

SEND Strategy 2025-2028

DRAFT subject to Consultation 10 July to 01 October 2025



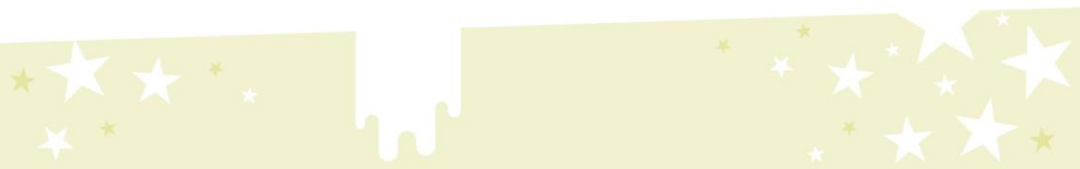
SEND | Together is better





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Foreword

We believe SEND is everyone's business and through the refreshed SEND Strategy 2025–2028, we would like to share with you our vision, aspirations, and priorities for developing support and provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and for their families.

Our services continue to strive to support and encourage young people with SEND to reach their full potential, including living independent lives wherever possible and achieving their individual ambitions. It is important that we continually review and improve our services to reflect the needs of our communities and respond to increasing demand. As these needs become more complex, our collective response must be increasingly proactive, person-centred, and well-coordinated.

Critical to the success of the SEND Strategy is the important role parent carers play in shaping the experience of their children and young people. Involving children and young people themselves is also fundamental to co-producing and implementing this strategy. During the pre-consultation engagement process, we heard clearly that lived experience must not only shape the vision but also drive meaningful change through delivery. Families told us they want clear communication, timely support, greater accountability, and a joined-up system that reduces the burden on them. We are committed to embedding these principles across all aspects of the strategy.

This work takes place in the context of a rapidly changing national policy environment and significant local pressures. Central Bedfordshire continues to experience rising numbers of EHCPs, a growing need for specialist provision, and challenges in timely access to services. At the same time, we are strengthening our local area offer, developing more inclusive educational provision, and expanding our specialist school and Additional Resource Provisions (ARPs) capacity in response to feedback from families and schools. Our ability to plan for future needs and deliver the right support in the right place will be essential in improving outcomes for our children and young people.

We recognise that many service providers, schools, professionals, and community groups play a vital part in supporting young people into adulthood. We want to continue to strengthen these partnerships, including with adult services, Integrated Care Board partners, health and therapy services, community organisations and education settings across Central Bedfordshire. By working together, we can deliver a more inclusive system that supports every child to thrive.

We would like to extend our thanks and appreciation to all those engaged in supporting children and young people with SEND and their families across Central Bedfordshire. This strategy identifies our shared ambitions and co-produced priorities across education, health, and social care, and will be monitored and delivered through a multi-agency SEND Action Plan overseen by the SEND Local Area Partnership. We are committed to reviewing progress regularly and ensuring that families and professionals can clearly see the difference this work makes.

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to thank SNAP Parent Carer Forum for their continued leadership and challenge, and to thank all our partners across education, health, social care, and the voluntary sector who have supported the development of this strategy. We look





forward to continuing this journey together and ensuring that the voices of children, young people and families remain central throughout.

Amana Gordon

Director of Children's Services,
Central Bedfordshire Council

Sarah Stanley

Chief Nursing Director,
Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes
Integrated Care Board





Introduction to SEND Strategy

In Central Bedfordshire, we are committed to improving the experience and outcomes of children and young people aged 0–25 with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). This refreshed SEND Strategy outlines our collective ambition for 2025–2028 and has been co-produced with families, professionals, and local partners.

The refreshed strategy builds on the foundations of the 2022–2025 plan, while responding directly to what we have heard during our extensive pre-consultation engagement. It reflects both the achievements made and the ongoing challenges faced by children, young people, and families.

As with our previous strategy, this plan is for all children and young people with SEND, whether their needs are emerging, supported through SEN Support, or met through an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP). It also aligns with key legislation, including the Children and Families Act 2014, and national policy frameworks.

Our aim is to make this strategy a practical and purposeful document that leads to visible action, measurable impact, and a more consistent experience for families. It is supported by a SEND Action Plan that sets out clear and accountable steps across each priority area.





Our Vision for SEND in Central Bedfordshire

The SEND Vision is a shared ambition that sets the direction for all our work to support children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) across Central Bedfordshire. It is central to this strategy and shapes the priorities we will deliver over the next three years.

In Central Bedfordshire, we want every child and young person with SEND to have the best possible start in life and a childhood that is rich in opportunity. We want them to feel included and valued for who they are, in their families, schools and communities, and to grow up with the right support to fulfil their aspirations.

We believe that all children and young people should be supported to thrive in education, live as independently as possible, enjoy meaningful friendships, and make confident transitions into adulthood. Whether their needs are supported through SEN Support or an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP), our vision is that every child receives timely, person-centred, and accessible support, at the right time and in the right place.

We will work in genuine partnership with families, schools, health, and care services to ensure our systems are inclusive, responsive, and focused on outcomes that matter. This means listening to lived experience, investing in provision, and holding ourselves accountable for delivering real improvements.

This vision will guide the delivery of our SEND priorities and provide a foundation for measurable and lasting change.





Our professional values

This strategy is underpinned by a shared set of professional values, shaped by feedback and co-production with those who use and deliver SEND services in Central Bedfordshire. These values guide how we work and interact with families and each other:

Children and young people are at the centre of all that we do

We will always act in the best interests of children and young people, ensuring that their needs and aspirations are at the heart of everything we do. Their voices will be valued, and their lived experiences will shape the way we plan, design, and deliver support.

We are transparent and accountable

We will share information clearly and proactively, ensuring families and partners can see the progress we are making against our commitments. We will be open about the challenges we face and work together to find solutions.

We are reflective and committed to learning

We are committed to learning from both our strengths and our mistakes, using feedback to drive improvement. Across all services, we will foster a culture of continuous reflection and development.

We work together to overcome barriers

We will strengthen collaboration between education, health, care, and community services to ensure support is joined up and accessible. By reducing duplication and complexity, we will help families navigate the system more easily and receive coordinated support.

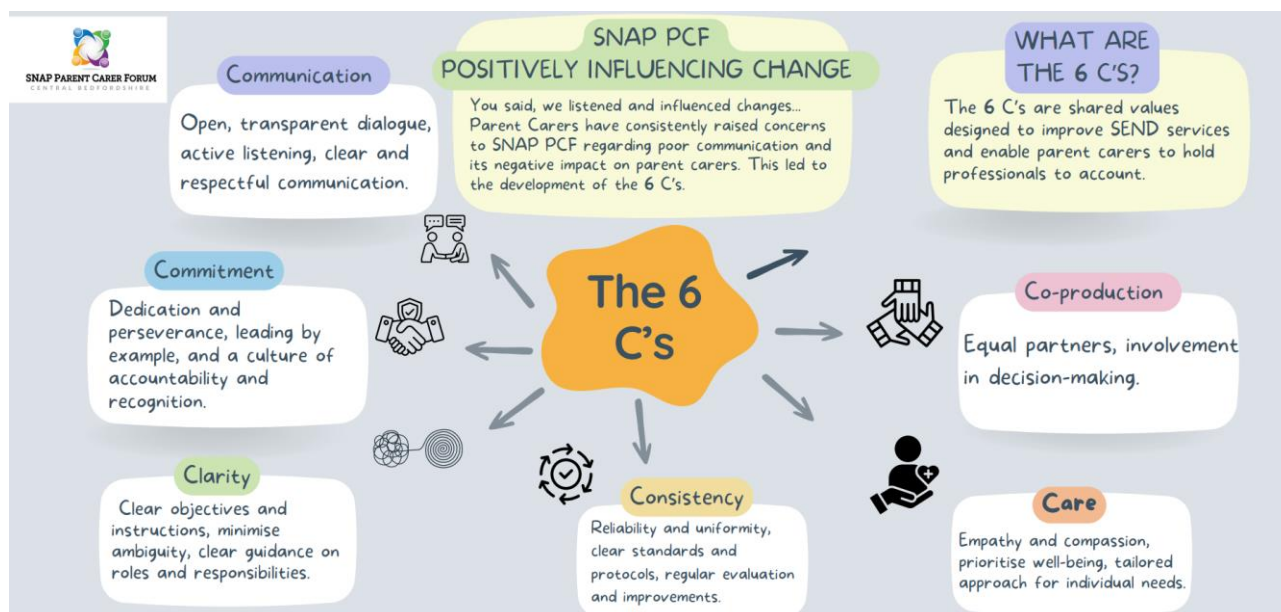
We listen to families and work in partnership

We will listen to parent carers in the process, recognising the insight, expertise and lived experience they bring. Through honest, open, and respectful conversations, we will build shared understanding and stronger relationships.

We will work in accordance with SNAP Parent Carer Forum's six Cs

Please see the picture on the following page which explains SNAP Parent Carer Forum's (PCF) six Cs. This ensures the SEND Strategic Partnership improves services through shared values and culture change. All staff receive training on the six C's and will work in this way. You can find more information about SNAP PCF on their website [Who is SNAP? - SNAP PCF - Central Bedfordshire](#)





The purpose of our SEND Strategy

The Central Bedfordshire SEND Strategy 2025–2028 sets out our shared plan for improving outcomes for children and young people aged 0–25 with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). It is inclusive of all children and young people with SEND, from those with emerging needs, to those supported through SEN Support, and those with an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP).

This strategy outlines six key priorities for improvement, which have been co-produced with families, professionals, and partners across the local area. It reflects our statutory responsibilities under the Children and Families Act 2014 and aligns with national and local priorities, including reforms to the SEND and Alternative Provision system. Central Bedfordshire is part of the SEND and Alternative Provision Change Programme Partnership which has tested reforms on behalf of the Department for Education. We have initiated work on inclusive education that is a key theme of reforms. This strategy has been informed by that work and hence the strategic partnership is prepared for SEND reforms that will be implemented during the life of this strategy.

The strategy is underpinned by a SEND Action Plan that will detail the specific actions to be taken under each priority, including timescales, ownership, and success measures. This plan will be reviewed and updated annually, ensuring that we remain focused on delivering tangible improvements.

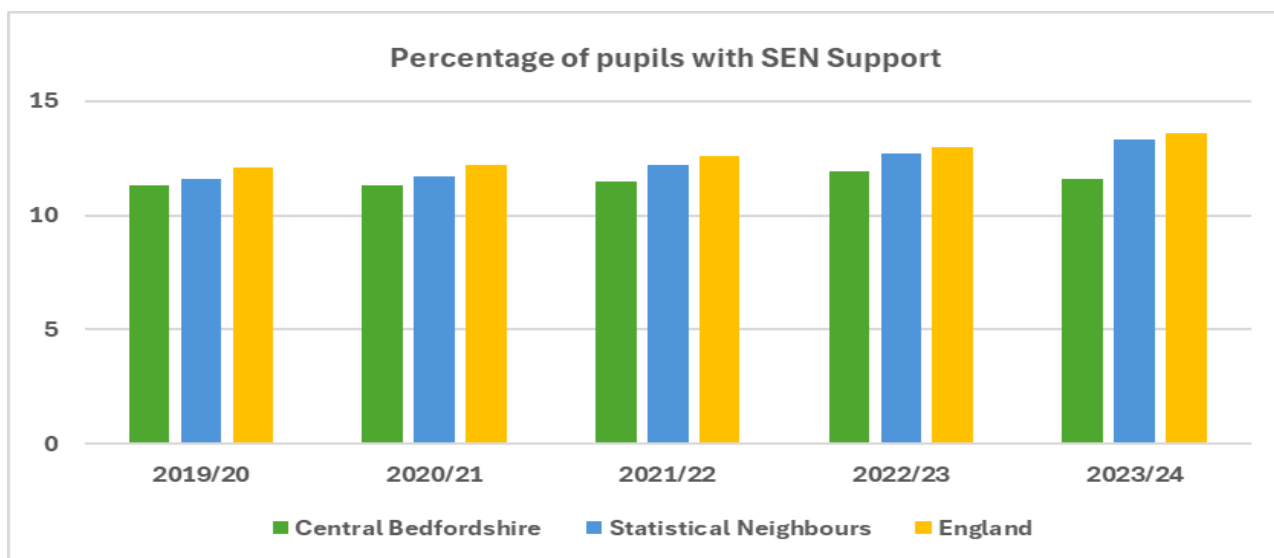
Above all, this strategy represents a shared commitment across education, health, care, and community services. Through partnership, co-production, and clear accountability, we will work together to improve the lived experience and long-term outcomes for children and young people with SEND in Central Bedfordshire.



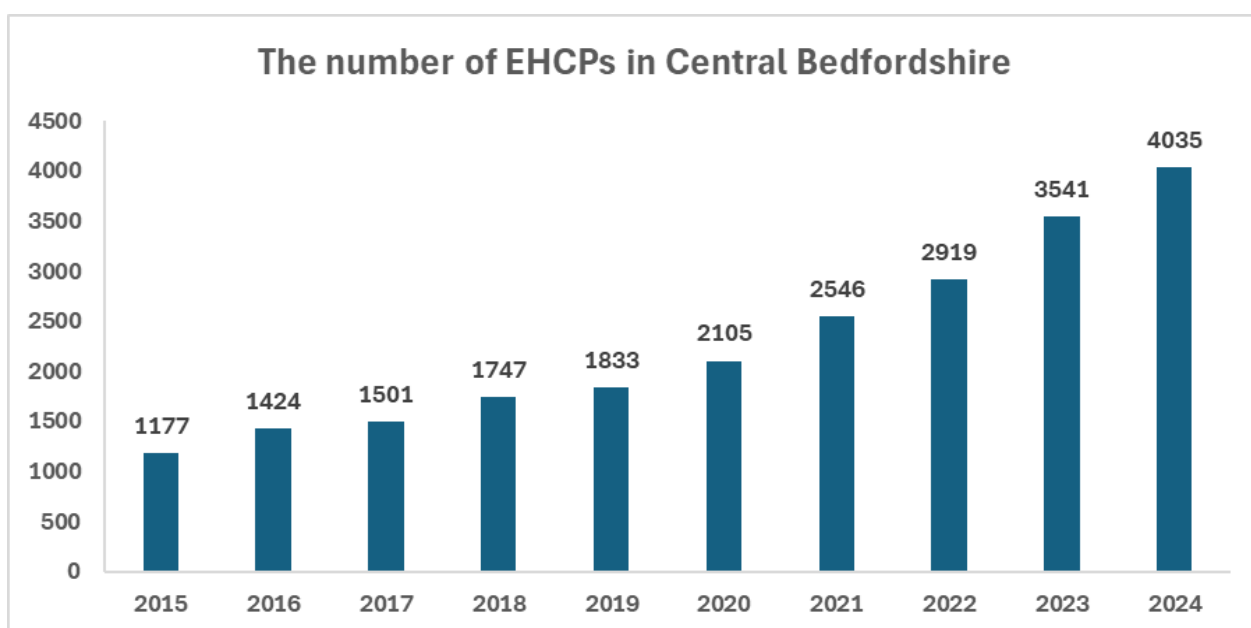


SEND in Central Bedfordshire

Central Bedfordshire continues to experience a rising level of need across the 0–25 population. The number of children and young people requiring support for special educational needs and disabilities has increased significantly over recent years, both in line with national trends and due to greater local identification of need.

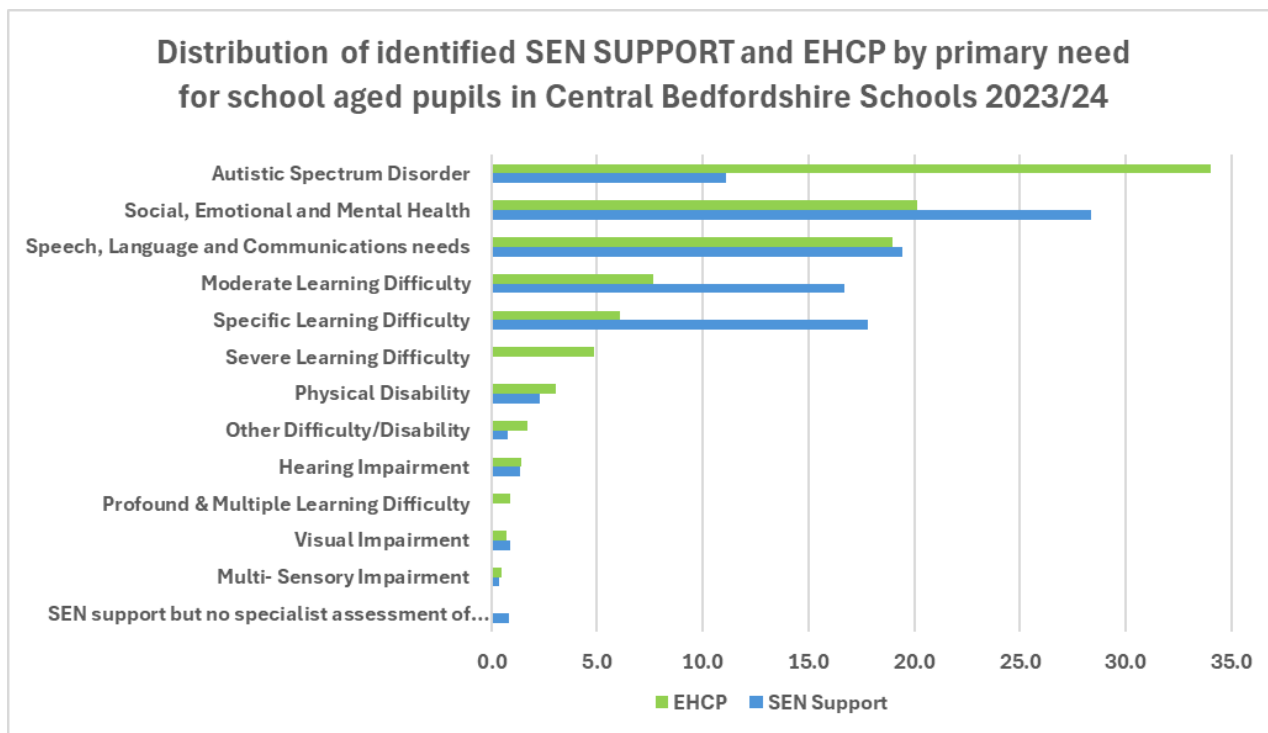


There has been a year-on-year rise in the number of Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs) issued, placing pressure on services across education, health and social care which affects effective and timely delivery.





We have also seen a continued increase in the complexity of needs, including higher numbers of autistic children and children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. While this reflects better awareness and earlier recognition, it also highlights the urgent need for additional provision and joined-up support.



Feedback from families and professionals confirms that they are feeling the strain. Parent carers told us about long waiting times, inconsistent communication, and a lack of clarity around roles and pathways. SENCOs and school leaders shared concerns about rising demand, the capacity of staff, and the emotional toll on school communities.

Despite these challenges, there is clear progress. Families have recognised the impact of SEND Advisory Teams, the increasing training offer, and the development of specialist placements. But there is a shared understanding that we must go further and faster to meet growing need in a sustainable, inclusive, and responsive way.

This strategy is set within a broader context of change, including: – The transformation of SEND services locally, including greater co-production and system leadership

- The Wider Schools Structural Programme (Schools organisational plan, specialist school place plan and three to two tier planning)
- National SEND and AP policy reforms
- Evolving integrated care arrangements across health and local authority services.

We remain committed to delivering meaningful improvement through clear priorities, focused investment, and collaborative leadership.





The proposed joint outcomes we want for children and young people with SEND

One of the ways we will measure the progress of this SEND Strategy and its key priorities is through a set of joint outcome domains; shared areas of focus that reflect what children and young people with SEND should experience because of effective support.

These outcome domains were shaped in collaboration with young people in Central Bedfordshire and reflect what matters most to them in their day-to-day lives. They are designed to be meaningful and accessible to children, young people, their families, and professionals alike.

Each outcome domain focuses on the lived experience of children and young people and is supported by data drawn from across education, health, and social care. Progress against these outcomes will be monitored through our SEND Partnership Dashboard, which will be published and reviewed twice a year.

The domains are aligned to the national outcomes model developed by the Council for Disabled Children and have been adapted following local engagement to reflect the aspirations of our communities. They help to ensure that the actions we take under this strategy translate into real, measurable change for children and young people.

These outcome domains form a core part of our approach to accountability, transparency, and improvement, ensuring we stay focused on what matters most.

The joint outcomes are:

Safety

Children and young people with SEND will feel and be safe in all areas of their lives.

Health and Wellbeing

Children and young people with SEND have healthy outcomes and feel valued, with a sense of belonging.

Aspirations

Children and young people with SEND will learn and develop their confidence to reach their full potential.

Independence

Children and young people with SEND will have opportunities to maximise their independence.

Involvement

Children and young people with SEND will have access to their community and have opportunities to influence the services that support them.

We will also focus on better using outcome data to identify gaps, target improvement activity, and demonstrate impact. We will use both data and stories to build a fuller picture of progress.





Co-production – ‘together is better’

Co-production remains at the heart of our approach in Central Bedfordshire. We believe that working *with* families, children, young people, and professionals, rather than doing *to* or *for* them, leads to better understanding and better outcomes.

This strategy has been co-produced in partnership with SNAP Parent Carer Forum, professionals across education, health, and care, and informed by the lived experiences of children, young people, and their families. While the language of co-production remains familiar, we have heard clearly that families want it to move beyond meetings and feel more visible in how decisions are made, and actions are taken.

Our local Co-production Charter sets out how we work together:

Effective communication

- We will use clear, jargon-free language and ensure information is accessible.
- We will be open about what we have heard and how we are acting on it.
- We will share updates regularly through multiple channels, including our Local Offer website, in line with our SEND Communications and Engagement Strategy.

Empowering people

- We will recognise lived experience as expertise, and value it in decision-making.
- We will support all families to contribute, including those whose voices may be less often heard.
- We will strive to remove barriers so that families can be active participants in shaping services.

Solution-focused approach

- We will be honest about challenges and open to constructive feedback.
- We will work creatively and flexibly across services to find practical solutions.
- We will remain focused on improving outcomes, even when change is complex.

We will continue to embed co-production throughout implementation, so that families can see where their contributions have influenced action and led to improvement.





Our proposed shared SEND priorities (2025–2028)

We propose to focus on six shared SEND priorities that reflect the lived experiences of families, professionals and children and young people in Central Bedfordshire. These priorities have been co-produced with SNAP Parent Carer Forum, professionals from across education, health, and social care, and informed by data, engagement, and consultation. They will be delivered through a refreshed SEND Strategy Action Plan and monitored and driven through our governance arrangements.

1. Person-centred and locally available education provision

We will ensure that education provision is tailored to the individual needs of children and young people, and that support is available locally whenever possible. This includes:

- A sufficient number of specialist school places and Additionally Resourced Provisions (ARPs) so that children can learn close to home.
- Inclusive, well-resourced mainstream education, with the right training for staff to support children as soon as needs are identified.
- Quality assured alternative provision which supplements mainstream education.
- SEN Support, Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and provision that adapt as children's needs and aspirations change.

2. A local area partnership that works well together

We will continue to build a strong, joined-up system that works collaboratively across education, health and social care. This includes:

- Clear roles, responsibilities and communication pathways to avoid duplication and create effective systems.
- Holistic, high-quality EHCPs that are co-produced with children, families and professionals.
- Transparent and timely communication so families only need to tell their story once.
- Respectful partnerships with families, with lived experience informing all areas of work.

3. A skilled, supported and inclusive workforce and community

We will continue to build capacity and understanding across the local area to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND. This includes:

- Training and support for staff across all services and sectors, including mainstream schools.
- Practical tools, advice and coaching to ensure training is embedded into everyday practice.
- Support for parent carers to understand systems and navigate SEND services.





- Promoting professional confidence, wellbeing and retention, especially for SENCOs and specialist staff.

4. Clear pathways for support and meaningful transitions

We will develop and promote clear, joined-up pathways for support, with a particular focus on key transitions. This includes:

- Support that is consistent and accessible throughout a child's life, with transitions between stages clearly supported.
- A system that supports young people to move successfully into adulthood.
- Seamless planning between services so that transitions do not result in gaps or duplicated work.
- Families and young people knowing what to expect and when, with visible pathways and consistent information.

5. Children and young people receive the right support at the right time

We will ensure that support is timely, effective, and reduces the need for escalation or crisis. This includes:

- A strengthened graduated response in mainstream schools.
- Early identification and intervention supported by accessible services.
- Timely access to assessment and diagnosis across health, education and social care.
- Ensuring that support reflects real demand and is not held back by thresholds or delays.

6. Inclusive and accessible community opportunities

We will support children and young people with SEND to access and participate fully in their communities. This includes:

- Commissioned services and leisure activities that are co-produced, inclusive and responsive to needs.
- Removing practical and financial barriers that prevent participation.
- Making sure the Local Offer reflects the full range of opportunities for children and young people.
- Supporting transitions into adult services, post-16 education, employment and social opportunities.





How we will effectively deliver the strategy

The delivery of this strategy will be driven through three key strategic plans, underpinned by robust governance and a strong culture of accountability.

The SEND Strategy Action Plan

This is a live plan, which sets out specific, measurable actions aligned to each of the six SEND priorities:

- Each action will include clear timescales, operational leads, and success criteria.
- Progress will be reviewed regularly through the SEND Local Area Partnership and its subgroups.
- The Action Plan will be reviewed regularly with SNAP Parent Carer Forum and partners to remain responsive to need.
- It will change over time in line with the needs of children and young people in CBC and to implement Department for Education guidance and legislation.
- The Action Plan will be published on the Local Offer and updated twice a year.

Central Bedfordshire Joint Commissioning Plan

- This plan describes how we will align resources across health, education and care to improve outcomes.
- Commissioning decisions will be evidence-based and informed by lived experience.
- The plan will prioritise local and early support to reduce reliance on out-of-area and crisis services.
- Delivery will be monitored through the Joint Commissioning Operational Group and the SEND Local Area Partnership.

Specialist Placement Plan

This plan outlines how we will meet rising demand for specialist education provision.

- This includes new special school developments and the expansion of ARP provision.
- The plan aligns and will become integral with the Schools Organisation Plan.
- It will be monitored through the SEND and Alternative Provision Local Area Partnership Board (LAP).

In addition to these three plans, a renewed focus will be placed on accountability, impact, and transparent communication. Families and professionals told us that it is not enough to have the





right priorities, we must also deliver on them. This means embedding SMART objectives into our planning, regularly sharing progress, and ensuring that feedback directly influences action.

Together, through co-production and collaboration, we will make this strategy a tool for meaningful change.

Effective use of local area resources

The effective and equitable use of local area resources is fundamental to the success of this strategy. It enables us to deliver the right support at the right time, make best use of public funds, and ensure long-term sustainability for services across education, health, and care.

In Central Bedfordshire, the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant continues to fund provision for children and young people with EHCPs and other specialist support services. However, with rising demand, we must be increasingly strategic, transparent, and outcome-focused in how resources are allocated and used.

We are committed to:

- Prioritising investment in local provision, including specialist school places, ARPs and enhanced mainstream capacity.
- Making decisions based on data, outcomes and lived experience.
- Reviewing and strengthening joint commissioning arrangements, so that services are better integrated, coordinated and cost-effective.
- Reducing reliance on high-cost, out-of-area placements by expanding local options that better meet need.
- Embedding value for money principles across our transport strategy, equipment and support services.
- Ensuring staffing levels and skillsets across services are sufficient to meet need and deliver quality support.

We recognise that families expect a SEND system that is not only responsive, but also sustainable and coherent. We will continue to listen to feedback on how services are accessed and experienced, and we will align this with financial planning to support continuous improvement.

Who will oversee the strategy?

This strategy will be governed by a strong, multi-agency partnership with clear lines of responsibility and accountability. Families and professionals have been clear that robust oversight is essential if the strategy is to lead to meaningful and visible change.





The following groups will oversee delivery:

SEND Local Area Partnership

- Meets quarterly and is accountable for the delivery of the SEND Strategy.
- Co-chaired by the Director of Children's Services and the Chief Nurse (BLMK ICB), with membership including leaders from education, health, social care, schools and the SNAP Parent Carer Forum.
- Tracks progress against all strategy priorities and receives reports from the SEND Programme Board, Joint Commissioning Group and Task and Finish groups.
- Reviews progress data and co-production feedback, and escalates risks or barriers to progress.

SEND Programme Board

- Meets monthly to drive and coordinate delivery of the strategy and associated plans.
- Responsible for monitoring the Action Plan, unblocking barriers and coordinating resource.
- Responsible for monitoring the projects in the Change Programme Partnership, Delivering Better Value and areas such as reporting and comms.
- Core members and joint-chairing include key CBC Directors, BLMK ICB leads, and SNAP PCF representation.

SEND Improvement Group

Meets monthly to drive individual actions on the SEND Action Plan.

Responsible for escalating area of the Action Plan that need strategic intervention.

Core members and joint-chairing include key CBC Heads of Service, BLMK ICB and Provider leads, and SNAP PCF representation.

Health and Wellbeing Board

- Provide strategic oversight and alignment across wider local priorities and plans.
- Support cross-sector leadership of the SEND Strategy and the Children and Young People's Plan.

SNAP Parent Carer Forum

- Plays a joint role, in co-production, engagement and challenge.
- Supports insight-gathering, contributes to governance and reviews delivery across all six priorities.
- A partner in the SEND Strategic Partnership. [Central Bedfordshire Partnership Agreement | Central Bedfordshire SEND Local Offer](#)





As part of our renewed focus on accountability, we will ensure that each strategic action has a named owner, a clear timeframe, and a reporting route to governance. Regular updates will be published via the Local Offer and shared with families and partners to maintain transparency and shared ownership of progress.

How we will recognise success

Success must be measured not only through data but through the experience of children, young people, and their families. We have heard clearly that families want to see action, feel improvement, and be kept informed along the way.

The experience of families

We will routinely listen to the lived experience of families through surveys, events, feedback forums and ongoing co-production.

- We will work closely with SNAP Parent Carer Forum to gather and respond to feedback.
- We will use the “You Said, We Did” approach to show how engagement leads to change.
- We will listen to what is working and build upon it.
- We will listen to what is not working and act on it quickly and transparently.

Progress against our priorities

- The SEND Strategy Action Plan will include SMART objectives and measurable outcomes.
- We will report publicly on progress at key governance boards and through the Local Offer website.

Using data and insight

- We will continue to use data to understand trends, track outcomes, and identify gaps.
- Our SEND Partnership Dashboard will be updated termly and shared widely.
- We will triangulate data with lived experience, complaints, and insight from schools, health, and community services.





Contact information and further engagement

This refreshed strategy will form the basis of formal consultation, taking place from July to October 2025. We encourage all children, young people, families, and professionals to continue to engage with us during this process and beyond.

You can find more information, including how to take part in the consultation and access the Local Offer, via our website:

www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/SEND

Email: send.feedback@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Phone: 0300 300 4659

Address: Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford,
Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ

We are grateful to all those who contributed to this strategy, and we remain committed to delivering improvements that are transparent, achievable, and co-produced. Together, we can create a SEND system that reflects our shared values and delivers real outcomes for the children and young people of Central Bedfordshire.





Recent work completed under the 2022-2025 SEND Strategy

Graduated Approach document



Very clear tool to use with both teaching staff and parents to show what needs to be in place or level of difficulties before applying for an EHCP"

A Graduated Approach document was coproduced with the aim to support SENCOs to be effective in their challenge and support of class teachers, and to effectively deliver ordinarily available provision. This helps SENCOs to be more strategic in their role of coordinating support within schools.

Therapeutic Thinking

SNAP Parent Carer forum brought Therapeutic Thinking to the attention of Central Bedfordshire Council. This is a whole school training which focuses on how all children and young people are supported, particularly in terms of their emotional wellbeing and mental health. It is a trauma-informed approach to behaviour for all educational settings and wider stakeholders, grounded in evidence-based research. More than two thirds of our schools have received the train-the-trainer training and sixteen have already fed back that they have noticed a reduction in suspensions in their schools.

Early Support Transitions (Neurodiversity) Pilot

In this pilot ten early years settings are testing an assessment tool to identify need, signpost to support and provide strategies to support neurodiversity early. This helps families and settings meet the needs of children and a specialist multi-agency team provide support and advice as needed.

Neurodiversity Workshops for parents

Neurodiversity Support online training and workshops for parents of children referred into Bedfordshire Community Health Services whilst awaiting assessment.

<https://www.bedsiltonchildrenshealth.nhs.uk/neurodiversity-support/neurodiversity-online-training-and-workshops/>

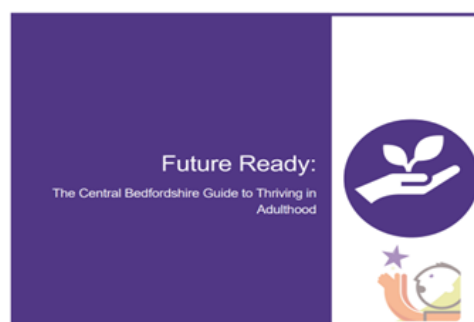




Future Ready - the CBC guide to thriving in adulthood

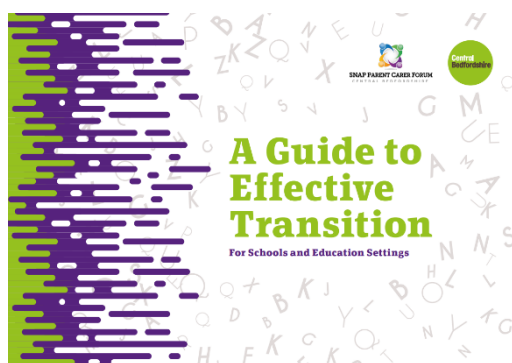
Preparing for Adulthood is about taking timely steps so children and young people with additional needs can enjoy independent living as adults as fully as possible and achieve as much as possible in their adult lives. The law says that should happen from their earliest years, and certainly no later than 13 or 14. This helpful booklet can be downloaded from the Local Offer and contains useful information on:

- Options for Education and Training.
- Involving young people in planning and decisions which affect them.
- A checklist for what to do at different ages and stages
- Help for healthy living.
- Living independently.
- Managing money and
- Signposts to useful sources of information that may answer other questions you have.



Transitions Toolkit

The transition toolkit focuses on transition between educational settings, for statutory school aged children and young people, but many of the suggested activities and provision would be beneficial for any educational transition taking place.



The document has been co-produced with: Youth Support Service, SNAP, Parent Carer Forum, Early Years SEND Team, Virtual School, School SENCOs, Educational Psychology Service and SEND Advisory Team

To learn more about the work completed under the SEND Strategy 2022-2025, go to our Local Offer page [What you have said and what we have done or are doing | Central Bedfordshire SEND Local Offer](#)



Central
Bedfordshire

great
prospects

Central Bedfordshire in contact

Find us online: www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Call: 0300 300 4659

Email: send.feedback@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

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Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ