction has an impact, whether that's positive or negative. We need to feel that you care”

- Young people with high support needs would like extra-curricular activities within school or the community which they can access, including the support they need to do this.
- They have raised concerns about the delays in accessing support for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and the negative impact this can have on young people.
- They want to feel they have an influence over their EHC plans and be actively included at an earlier stage.
- They would like to see an increase in diversity of the young people sharing their experiences, including ethnicity, areas of need and LGBTQ+ experience.
- They would like there to be an IMPACT Apprentice, so that they can represent young people's views actively throughout the week.



Feedback from parents and carers

- Families need easy access to clear information to support them throughout their SEND journey. The SEND Local Offer needs to be easy to navigate and up to date, as well as being familiar to professionals, who families look to for support. Families feel currently that access to support is a 'postcode lottery'.
- Families need open and honest communication to enable a more collaborative process. There needs to be clear accountability for provision and support, with clear escalation routes, which they can trust.
- Families highlight that early identification and support, especially at key transitions, will help to prevent escalation of needs and children being out of school or changing placements unnecessarily. Statutory duties should be carried out as a minimum, so that support is provided in a timely manner to avoid escalation of need, including early support for Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA).
- Where an alternative placement is needed, families need clear information and advice at an early stage about the process and type of provision indicated by professional advice.
- Current services, such as Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Occupational Therapy and Speech and Language, do not take account of the complexity and range of needs of neurodivergent children and young people. This can lead to a disparity in support as some parents can afford private assessments while others are left without any provision.
- Progress has been made on the Autism Pathway however the ADHD diagnostic assessment needs to be faster, including access to medication. This could be a significant factor in enabling effective support and access to education and family life.
- Families need social care needs to be assessed and understood, informed by relevant knowledge of their child's particular needs, and support in place to ensure they are not disadvantaged relative to non-disabled peers, including support to access activities in their community.
- Increased working together with parent carers is valued however the four cornerstones of inclusion and coproduction need to be embedded and more consistent.



Feedback from professionals

- The Early Years sector needs more support to ensure successful transition to primary school and a need to ensure that provision for children with SEND is in place from the early years and before starting school.
- Support for Preparation for Adulthood could be improved.
- Communication from professionals and services to families regarding waiting times, assessments and access to services needs to be clear and timely to ensure families are well informed and have the opportunity to ask questions.
- More comprehensive data needs to be available and regularly reviewed to help services understand the levels of need which will enable the correct support and services to be implemented.
- Early intervention and early identification of need for children and young people to ensure they are provided the right support at the right time.
- There is a high need for schools to help reduce the level of exclusions by supporting families
- There is a need for more resourced provisions around the county which will ensure that children and young people will have the opportunity to attend mainstream schools with the correct support in place.
- There is a need for collaborative working between special schools and mainstream schools to offer support, knowledge and guidance.



Challenges and opportunities

Challenges:

- There is a need to establish more SEND Resourced Provisions in Warwickshire.
- EHC plans are not routinely completed within 20 weeks.
- In light of increased complexity and understanding of need, the cost of provision continues to exceed allocated budgets, raising concerns for financial sustainability.
- EHC plan annual review decisions are not routinely completed within 4 weeks of the annual review.
- There is a need for communication with families, children and young people and internal and external professionals to be prioritised.
- Attendance, Emotionally Based School Avoidance and the factors that influence children and young people not being able to access their education.
- Children and young people with multiple vulnerabilities require a multi-agency 'team around the child' response.
- Health visiting checks at 6-8 weeks are below expected levels compromising early identification of need.
- Waiting list for diagnosis of Autism and ADHD are in excess of 18 weeks
- Transitions and preparation for adulthood packages need to be more realistic for children and young people ahead of post 18.

Opportunities:

- Continuing to build on existing co-production with WPCV and IMPACT and working collaboratively to embed the Working Together Charter, so that parent carers and young people are increasingly involved in key strategic meetings and activities.
- Continuing professional development of our local workforce to ensure best practice in supporting children and young people with SEND.
- Continuing to grow the representation of young people with SEND through their forum, IMPACT, and supporting them to influence areas, according to their priorities.
- Continuing to provide and co-produce existing communications, such as the SEND Newsletter and webinars.
- Opportunities to improve early intervention for children and young people with SEND.
- Better transition support and pathways for 16+ and 18+ including academic options.
- There is clear SEND & Inclusion Guidance on the graduated approach in schools, which is supported by a local offer of training and support.
- The Local Offer Webpages are maintained and developed through coproduction with WPCV.
- We recognise that every interaction with a family is an opportunity to build relationships and trust.
- Move to a 0-19 approach for public health nursing and closer working with community services to improve the offer.
- Improving the local SEND system in line with the Delivering Better Value Programme.
- Development of the Families First for children programme, the Warwickshire Pathfinder.

Our priorities

Complementing the overarching priorities outlined in the Warwickshire Education Strategy 2024-2029, we will work under a framework of six priorities, as set out below.

The SEND and Inclusion Partnership Board will oversee this strategy with a plan which will hold organisations and teams accountable to deliver on what we have set out. This Board has representation from across the system, including parent carer and young people representation, which together will ensure joined up, collaborative working, with high support and high challenge.



1. SEND provision is commissioned in accordance with children's needs, professional advice, and best practice.














Our findings

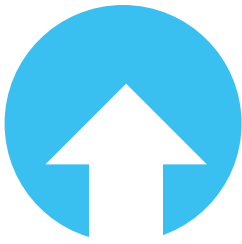
Children and young people's needs are changing. We are seeing an increase in those with neurodivergent conditions and social, emotional and mental health needs which require services to adapt and respond accordingly to ensure they are fit for purpose.

The services we provide need to reflect the continued growth in understanding and what works to achieve positive outcomes for our children and young people.

Our actions:

-  Continue to reduce the waiting times for an Autism assessments and explore the opportunity for a single Autism and ADHD diagnostic pathway.
-  Continue with the expansion of Oak Wood and Evergreen Schools, subject to permissions and governance.
-  Develop a new local alternative provision model and work with the Department for Education to ensure that the new Alternative Provision Free School is operational.

-  Roll-out a top-up funding system for children and young people with EHC plans to release the right funding at the right time.
-  Review and refresh existing models of speech and language therapy and occupational therapy.
-  Continue to commission and improve short breaks provision and publication of the offer through the Short Breaks Statement.
-  Pilot a new pathway to identify Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) and develop a new pathway that supports children and young people with EHC Plans who require Education Other Than at School.
-  Pilot a new Family Wraparound service for families in distress and at risk of crisis, with children facing barriers to Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) and wellbeing.
-  Promote and embed the Families First Pathfinder Programme to build effective joined up working and a growing understanding of working with children and young people with SEND and their families.
-  Delivery of the Early Years Integrated Plan Service redesign to improve delivery of the Healthy Child Programme (HCP).
-  Develop a SEND joint commissioning plan to be overseen by the SEND and Inclusion Partnership Board.



2. Increase the level of Specialist Resourced Provision available for those who need it.







Our findings

The Delivering Better Value Programme (DBV) reviewed SEND Services in Warwickshire and found that the breadth of the education provision needed increasing, in particular there was a lack of Specialist Resourced Provision (SRP) across the county. IMPACT's film 'Wrong Size Fits All' highlights key themes raised by children, young people and their parent carers about the struggles they face in mainstream schools; they also shared the importance of having education provision that enables children and young people to achieve according to their academic ability. We also recognise that provision needs to be located in areas where there is greatest need and close to home.

SRP offers an important model of education that enables greater flexibility, whilst maintaining access to an academic curriculum and links to the wider mainstream school, depending on the child or young person's interests and areas of need. Some young people, who were educated in a specialist setting shared that they thought SRP may have worked for them, if it had been available at the time that they needed it.

Six new SRPs opened in September 2024 creating a further 68 places, increasing the total offer to 272 places for the 2024/25 academic year. This is ahead of the target of 231 places by January 2025.

Our actions:

-  Support the implementation of the DBV programme by working with schools to increase the number of SRP places for children and young people with SEND. It is expected that there will be a greater number of SRP places in the areas of greatest need, such as Nuneaton.
-  Increase the number of SRP places to over 500 by 2028 with a priority to develop secondary resourced provision to ensure suitable transition opportunities for children leaving primary school.
-  For the growth of resourced provision to be linked with the Education Sufficiency Strategy to ensure provision in place for growing populations.
-  To review the impact of increased resourced provision in terms of both outcomes for children and young people and financial sustainability.



3. Education Health Care (EHC) needs assessments, plans, appeals and annual reviews meet statutory requirements.

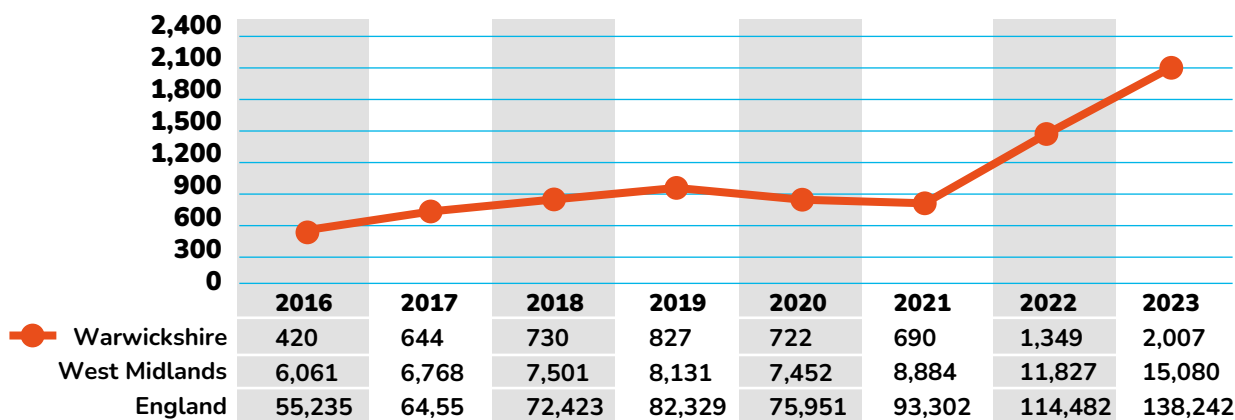


Our findings

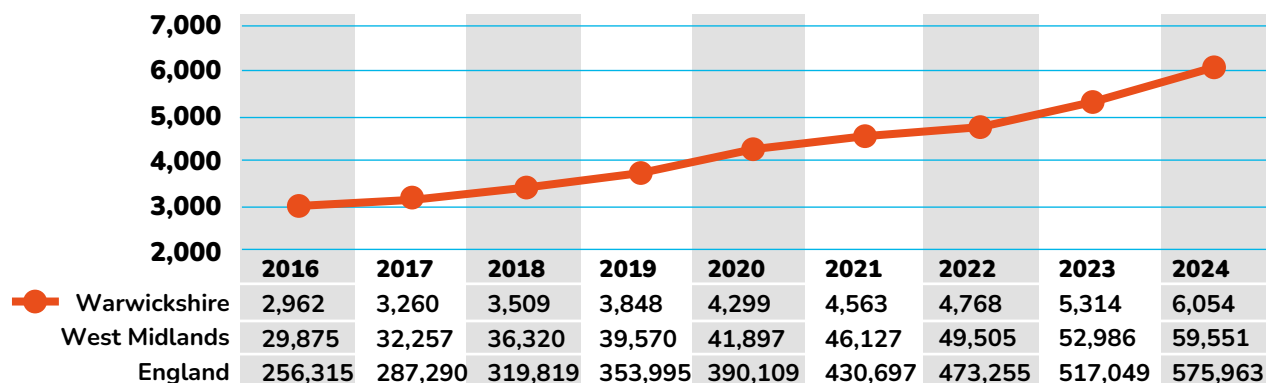
We know that the timeliness of statutory processes for assessing, issuing and reviewing EHC Plans is important in ensuring children and young people receive the support they need. We also know that at present the capacity of the local SEND workforce is stretched and as a result too many statutory processes are not completed within the defined timescales.

Work needs to be undertaken to address this as we know that timely action and decision-making impacts on positive outcomes for our children and young people and their families.




Initial requests for an EHC plan (calendar year)



All children and young people with an EHCP (SEN2)



Our actions:

-  Undertake system improvement work to meet the statutory timescales for the issuing of EHC Plans in light of the increased complexity of need and growing number of requests for assessment.
-  Review the process used to complete Annual Reviews for the EHC Plans to ensure they are completed within the statutory 12-month timeframe.
-  Review communications following panel decisions and follow up communications to see how this process can help improve the Graduated Approach in schools.



4. Promote inclusive practice

Where a pupil is identified as having SEN, schools should take action to remove barriers to learning and put effective special educational provision in place. This SEN support should take the form of a four-part cycle through which earlier decisions and actions are revisited, refined and revised with a growing understanding of the pupil's needs and of what supports the pupil in making good progress and securing good outcomes. This is known as the graduated approach.








Our findings

Families stated that the application of the graduated approach in schools can be inconsistent. Children and young people need reasonable adjustments to be made, but they often experience the education system as a one-size-fits-all approach, lacking the flexibility and support that they need, leaving them feeling overwhelmed and feeling that school is not a safe place.

Children and young people and families worked with partners, including schools, to develop the Schools' Inclusion Charter, which provides a model of inclusive practice for all settings developing and nurturing the four cornerstones of 'Welcome and Care', 'Value and Care', 'Communicate' and 'Work in Partnership'. Inclusion starts with building relationships of trust between families and settings.

Our actions:

-  Support an improved Graduated Approach in our schools through the development of a team around the school model. Trial the Inclusion Framework with three families of schools and continue to promote the Inclusion Charter to provide earlier inclusive intervention and preventative practices.
-  Develop a new approach to reducing permanent exclusions.
-  Promote new transitions guidance to children and young people and parents and carers.
-  Through the Workforce Development project create resources and training to help others understand children and young people and families' experiences to develop best practice and ways of working together effectively to find positive solutions.
-  Implement and share learning from the Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINs) DfE/NHS England project to increase awareness, acceptance, and affirmation of neurodiversity in schools.



5. Preparation for adulthood



Our findings

In Warwickshire, young people with SEND are more likely to stay in education, employment and training and are more likely to achieve level 3 qualifications. However, we have found that for many young people the transition from child to adult services is not always smooth and pathways to employment, such as supported internships, can be improved.

Our actions:

- ➔ Develop the infrastructure in order to deliver increased numbers of supported internships.
- ➔ Work with Health and Social Care teams to support young people with SEND to prepare for adulthood in line with the SEND Code of Practice.
- ➔ Embed the development of independent living skills and preparation for adulthood within commissioned services, including short breaks and respite.
- ➔ Work with the market to develop pathways to support transition to independent living for young adults, including greater use of supported living, specialised supported housing and supported accommodation where appropriate.
- ➔ Improve links with District and Borough Council housing leads to support development of suitable accommodation to enable young adults to transition to independent living.



6. Improve workforce development and collaborative working












Our findings

Children and young people with SEND need a skilled and committed workforce, who are supported to deliver services that are responsive to their needs. Families need to feel that people care and for those working with them to know that 'small things make a big difference' and 'every interaction has an impact'. Children and young people and their families frequently report that when people understand them and 'get it', the reasonable adjustments that would make a difference to them become possible and this enables good collaborative working. When we start with listening, this enables understanding and enables shared solutions.

We know our workforce needs support to keep up to date with the latest best practice in SEND and recruitment and retention of key staff is an issue across the county. Transition support and pathways for post-16 young people needs to be improved across the county.

Our actions:

-  Support the implementation of the DBV programme by co-designing a workforce development programme for those working in mainstream school settings to equip them to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND in their local schools.
-  Explore solutions to the recruitment challenges for Teaching Assistants and Personal Assistants.
-  Continue to promote the Working Together Charter and embed further co-production processes with WPCV and IMPACT.
-  Expand our work with young people through IMPACT and links to special school councils and develop the involvement of children and young people in strategic decision-making.
-  Develop communications for young people aged over 16 so that they are able to participate in the decision making in their EHC plans.
-  Continue to monitor and respond to feedback received from parents through the live feedback form, particularly in relation to their experience of communication.

-  Continue to promote commissioned activities through the Search Out Warwickshire directory and Family Information Service newsletters. Continued provision of information to families through webinars and newsletters.
-  Continue to share data, both quantitative and qualitative across the County Council, ICB and health providers and challenge each other as part of working towards our vision.
-  Continue to roll-out safeguarding training and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) processes.

How will we deliver this strategy

Progress against our strategy will be reported to the Warwickshire SEND and Inclusion Partnership Board. There will be a Local Area Inclusion Plan with key performance indicators which will be reviewed quarterly (See Appendix A). This delivery plan integrates our improvement actions, including the Council's DBV programme and our Self-Evaluation/inspection preparation.

To support with delivering the priorities set out in this SEND and Inclusion Strategy, we have been working closely with the DfE and have committed to the DBV programme. The DBV programme works to identify and implement local and national opportunities to improve the outcomes for children and young people with SEND in line with the current financial position. Some workstreams we are already working on include the following:

- Inclusion Framework: Improving SEN Support
- Workforce Development: Maintaining placement in mainstream
- Resourced Provisions: Supporting children with high needs in their locality
- Digital Infrastructure (Synergy): Improving communication and productivity

These workstreams were agreed following significant stakeholder engagement including children and young people, parents and carers, and schools.

Warwickshire SEND and Inclusion Partnership Board want to ensure there is transparency with the local community on the work currently being undertaken across the SEND service.

The commitment of this strategy remains to work together to deliver the best system of education, health and social care for learners with SEND in line with our delivery plan.

How our strategy links to other strategies and plans; the golden thread

The SEND and Inclusion Strategy has been created by looking at the areas for improvement within the service and also looking into other strategies which have SEND and Inclusion within their priorities. See Appendix B for strategies which have been used.



Glossary

ADHD - Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder	NHS - National Health Service
CWPT - Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust	PINS - Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (project)
DBV - Delivering Better Value	SEF - Self Evaluation Form
DfE - Department for Education	SEN - Special Educational Needs
DSL - Designated Safeguarding Lead	SEND - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
EBSA - Emotionally Based School Avoidance	SENDAR - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Assessment and Review Service
EHC - Education, Health and Care (Plan)	SENCO - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator
EHCNA - Education Health and Care Needs Assessment	SRP - Specialist Resourced Provision
HAF - Holiday Activities and Food Programme	WCC - Warwickshire County Council
HCP - Healthy Child Programme	WPCV - Warwickshire Parent Carer Voice
ICB - Integrated Care Board	
IMPACT - Warwickshire's Youth Forum for SEND	

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