

Blackburn with Darwen

# Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy

2024-2027



Trust

Respect

Ambition

Collaboration

Kindness

Proud  
to be  
BwD



**NHS**  
Lancashire and  
South Cumbria  
Integrated Care Board

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# Forewords

It is with great pleasure that we introduce our refreshed SEND strategy for 2024-2027. Since 2019, we have made good progress against the priorities set out in our last strategy and partners have worked well together to make a difference to the lives of children and young people with SEND living in Blackburn with Darwen. Last year, our council Corporate Plan was launched, and it states that Blackburn with Darwen is a borough with huge potential, and that we are ambitious for our children and young people and determined to ensure that no one is left behind.

As a SEND partnership, we firmly believe that we can achieve more together and we are committed to engaging and collaborating with all our partners to improve outcomes for children, young people, and their families, across education, health, social care, the voluntary sector, and our local employers. To help us achieve this we want young people to access the **'right support, at the right time, in the right place.'** Through this, we will create better futures for the children and young people with SEND living in Blackburn with Darwen.

This strategy identifies our SEND ambitions and priorities across the partnership which will be closely monitored and routinely reviewed by the SEND Strategic Partnership Board. There will be an ongoing review of this strategy to ensure we remain focused and make good progress towards achieving them. Finally, we would like to thank everyone in Blackburn with Darwen who is engaged with supporting children and young people with SEND and their families; we have much to be proud of and we know that, together, we will continue to do amazing things.



**Councillor Julie Gunn**

Executive Member for Children, Young People & Education, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council



**Jo Siddle**

Strategic Director for Children's Services & Education (DCS), Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council



**Professor Sarah O'Brien**

Chief Nursing Officer, NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB)

# Forewords

Parents in Partnership (the strategic Parent Carer Forum for Blackburn with Darwen) welcome the revised SEND Strategy. We hope that it will make a difference to our families in the borough with special educational needs and/or disabilities, leading to happier, healthier children and young people and better life outcomes. As “critical friends” we wholeheartedly support the aims and objectives of the strategy, and hope that the hard work with young people, parents and practitioners that has gone into the strategy is reflected in the positive results for our families.

**Christina Cramsie and Janet Harrison**

Co-chairs, Blackburn with Darwen Parents in Partnership



# Introduction



**Our strategy has been developed with the help of Blackburn with Darwen's children, young people, young adults, their families, and our stakeholders.**

It will set out how Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, Lancashire & South Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB) and our partners, including education and health providers, will work together to provide services and support for children and young people aged 0-25 with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) and their families.

Our strategy also clearly sets out our approach to identifying and supporting SEND in Blackburn with Darwen through a Graduated Approach and aims to support children and young people 0-25 with additional needs - including SEN Support, those with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and those who are going through this assessment process.

It makes clear what we intend to do to support our high ambitions for children and young people with SEND and their families.

## **What do we mean by stakeholders?**

A person with an interest or concern in something

# Our Context

In Blackburn with Darwen, one in 5 children and young people has a Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND) which is slightly higher than the average figures in England.

- 4.3% have an EHCP or Statement and 13.9% are supported at SEN Support. More than half of these children and young people attend a mainstream school, so we understand the need to have inclusive and adaptive teaching practices and the importance of the use of the Graduated Approach.
- Blackburn with Darwen and our partners work within the statutory requirements and guidance of the Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice and the clear agenda of SEND reforms.
- In Blackburn with Darwen we believe that SEND is everyone's responsibility and value our partnerships with Education, Health, and Social Care to ensure that children and young people with SEND access the right support, at the right time, in the right place.
- One in every 15 children and young people have identified Speech, Language and Communication needs as their main type of need.
- Many pupils will have more than one type of need, however Social, Emotional or Mental Health difficulties are next most common, followed by Moderate Learning Difficulties and Autism.
- Autistic pupils are more likely to have an EHCP than SEN Support, as are pupils with the most severe and complex learning difficulties and disabilities.

# Our Values

In Blackburn with Darwen we value the views, wishes and feelings of the child or young person and their family, and we believe that children and young people and families should be as fully involved in decision making about their lives as possible.

We have worked closely with our local families to develop our 'Co-Production Charter'. It sets out how we will support children and young people and their families with SEND.

[The charter is available to download on the Local Offer website.](#)

## Communication



## Accessibility – Inclusivity



## Respect, recognition & understanding



## Honesty, transparency & accountability



## Focusing on strengths



## Working in partnership, valuing everyone



# Our Vision: what do we want to achieve?

In Blackburn with Darwen we are working together to realise our vision that children and young people with SEND will live happy, healthy, and fulfilled lives wherever possible within their local community and it is a place where they will have every opportunity to:



**Achieve your goals for being independent**



**Be and feel safe**



**Be and feel respected and supported**



**Achieve your best health and wellbeing**



**Belong and enjoy being in your community**



**Learn and achieve in everything you can do**



**Find a job that you want to do**

These outcomes have been agreed by our children, young people and families and are featured in our 0-25 SEND Strategy on a Page which has been co-produced with them. [The SEND Strategy on a Page is available for download on the Local Offer website.](#)

## What is important to us?

- Data – to make better use of data to help us improve the services and support we offer
- Co-production – to ensure the voice of children, young people and their families shapes all we do
- Multi-agency working – create stronger links between services to further improve how we work together
- Transitions – ensure children and young people are well prepared for adulthood
- Increasing awareness – of the of the challenges facing children and young people and how best to help them overcome them

# Our Vision: what do we want to achieve?

How are we doing to do better?

## Heart: Values and attitudes

We will:

- Put the needs of families at the heart of all decision making
- Treat children and young people with respect and dignity
- Value the experiences of families and learn and act on it

## Head: Knowledge, skills, and processes

We will:

- Ensure the voice of young people is embedded at every stage of the system
- Cultivate a workforce that has the right skills to work well with and support families
- Share information and learning between all those involved

## Hands: The doing of what we think and feel

We will:

- Use different communication methods, activities, and places to help families talk to us
- Regularly review and improve the Local Offer with families, for families
- Recruit experienced staff with a passion for making things better

# Our Vision: what do we want to achieve?



## How will we know we are making a difference?

In Blackburn with Darwen, we will **see**...

- ✓ more young people in employment, education, and training
- ✓ more children and young people using public places and spaces
- ✓ more children and young people having fun with friends and family

Children and young people will **say**...

- ✓ they have lots of different things to do that they enjoy
- ✓ they are happy to go to school/college and that they're learning lots
- ✓ their thoughts and ideas really matter and help to make a difference

Children and young people will **feel**...

- ✓ happy, healthy, and safe
- ✓ they get the right help and support, when and where they need it
- ✓ positive about their futures and reaching their goals

# Our Stakeholders: what have families told us?

Our strategy has been shaped by a programme of engagement activities to ensure that this strategy has been truly co-produced with stakeholders and reflects the views of the local community.

- **Families** have made it clear that they want tailored support, which is delivered at the right time by practitioners who listen, believe, and respect their views and place them at the centre of the decision-making process.
- **Families** told us that it is important that they are aware of the support, advice and guidance services that are available for them and that information on how to access these and the eligibility criteria for these services is clear.
- **Families** feel that the offer of education and enrichment activities post-16 is limited and there are no clear pathways into employment.
- **Families** have shared that transition points, particularly from children to adults' services is an area of concern that worries them the most. Blackburn with Darwen acknowledges these concerns and has set this as a priority to be addressed as part of this strategy.
- **Practitioners** across the local area have said they would welcome a programme of workforce development to help them to meet the needs of children and young people and their families with SEND and to meet the challenges of a multi-agency approach.
- **Practitioners** would like improved information sharing between each other and better communication systems.



# Our Journey: where are we now?

**In Blackburn with Darwen we are constantly striving to improve the quality of our response to SEND and have made some big changes which will make a real difference to the lives of children, young people, and their families. We have:**

- ✓ Strengthened our governance around SEND through the continued development of the SEND Strategic Partnership Board who will be responsible for our SEND Strategy outcomes 2024-2027.
- ✓ Co-designed and launched a new and improved Local Offer website with its own dedicated young people's area.
- ✓ Broadened our support specialism at SEN Support
- ✓ Created a dedicated advisory team to support children with Social and Emotional Mental Health Needs (SEMH).
- ✓ Delivered a Year 6 to 7 Transitions event to support the transition from Primary to Secondary for vulnerable pupils, including those with SEND.
- ✓ Recruited 2 SEND School Effectiveness Officers who are dedicated to improving the quality and effectiveness of our response to SEND.
- ✓ Recruited a SEND Engagement and Co-production Lead to champion co-production with children, young people and families and ensure their voices are at the heart of everything we do.
- ✓ Recruited a Designated Social Care Officer for SEND who is dedicated to improving the quality of Social Care's response to SEND.
- ✓ Recruited 3 x Social Care Advanced Practitioners in Children's and Adult's Social Care to offer advice and guidance to the workforce and to support transitions of children and young people into adulthood.
- ✓ Reviewed and increased our specialist school places within our existing special schools and drafted a pupil place strategy to support the creation of a further 120 places.
- ✓ Established a Key Stage 1 Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) provision offering up to 8 school places.
- ✓ Supported our Alternative Provision to extend the number of places and review their existing placement offer.
- ✓ Improved our joint commissioning arrangements to deliver better outcomes for children, young people, and their families with SEND.
- ✓ Developed a multi-agency Employment Forum which is seeking to improve employment opportunities for young people with SEND.

# Our Priorities for 2024-2027

These are the 4 main priorities that the SEND Strategic Partnership Board will focus on over the next 3 years:

## Priority 1

**Preparation for Adulthood** (especially transition from children's to adults' services)

## Priority 2

**Aligning commissioning priorities** to ensure they reflect and meet local needs

## Priority 3

**Sufficiency of SEND educational specialist places** to meet needs

## Priority 4

**Strong multi-agency working** to accurately identify and meet children and young people's needs without delay

# Priority 1: Preparation for Adulthood

## Why is this a priority?

Families tell us that they worry about what their children and young people's journey into adulthood will look like and have shared that they do not know what support will be available. We need to make this journey easier and ensure that children, young people, and their families are as prepared as possible for and are able to live healthy, fulfilled, independent lives and be part of their community.

## What will we do?

- Make sure that our children and young people are well prepared for adulthood through the development of an All-Age Transitions Policy, supporting young people's smooth transitions into adult services and through continued monitoring of children who may experience challenges in achieving good health, social and community inclusion, independent living, and employment.
- Carry out a review of our Local SEND offer for young people as they approach adulthood, looking at our offer for activities for children and young people with SEND to make sure that we are offering opportunities for young people to make progress towards the 4 preparation for adulthood outcomes and to focus on when their education ends young people can continue to get the right support.
- Deliver training to raise awareness of preparation for adulthood and consider how best to support children and young people's journey.
- Work with our Educational Psychology Team to deliver best practice guidance to schools to reduce Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) and keep children in education to promote them to achieve the best outcomes.
- Continue to grow our Employment Forum to encourage greater opportunities for young people to have a successful pathway to employment.

# Priority 1: Preparation for Adulthood



## If we achieve this priority, what will children and families say?

- Children, young people, and their families will say that they have the knowledge and skills they need to successfully move into employment, lead healthy lives, be active members of their local community and live as independently as possible.
- Children, young people, and their families will say that there are real opportunities available to them to support them to access employment, good health, social and community inclusion and independent living.

## What do we want to see by 2027?

- ✓ More young people in employment, education and training and less young people who are 'not in employment, education or training' (NEET).
- ✓ More children and young people using public places and spaces and using the Local Offer to identify activities or support in the local community.
- ✓ Children, young people, and their families reporting positively about the journey into adulthood and their aspirations for the future.

## Priority 2: Aligning commissioning priorities

### Why is this a priority?

As described in Children and Families Act and more recently, in the SEND Green Paper we need to ensure that our children get 'the right support' at the 'right time' in the 'right place.' It is therefore important that local partners work effectively together when commissioning to improve outcomes for children and young people with special education needs and disabilities. In our last SEND inspection (June 2019), there was evidence of a clear commitment to collect more useful data to improve commissioners' understanding to better inform decisions about service provision. We now need to ensure that all agencies' priorities are aligned so that commissioned services better meet the needs of children and young people across our borough.

### What will we do?

- We will continue to strengthen our joint strategic commissioning arrangements with our health partners.
- We will ensure our combined resources are used to best effect to meet the needs of the children and young people and their families, aligning and pooling our resources to be most effective.
- We will ensure that our strategic plan for commissioning is fully co-produced with our children, young people, families, and our stakeholders.
- We will review and reform specific services within our Local Offer to address gaps in provision and improve outcomes.

### What do we mean by commissioning?

Buying and monitoring of services

## Priority 2: Aligning commissioning priorities



### If we achieve this priority, what will children and families say?

Children and young people in Blackburn with Darwen will feel happy, healthy, and safe and will say they get the right help and support, when and where they need it.

### What do we want to see by 2027?

- ✓ We want all our children and young people accessing and achieving their best health and wellbeing.

## Priority 3: Sufficiency of SEND educational specialist places

### Why is this a priority?

It is important for Blackburn with Darwen to consider the best value outcomes for the children and young people in the area, by building capacity into the mainstream sector through the consistent evidence-based approaches to identification of need and intervention for those with SEN Support and those in receipt of an education, health and care plan (EHCP). Using targeted support to address those needs including specialist placements where appropriate.

### What will we do?

- Using local data and knowledge as described in the SEND sufficiency strategy, increase provision across both mainstream and specialist provisions that allow children and young people to be educated and supported in their local communities, with high-quality teaching and well-designed curriculum that meet their educational and personal outcomes.
- Over the next 3 years we will develop a 3-tiered model to AP as per the SEND and AP Improvement Plan, this model will focus on intervention and not destination, ensuring that mainstream settings can provide support to meet needs early and prevent persistent absences or risk to exclusion.
- The local area partners, including Parents in Partnership, will develop Blackburn with Darwen's local inclusion plan, to strengthen accountability to increase confidence in local SEND decisions including sufficiency, commissioning, and developing evidence-based support and interventions.

### What do we mean by AP?

Alternative Provision e.g. a setting for children who can't go to a mainstream school

### What do we mean by Sufficiency?

Having enough e.g. enough support available.

## Priority 3: Sufficiency of SEND educational specialist places



### If we achieve this priority, what will children and families say?

Children and families in Blackburn with Darwen will say that they are getting the right support in the right setting.

### What do we want to see by 2027?

- ✓ We want all our children and young people to be accessing education in a setting that best meets their needs so that they can achieve well, be and feel respected and supported, learning in everything they do.

# Priority 4: Strong multi-agency working

## Why is this a priority?

Across Blackburn with Darwen we truly appreciate the value of multi-agency working and know that this leads to better outcomes for our children, young people and families with SEND. We hear that families feel that they have to re-tell their story which should not have to happen.

## What will we do?

- Continue to build on our strong relationships with our children, young people, and families to make sure their voice is at the heart of everything we do.
- Continue to raise awareness of the challenges experienced by our children and young people with SEND and their families and how we can best support them to overcome them through our Annual SEND Conferences and ongoing training events – supporting a broader understanding of SEND across our partnership.
- Carry out regular multi-agency audits to review children and young people and families' lived experience of SEND and consider whether the support they have received is making a difference. We will use this information to learn, grow and improve our offer to children, young people and families and inform our future service provision.
- Make the best use of data to help us to improve the services and support we offer to children and young people and their families and making sure that our systems support us to share information effectively between our partners – reducing the need for families to re-tell their story.

## Priority 4: Strong multi-agency working



### If we achieve this priority, what will children and families say?

- ✓ They do not need to re-tell their story.
- ✓ We are knowledgeable, helpful, and understanding and have made a positive difference to their lives.

### What do we want to see by 2027?

- ✓ Our workforce to have an even better understanding of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and report that they feel more confident in offering the right support to children, young people, and their families.

# Delivering our priorities and next steps

The SEND Strategic Partnership Board is responsible for overseeing the priorities set out in this strategy and offering challenge where it is identified that progress has not been made and to look at next steps in the SEND Strategy Implementation Plan. We will continue to seek the views of children and young people and their families to ensure that the priorities in this strategy are being actioned and to consider if anything needs to change.

## Health & Wellbeing Board

A forum for leaders from the health and care system to work together to improve the health and wellbeing of local people

▲ The following Board reports to the Health & Wellbeing Board ▲

## SEND Strategic Partnership Board

Holds the strategic delivery groups to account for the delivery of the outcomes identified in the SEND Strategy 2024-2027

▲ The following strategic delivery groups report to the SEND Strategic Partnership Board ▲

STRATEGIC DELIVERY GROUP

### 0-25 SEND Improvement Group



This strategic delivery group is informed and influenced by the following formal and informal working groups and forums:

Co-production and engagement group(s)  
Parents in Partnership Keeping in Touch (KIT) meetings

STRATEGIC DELIVERY GROUP

### 0-25 Joint Commissioning Group

STRATEGIC DELIVERY GROUP

### Preparation for Adulthood Strategic Board



This strategic delivery group is informed and influenced by the following formal and informal working groups and forums:

PfA Pathways & EHCP Transitions Group  
SEND Employment Forum

Task & Finish Sub-groups – as required

# Delivering our priorities and next steps

## GOVERNANCE LEVEL 1

### Health and Wellbeing Board

The Blackburn with Darwen Health and Wellbeing Board is a forum for leaders from the health and care system in Blackburn with Darwen to work together to improve the health and wellbeing of the local population and reduce health inequalities.

#### Which groups report to this Board?

SEND Strategic Partnership Board

## GOVERNANCE LEVEL 2

### SEND Strategic Partnership Board

Holds the 0-25 SEND Improvement Group and other strategic delivery groups to account for the delivery of the outcomes identified in the SEND Strategy.

#### Which groups report to this Board?

Preparation for Adulthood (PFA) Strategic Board, 0-25 SEND Improvement Group, 0-25 Joint Commissioning Group

#### Links to other Boards

**Local authority:** Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Executive Board, Children's Partnership Board, School Effectiveness Board

**Health:** NHS Lancashire & South Cumbria ICB Executive Committee, NHS Lancashire & South Cumbria ICB Children & Young People's Board

## GOVERNANCE LEVEL 3

### SEND Improvement Group

Provides strategic input and directs the operational delivery of the partnership's strategy, policies, implementation, and practice in relation to SEND improvement.

#### This strategic delivery group is influenced and informed by:

Co-production and engagement group(s), Parents in Partnership Keeping in Touch (KIT) meetings

# Delivering our priorities and next steps

## GOVERNANCE LEVEL 3

### 0-25 Joint Commissioning Group

Drives the joint commissioning approach for children and young people aged 0-25 in the borough at a strategic level.

## GOVERNANCE LEVEL 3

### Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) Strategic Board

Identifies, prioritises, directs, and oversees improvements to support timely planning and preparation for adulthood for children and young people with SEND.

**This strategic delivery group is influenced and informed by:**

Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) Pathways & EHCP Transitions Group, SEND Employment Forum

## GOVERNANCE LEVEL 4

### Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) Pathways & EHCP Transitions Group

Directs the operational delivery of positive initiatives designed to deliver improvements and broaden opportunities across the four PfA pathways.

## GOVERNANCE LEVEL 4

### SEND Employment Forum

Brings together key local partners to work collaboratively to improve employment opportunities and outcomes for young people with SEND.

## GOVERNANCE LEVEL 5

### Task & Finish/Sub-groups

Set up as and when required

## **Blackburn with Darwen SEND Strategy 2024-2027**

The SEND Strategy links to Blackburn with Darwen's Joint SEND Commissioning Arrangements 2023-26 and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. This strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it continues to reflect the local area's priorities.

There is a 0-25 SEND Strategy on a page available via the [Local Offer website](#)

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