



Strategy

Hertfordshire Local Area Partnership

2026-2029



Contents Page

This strategy sets out our current priorities and approach to improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND. It is grounded in local evidence, co-produced with stakeholders, and aligned to our shared mission. We recognise that the national policy landscape is evolving, and as such, this strategy is designed to be dynamic—capable of adapting to future developments in legislation, guidance, and funding. We are committed to reviewing and refining our approach as needed to ensure it remains relevant, responsive, and impactful.

This strategy should be read by all staff who support children and young people if you work in education, health or social care, regardless of your level or organisation, because your day-to-day work helps deliver the ambitions of this strategy, and the improvement work impacts you too. We also want the families of Hertfordshire to read this strategy and understand what our ambitions could mean for their family, because they are central to this partnership.

Section:	Pages:	What this section aims to explain:
Our Mission Statement, Executive Summary and Outcome Bees	3 – 6	To summarise what we want to achieve from writing and delivering this strategy and what outcomes we want children and young people to achieve.
Context	7 – 10	We set out the context that the SEND Local Area Partnership is working in. This includes who we are, important local and national data points, and what our journey to this point has been.
Your Voice	11 – 13	We have a wide range of ways that we hear from people that both use SEND services and those that work in them. This summarises the findings from the engagement activity that has taken place to specifically feed into this strategy. You told us what is most important to you.
The detail: our ambitions and the way we will work	14 – 21	Explains in detail what each of our six ambitions are and what they mean for children, young people and their families.
How we will know our strategy is working – our Outcome Bee indicators	22	We must have ways of measuring if we are meeting our ambitions and if we are helping children to achieve our intended outcomes (the seven outcome bees). This section summarises what information we review at a partnership-wide level to understand this.
How we will deliver this strategy – our governance	23	Provides a diagram of the different board meetings who will oversee progress of the strategy and continuous improvement plan, and how they link together.
Links to other key strategies	24	This strategy is not the only one which aims to improve children and young people’s outcomes, we have reviewed other strategies to ensure our ambitions for children and young people align with theirs and we have listed these.

We want this strategy to be accessible and understood by everyone, including young people, their families, our staff, our leaders and the wider network of organisations who support children and young people in Hertfordshire.

We have created an easy read document to summarise the strategy and what it would mean for you. This can be found on the Local Offer.

Our Mission Statement

To the children and young people of Hertfordshire: we want you to feel understood, be accepted for who you are, and succeed in life.

To achieve this, we will make sure that:

Every decision made through this partnership is driven by a shared commitment to improving the lives of children and young people with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND). In Hertfordshire, our mission is clear: to ensure that all children and young people have the opportunity to live their best life—one filled with hope, ambition, and a strong sense of belonging. We believe every young person should feel accepted for who they are, supported in their learning environments, and connected to the communities they call home. Our goal is for them to be as happy, healthy, and safe as possible so that they can thrive.



Executive Summary

Improving the lives of children and young people with SEND—and their families—depends on strong, sustained collaboration across education, health, and social care. Every decision we make is rooted in this principle. While national reform is on the horizon and we await the full detail of the White Paper, we are not waiting to act. This strategy reflects what families, schools, and professionals in Hertfordshire have told us must change, and it aligns with the Minister’s five principles: early support, local delivery, fairness, effective practice, and shared responsibility. These principles are embedded throughout our strategy, ensuring we respond to local needs while preparing for national change. As the SEND landscape shifts nationally, the partnership will continually reflect on what this means locally for our strategic ambitions

Leaders are ambitious for children and young people with additional needs and our mission in Hertfordshire is clear: every child and young person should have the opportunity to live their best life—one filled with hope, ambition, and belonging. We want them to feel accepted for who they are, supported in their learning environments, and connected to the communities they call home.

Our goal is for children and young people to be as happy, healthy, and safe as possible. We are committed to creating inclusive spaces where individual strengths and challenges are recognised, and the right support is provided at the right time.

We know that some children and young people face greater barriers and require more tailored support. And while we have made progress, we recognise there is still more to do. By focusing on inclusive education, health, and care systems that meet these needs, we are creating a stronger, more supportive environment where every young person can reach their full potential.

No one person, service or organisation can achieve this mission on their own. Working together is key, and that includes the partnership we form with families. Families know their children and young people better than anyone, and their expertise is vital in understanding and supporting their child. We want to work alongside and empower families, because we know that a supported family allows a child or young person to thrive, and that the best outcomes for children are achieved when we all work in partnership.

We are committed to being open and transparent. As we continue to improve, some of the ways we work may evolve—always with care, collaboration, and the best interests of children and young people at the centre. By working together and focusing support where it’s needed most, we can make a lasting and positive difference.

Jo Fisher & Beverley Flowers

Executive Director of Children’s Services. Hertfordshire County Council

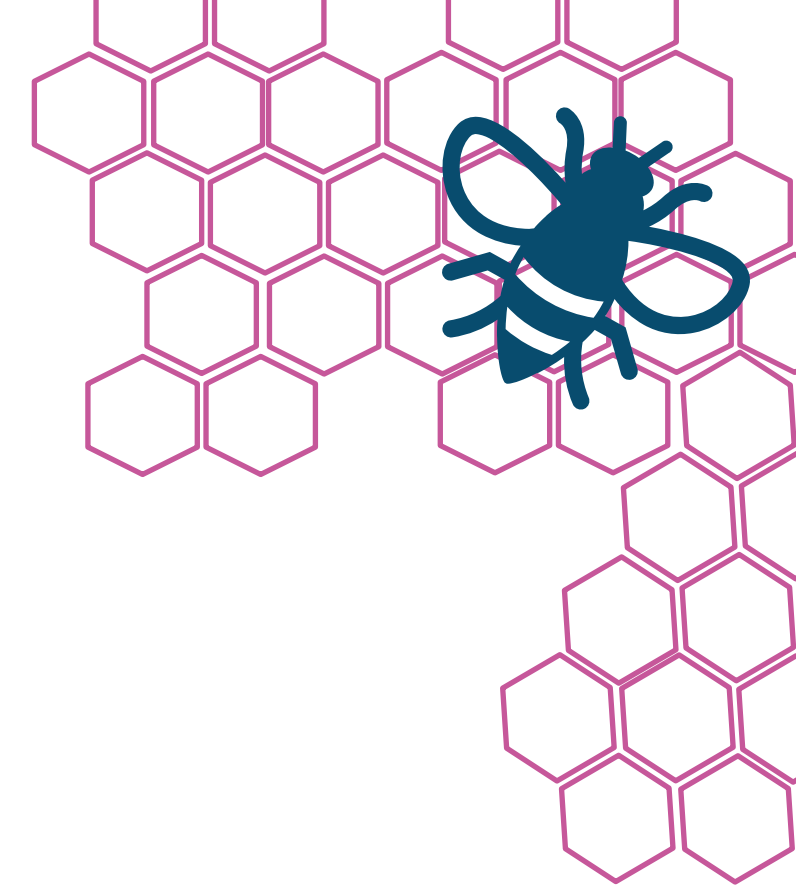
Lead Director, Hertfordshire & West Essex Integrated Care Board



Lily – aged 10

What outcomes are we aiming for?

In Hertfordshire, we developed the **Outcome Bees** to explain the outcomes we want all children and young people to achieve and support them to Be Happy. In delivering the ambitions of this strategy, we are aiming for children and young people with SEND to achieve these outcomes.



Be Included

Children, young people and families feel listened to, valued, and feel a sense of belonging and have the opportunities and support they need.

Be Independent

Children and young people have connections, information and skills to make decisions about their lives and future.

Be Ambitious

Every child, particularly those who are disadvantaged, is empowered with a good start in life and the ability to thrive in education and beyond in order to achieve their full potential.

Be Safe

Children and young people get help to stay safe from harm in their home, community and online in order to feel protected and secure.

Be Healthy

Children and young people get the best start in life and are supported to be healthy.

Be Resilient

Building individual and community resilience and promoting inclusion within our communities to enable children, young people and their families to thrive and cope with the pressures they face.

What will be different?

Building on the progress of the SEND Partnership, this Strategy marks a transformative shift in how we engage with and support families, shaped directly upon [what they told us](#) - placing collaboration, communication, and meaningful outcomes at the heart of everything we do.

Children's voices are central

Children and young people will help shape services through [Voices of Hertfordshire and our SEND Youth Councils](#). Their views will inform service design, helping them feel more included and empowered in their school and community.

Families are much more involved in shaping services

We are going to go further than ever before by engaging and listening with more families, more often, and in the ways that you have told us work best for you, that help us to make services even better. Parent carers will co-lead governance boards and help co-produce improvement. This will mean more opportunities to share feedback and influence decisions. Communication will become clearer and more compassionate, and early resolution will be prioritised when issues emerge. We will better utilise technology to enable families to have access to information when they need it.

Support starts earlier

Families will be able to access help even without a formal diagnosis. Resources like the [Local Offer](#) website and the [Neurodiversity Hub](#) will contribute to clearer pathways to support. All partners will focus on reducing delays, uncertainty, and inequity.

Transitions are strengthened

Transitions into settings, between phases and into further education, employment or training will be better planned and supported so young people can prepare for the future. EHCPs will reflect future goals, and children and young people will be more involved in preparing for key life stages.

Inclusion is embedded across the system

Inclusive values will be promoted across schools and services. Children will feel more welcomed and supported, and families will be more connected to their communities.

Services work more closely together

Education, health and social care services will collaborate more effectively. This should lead to more coordinated support and fewer delays, particularly for our most vulnerable children including those looked after and those missing education.

Schools as a key partner are valued and supported

We will foster a culture of collaboration and communication. Clearer guidance and more training through the [SEND Academy](#) and [HFL Education](#) will be available so that staff are more confident in meeting diverse needs so that children can achieve their outcomes.

More partners across the SEND workforce receive training through the SEND Academy

We will extend our [SEND Academy](#) so that even more schools, settings and staff receive training in SEND. This will include forging stronger partnerships with the voluntary sector, recognising the important role that they play in supporting children and young people.

More local provision that meets needs

We will develop a graduated offer of provision that means families will have more options in mainstream settings, with more specialist provision available for those with the most complex needs so that children and young people can go to their local schools. Development of provisions will be informed by data and jointly planned by education and health services.

We harness technology that benefits families

We will better utilise technology to enable staff to more effectively meet the needs of families and so that families have access to information when they need it. For example, families will have access to an online portal to improve experiences with their children's EHCPs.

Context: Who are the Hertfordshire SEND Partnership?

Our partnership is led by Hertfordshire County Council and the Integrated Care Board and includes local NHS trusts, 524 schools, four colleges, nine Delivering Specialist Provision Locally (DSPL) areas, and our range of commissioned alternative provision and early years providers and [Herts Parent Carer Involvement](#) (HPCI). It is the responsibility of this partnership to deliver the ambitions of this SEND Strategy. HPCI are the recognised and independent parent carer representative organisation who work with us to improve services by advocating for families and ensuring their voices are heard.

Who is this strategy for?

A SEND strategy is designed to serve and support a wide range of people and roles who are essential to the wellbeing and success of children and young people with SEND. It is for:

- Children and young people with SEND, to ensure their voices are heard and their needs are met through inclusive, person-centred support.
- Parent carers, who play a vital role in their children's lives and need to be empowered, informed, and involved in decision-making.
- System leaders across education, health, and social care, who are responsible for shaping, commissioning, and delivering joined-up services that work effectively together.
- The wider workforce, including Children's Services staff, teachers, SENCOs, teaching assistants, health professionals, social workers, early years practitioners, colleges, and community organisations—everyone who contributes to the education, health, care, and development of children and young people with SEND.

Together, these groups form the foundation of a collaborative, inclusive system that puts children and young people with SEND at the centre.



Context: Who are we supporting?

The data below aims to highlight the breadth of children and families we support:

- ✿ There are **365,400 children and young people aged 0 – 25** in Hertfordshire. (2024 estimates)
- 🌱 **9,804** pupils in Hertfordshire schools **with EHCPs** and **31,966** pupils **with SEN support**, representing **18.5%** of all pupils. (Jan 2025 School Census)
- 🍄 **3,146** young people aged 16 – 25 **with EHCPs**. ([SEN2](#), Jan 2025)
- 👤 We Received **4,616** new referrals for **Speech and Language Therapy** in 24/25. (SEND Data Dashboard)
- ✿ EHC Needs Assessment requests for **children with physical disability as their primary need tripled** between 2020/21 and 2023/24. (SEND Data Dashboard)
- 🌱 **39.8%** of children with **social care support** in June 2025 had an **active EHCP**. (SEND Data Dashboard)
- 🍄 In June 2025, there were **61** young people being supported by **Youth Justice Service with SEND**. (SEND Data Dashboard)
- 👤 In 2024, **2,916 Families First Assessments** for early help support were completed, **27.8%** of these were for a child or young person **with SEND**. (SEND Data Dashboard)
- ✿ Approximately **2.5%** of children in the UK are believed to **have a learning disability**. ([Mencap](#), 2024)
- 🌱 The **school absence rate** in Hertfordshire Autumn 24/25 was **6%**, compared to 6.2% nationally. (SEND Data Dashboard)
- 🍄 There are **165** children and young people **electively home educated who have EHCPs**. (June 2025, SEND Data Dashboard).
- 👤 At Key Stage 4 in 2024, in Hertfordshire, **14.3% of pupils with an EHCP** and **51.8% of those with SEN Support** achieved grade 4 GCSE in English and Mathematics compared to 13.5% and 39.1% nationally.

Context: Our Improvement Journey since 2023

Hertfordshire has been on a journey to improve outcomes and experiences for children and young people with SEND following the 2023 SEND Inspection. We have delivered many of the commitments in the [24/25 Priority Action & Improvement Plan](#).

Progress was recognised by the Department for Education (DfE) and NHS England (NHSE) in [Autumn 2024](#) and [Summer 2025](#).

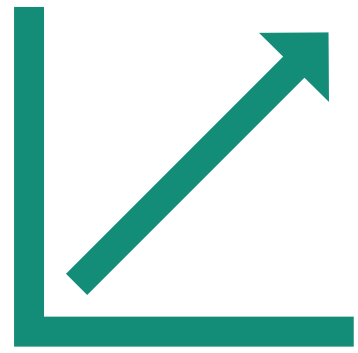
However, **we know there is still more to do** in order for children, young people and their families to consistently experience good quality and timely services and get the support they need. These areas are a focus through this new strategy.

Key progress made since the last strategy:

- We put in place **strong governance** through our Partnership Board and Executive. A **data dashboard** recognised as national good practice is in use and a robust Quality Assurance Framework drives continuous improvement.
- We invested in a workforce transformation programme, '**Making SEND Everyone's Business**', and developed the **SEND Academy** to recruit and train staff to improve statutory SEND experiences, employing more than **130 new staff, many with lived experience**.
- **More children are able to access the support they need through more timely assessments** 89% of new EHCPs were issued on time in Sep 2025, up from 38% in Jul 2023.
- **More children and young people are receiving new EHCPs of good or outstanding quality** (66% of those audited in Quarter 2 of 25/26 compared to 5% in Quarter 2 23/24).
- **Annual Review timeliness** has improved and was at 58% in July 2025, up from 15% in 2023.
- We developed the '[This is Me](#)' form to support children and young people to have their **voice heard** and our [Voices of Hertfordshire](#) co-production model so that more children and young people can get involved in shaping services.
- The majority of children now receive their **speech and language reports for their EHC needs assessments** on time.
- Over 2000 children have been placed in specialist provision since Sep 2023, with an 82% increase in 2024/25 compared to 22/23. The number of children waiting more than two years has dropped by 69% (Sep 2025).
- We put in place a dedicated team and multi-agency meetings to **support children back into education**. Over 40 children have successfully been reintegrated into education.
- We launched the [Neurodiversity Support Hub](#) across the county
- Through the expansion of [Mental Health Support in School Teams](#) (MHST) **more children and young people are having their mental health needs met**, however these numbers continue to grow.
- We developed our [Accurate, Compassionate, Timely \(ACT\)](#) communications framework and trained our staff in how to deliver communications in this way. Our **complaint rate has fallen** to 3.7% in Quarter 1 25/26 compared to 6.7 Quarter 4 22/23. We have seen an increase in **compliments, many related to good communications** by our staff (rate increased to 4.8% from 1.7% in same period).

Context: SEND Strategy in a Changing System

This SEND Strategy is live during a time of increasing pressures and uncertainty in the system, with many areas of national policy change being proposed.



Requests for services are increasing. In Hertfordshire we have seen:

+55% rise in overall numbers of pupils waiting for specialist placements (Sep 2023 to Jun 2025)

+24% Year-on-year increase in Neurodiversity Assessment Requests (2024)

+27% increase in EHC Needs Assessments agreed in 2024 compared to 2023.

We must consider how we sustain and make further improvements at the same time as facing increasing need and significant funding challenges.

There is **increasing recognition**¹ at a national level of the **challenges** faced by local areas and education settings in delivering services and **meeting the needs children and young people who need more support.**

We are also influenced by **changes happening at the national level, where reform is already underway in areas** and priorities are set:

- A Schools White Paper, setting out national reforms for SEND, was published in February 2026.
- Ofsted's new [Education Inspection Framework](#) is in use from November 2025, with more focus on how education settings are inclusive.
- [NHS England](#), an NHS body which manages how health services in England are run, will be merged with the Department for Health & Social Care. Integrated Care Boards, who commission many health services, are being re-structured.
- NHS England have asked health services to focus on 5 key areas to reduce health inequalities in children and young people (known as [Core20+5](#)): asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, oral health and mental health.
- There is going to be more focus on how education helps to keep children safe from harm in the new [Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill](#).
- There will be [changes to the way safeguarding services operate](#) to protect children, with focus on keeping children with their families wherever possible, and recognising the needs and support of the whole family.
- Plans to reform local government by devolving more powers to local areas and simplifying the local government structure were announced in Dec 2024 by central government. This will impact how Hertfordshire is structured, but our vital work supporting residents and providing services will continue.
- Our partnership must harness the opportunities these national changes bring, carefully considering what they mean for Hertfordshire and **how we improve our services in a way that also aligns with nationally set priorities.**

1. [Towards an effective and financially sustainable approach to SEND](#)
[Support for children and young people with special educational needs - NAO report](#)
[Spending on special educational needs in England: something has to change | Institute for Fiscal Studies](#)
[Solving the SEND Crisis - Committees - UK Parliament](#)

Your Voice

Hertfordshire SEND Summit 2025

In September 2025, the partnership hosted a SEND Summit, attended by parent carer representatives, Head Teachers, SENCOs, voluntary and community sector organisations, County Councillors, young people, and Leaders from Education, Health and Social Care services. The aim of the event was to listen, understand challenges and work together to find solutions, which have informed the priorities of this SEND Strategy.

Before the Summit, we also held a series of engagement activities with young people, parent carers, schools and staff:



Community Listening Event – July 2025



In total, over 50 hours of County Councillor and Officers time was spent meeting with over 130 parent carers and professionals at community events.

531 responses were received in a parent carer survey, 193 responses were received in a survey for educational professionals, and 135 responses were received in a survey for young people.

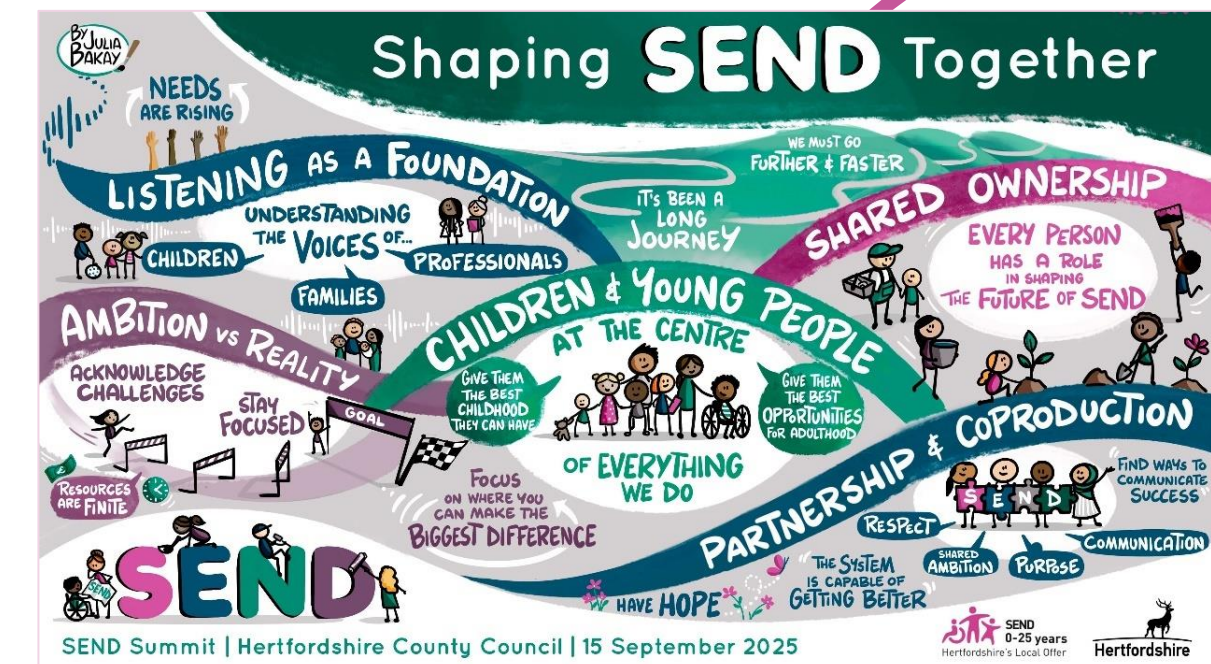
The Local Offer Team attended 23 community events and chatted to 77 people about the challenges and solutions.



124 people from across education, health, social care and parent carer representatives attended the SEND Summit. They shared their views, insights and ideas in interactive workshops.



Over 100 people joined the event via the livestream and submitted questions for a Q&A session. Recordings are available to watch on the [Local Offer YouTube](#).



Visual notes capturing the SEND Summit – September 2025

Your Voice

Your Priorities

In addition to the wide range of ways that we hear the views of people across the SEND System, we heard from over **1000 voices in the lead up to the SEND summit**. This included parent carers, children and young people, and professionals working across education, health and social care. We also held a consultation on the draft SEND Strategy Nov 2025 – Feb 2026.

Here's what you told us...

You really valued the opportunity to share your experiences, insights and what changes you'd like to see. You want this to continue, with ongoing opportunities for engagement.

When children and young people are in a learning environment that is tailored to their needs, they thrive. Specialist provision, such as deaf schools and SEND Units were highlighted as excellent resources.

You'd like to see mainstream schools with a genuinely inclusive culture, so that children and young people feel a sense of belonging.

You want to be kept informed and up to date during the Educational, Health and Care Plan processes.

You want more opportunities for young people once they turn 16. You'd like more support into employment, training or further education.

You'd like children and young people with SEND to be supported by professionals who have access to ongoing training and development, so that they feel confident and well-equipped to do their job.

There's lots of information out there, but you'd like it to be clearer on where to go, and when to access different types of support and services.

You want children and young people to feel part of their local communities, and for this to continue once they leave school.

You want timely access to health interventions such as diagnosis for ASD and ADHD, Mental Health Support, and Speech and Language Therapy.

There are some great groups and activity clubs that enable children and young people to meet their peers. You want more of these inclusive groups across the county.

Support networks are important to many of you. You value support from Voluntary and Community Sector organisations that give advice and provide opportunities to meet other parent carers or professionals.

You want user friendly technology that enables you to communicate, access and manage different parts of processes more effectively.

You want to be involved in decisions that impact you and your family. You'd like to be listened to and trusted on what you need.

You'd like to see better join-up and collaboration between services so that you don't feel as though you are being 'bounced' around the system.

Moving between phases is a stressful time for many families. You'd like more support from schools, settings and services during this time so that you feel ready for this transition.

You'd like more access to Specialist Provision so that children and young people are able to learn in an environment that meets their needs.

Children and Young People's Voice

Hearing the voices of children and young people, and using them to inform our improvement work, is important in this partnership. We created [Voices of Hertfordshire](#) to increase the ways in which children and young people can participate in improving services.

How children and young people engaged with us to shape this SEND strategy:

Voices of Hertfordshire worked with **378 young people** aged from 8 – 18 covering 42 schools in Jan 2025, focussing on 'inclusion'.

129 children and young people from the East of England attended the 'Big Get Together 2025' with Education, Health and Care leaders.

135 responses were received in a survey for young people for the SEND Summit.

Experts by Experience participated in the SEND Summit and focus groups during the consultation.

50+ young people discussed the draft SEND strategy across **6 SEND Youth Councils** run by Services for Young People.

Some children **drew us pictures, made videos and some spoke to us about inclusion**, we have summarised these to represent a broad range of views.



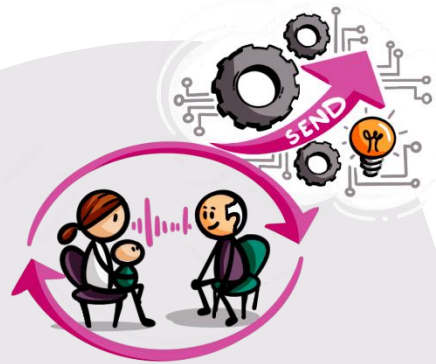
Our Ambitions



These priorities have been based on what you told us matters most.

Throughout our engagement activities in 2025, we asked whether these ambitions reflect the right priorities for children and young people with SEND. Over 85% of respondents agreed that they do.

1. Listen, Engage, Collaborate, Evolve



We will continuously listen to children, young people, families, staff and education settings and take time to understand their experiences. They should always be engaged in our continuous improvement work. This is so we can continue to learn about what works and what doesn't.

2. Early Identification & Support



Children and young people can have needs which emerge at any time. Our services will aim to provide timely assessments which identify children and young people's needs at the earliest possible point to enable early support. Guidance and support without a diagnosis will be readily available and promoted.

3. Local Provision for Children and Young People



We will provide children and young people with access to high quality education, health and social care provisions that are local to them and work together to consider their needs and outcomes. All of our provision will operate flexibly to meet varying and changing needs.

4. Aspirational for All



We want children and young people with SEND to be included and feel like they belong in their community and where they learn. All partners must champion inclusion and do more to engage and influence wider system partners, community and public on this, creating a more inclusive society.

5. Preparing for the Future



For children, young people and families, transition at any age or life stage is vitally important and can be stressful. We will support children and young people to be ready for the next step in life.

6. Strong Foundations



There are things required that are essential to achieve our five other ambitions. Examples include good communication, strong workforce, good technology and good partnership working.

The way we will work: our professional promise

- **The views of the child and young person will be at the centre of everything we do.**
We will listen to what is important to you, build on your ideas and remember that we are working to help you get the outcomes you need.
- **We will recognise the strengths and abilities of children and young people and we will build on these.**
We will focus on what works and what you are good at so that we can build on this.
- **We will communicate clearly and appropriately and in the way that children and young people choose.**
We will talk to you about how you like to give and receive information and together find a way that will work.
- **We will work together in an open and honest way.**
We won't let the fact that we are from different organisations stop us from working well together to help achieve the best outcomes.
- **We will work together towards positive solutions and outcomes.**
We will be creative and open to considering new ideas to help you get the outcomes that you want.
- **We will have the skills to do the job or signpost elsewhere when needed.**
We will make sure that all of our staff are well trained and that they know who is the most suitable person to help if they can't.
- **We will be honest about what can be achieved.**
We will be clear from the start about what we can do, considering the law, time, and resources available. We will be clear why things are happening.
- **We aim to get it right first time and continue to learn from our experiences to inform changes.**
We'll try hard to make things work and if they don't we'll try to understand what went wrong so that we can make sure it doesn't happen again.



Hertfordshire's
Professional Promise

1. Listen, Engage, Collaborate, Evolve



Listening to You:

We will more clearly recognise the important role that children, young people, and families have in shaping the services that they use. We want more young people to share their ideas and experiences through Voices of Hertfordshire. We will significantly shift how we engage with families to create more opportunities for ongoing and meaningful dialogue, so that you feel listened to and are involved in the changes that affect you. We're also helping professionals to communicate in ways that are accurate, compassionate and timely. [Herts Parent Carer Involvement](#) is our dedicated parent carer forum, supporting strategic co-production and ensuring families have a strong voice in shaping SEND services.

Supporting Families

We're finding better ways to support families and young carers who help look after someone at home. If something isn't working, we want to work with families early on to sort it out together.

Working Together

We're building stronger connections with schools, colleges, and organisations that support you—like SENCOs, Headteachers, and local charities. We want to hear from more people and make sure everyone's voice is part of the conversation. We recognise that we all have an important role to play in making things better. That's why working in partnership is essential to enabling meaningful collaboration.

What this means for you and your child:

You'll have opportunities to share your thoughts and ideas to help make our services better. We're working on making our communication with you clearer and more helpful. If there is a disagreement, we'll do our best to sort it out quickly and fairly. And if something doesn't go as it should, we'll listen, learn from it, and try to make sure it doesn't happen again.

“I really value having a space to come together and collaborate around a problem, working out solutions together.”

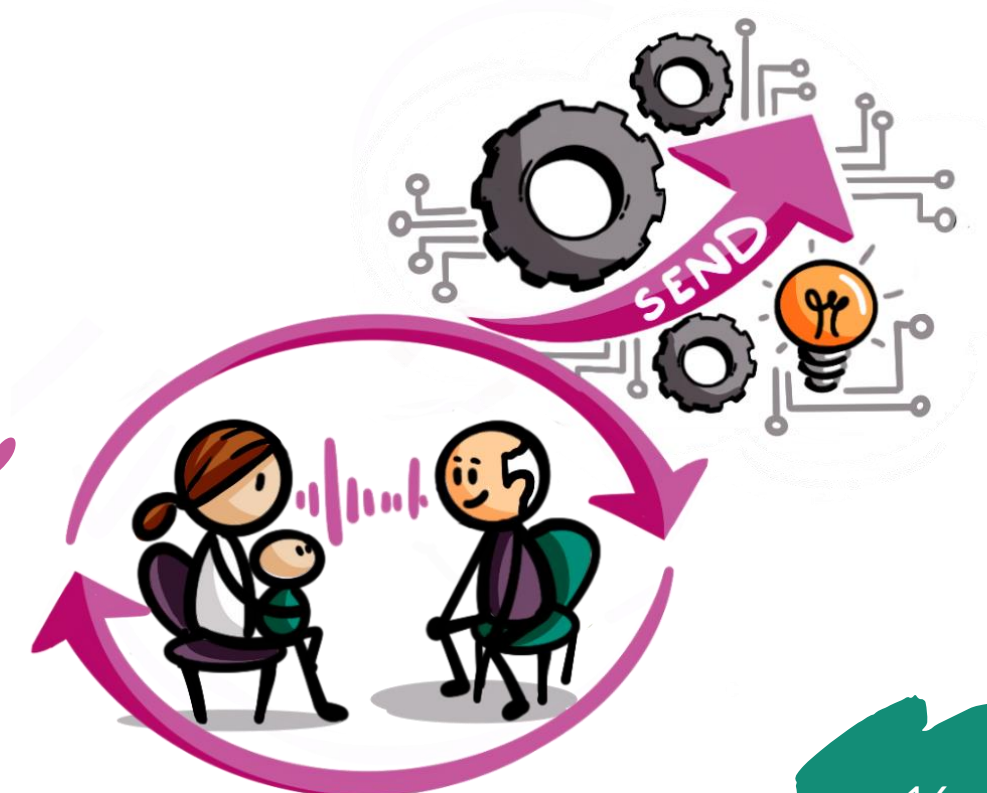
SENCo - Community Listening Event Summer 2025

“I believe when it comes to providing support for any group, incorporating individuals with lived experience into policy creation is critical to improving their experience.”

Expert by Experience

“Ask me what works for me!”

Young Person - Big Get Together February 2025



2. Early Identification & Support



Getting Support Early

We're working to spot children and young people's needs earlier and give support quickly. You don't need a diagnosis to get help – support and advice is already available and we will make this easier to find. We're also making sure our [Local Offer](#) website has clear and useful information for families so that you feel informed, empowered, and confident in finding the right support when you need it.

Helping the Whole Family

We recognise the central role that parent carers play in ensuring the best outcomes for their child or young person. You told us that siblings of SEND children can sometimes feel that their needs are overlooked and that parent carers need support too. By recognising the needs of the whole family, we want to provide more joined-up support that strengthens resilience and make sure that no one feels left behind.

A Strong Start and the Right Support

We're improving Early Years services so children with SEND get the best start in life and are ready for school. For those with more complex needs, we're making sure Education, Health and Care (EHC) Needs Assessments and EHCPs are timely and are high quality so children and young people get the right support at the right time.

Support Without a Diagnosis and Better Health Access

We're promoting support for children and young people who are neurodivergent, even if they don't have a diagnosis. We're also improving access and equity to both physical and mental health services, especially for those who might find it harder to get help so all children and young people can access support when they need it.

What this means for you and your child:

Your child is supported to have the best possible start in life. If needs emerge, they are identified early and support is put in place based on their needs, not on a diagnosis. If you are looking for advice and guidance, our [Local Offer](#) is the first place to look, and our staff will help you to access this. If you or another family member needs help with a need of your own, our staff will know where to direct you.

“ There's so much information out there it can be overwhelming.
Professional – SEND Summit Sept 2025 ”

“ Early intervention is key to more successful outcomes in education, wellbeing, families remaining together and the child's future and independence.
Parent Carer – Pre-Summit Survey Summer 2025 ”

“ It's hard sometimes as I have other children and my own needs, but no one seems to think about that.
Parent Carer – Pre-Summit Survey Summer 2025 ”



3. Local Provision for Children & Young People



Making Education More Inclusive

We're making sure schools and settings have the right support and funding to help all children and young people, based upon their needs. This is called a "graduated offer," which means different levels of help are available depending on what's needed. This means that there is access to the right support at the right time.

Helping Mainstream Schools Support Everyone

We've created a guide called the *Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP)* to help all mainstream schools and settings know what support they should offer for pupils with SEND. We're also making more training available to schools from our SEND Academy, HFL Education, and health partners, so they can meet these standards and better support children with additional needs.

Support Across All Schools and settings

We're strengthening specialist provision to make sure children and young people with more complex needs get the right support. This includes expanding specialist units and resource bases within mainstream schools, so that children can benefit from inclusive learning environments while receiving tailored help. We're moving away from a 'mainstream vs. specialist' model and instead building a more flexible system that offers a range of support based on individual needs. This means families may see changes in how specialist support is accessed, with more options available closer to home within inclusive settings.

Our vision is for children to thrive in a setting that understands and meets unique needs - whether that's in a mainstream classroom, a specialist setting, or somewhere in between.

Evidence-Based Future Planning

Health and education teams are working together to plan the right types of provision for the future including Alternative Provision, Post-16 pathways and therapy services. We are using data and insights from across the system to understand how children's needs are changing. This helps us to plan the right types of provision in the right places, so we can respond quickly and effectively as needs evolve. By basing our decisions on evidence, we can make sure new provision is set up where it will make the biggest difference.

What this means for you and your child:



Most children and young people will get the help they need in their local mainstream school. For those with more complex needs, there will be specialist support available. As schools and settings become more inclusive, we want families to feel confident in the support their school offers. And when it's time to move on after school, there will be more local options for college or training.

“ I want to go to school where my friends go to school. ”
CYP Pre-Summit Survey Summer 2025

“ What happens to those children that can't cope in mainstream schools, but don't need a special school to have their needs met? ”
Question at SEND Summit 2025

“ What's good for a child with SEND is good for every child. ”
SENCo - SEND Summit 2025

4. Aspirational For All

Working Together for Inclusion

We will all share one clear vision of what an inclusive culture looks like and how to achieve it so that children and young people feel a sense of belonging. We're celebrating schools and settings that are already doing this well and helping others understand how inclusive they are and what support they might need to build on this. We're also providing strong training and learning opportunities for schools and settings to keep improving.

Supporting Children with Different Needs

We're improving how we support children with their health, education and social care needs who are home educated and making sure we understand and help children who are missing education or face extra barriers to learning. We want all children and young people to be able to engage in learning.

Keeping Children Safe and Learning

Social care and education teams are working more closely together to make sure education is always part of the plan when keeping children safe. This helps us support the most vulnerable learners in the best way possible. Some young people told us about their experiences of bullying and emotional safety and our focus on inclusion will aim to support a sense of belonging for all young people.

What this means for you and your child:

We want children to feel welcome, supported, and able to learn in a place that works for them. If your child is struggling with school or has been out of education, there is good support available to help them re-engage and feel included.

“ My child was too anxious to be able to go to their school. Once they were accessing learning outside of the classroom, things really changed for them.
Parent Carer - Pre-Summit Survey Summer 2025

“ Inclusion is creating a space where every learner, regardless of ability, feels safe, valued, and empowered to grow. When schools embrace inclusion, they nurture not only academic success but empathy, resilience, and a sense of community in every student.
Headteacher - Pre-Summit Survey Summer 2025

“ Finding the right Alternative Provision for my child has made the biggest difference- they are great.
Parent Carer - Pre-Summit Survey Summer 2025



5. Preparing for the Future

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

Planning for What's Next

We're working with schools, families, and professionals to make sure transitions into settings, between phases and into further education, employment or training, are well prepared, consistent, and child-centred. We know how important this step is and we're strengthening support for families so that children feel ready for this transition. We're also making sure that Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) reflect each young person's goals for the future. These plans are shaped by the young person's voice, their choices, and what matters most to them.

Working Together to Improve Transitions

Health, education, and social care teams are reviewing how they support young people during big life changes. Mental health services are working with schools and early years settings to help children move smoothly through different stages, especially for those aged 18-25.

Preparing for the Future

We're encouraging all eligible young people aged 14-25 to join the learning disability register and to get their annual health check. We're working with colleges, training providers, and local employers to create more education, job, and training opportunities. We're also reviewing our Short Breaks offer to make sure it meets future needs.

What this means for you and your child:

When your child is ready to take a next step, services that support them will have planned for it. As your child gets older, they are supported to think about the future and what options are available to them.



“Moving from primary to secondary school was a really difficult time for us as a family.”
Parent Carer - Pre-Summit Survey Summer 2025

“It can feel really scary for families when their teenager is finishing school, they want to know what options they have and this can feel really limited.”
Social Care Professional - Listening Event Summer 2025

“Transitions between primary, secondary and further education, all in Stevenage SEND settings, have been brilliant. The settings know each other and the transition programs are great. We felt known and well looked after.”
Parent Carer - Pre-Summit Survey Summer 2025

6. Strong Foundations



In order to deliver the best outcomes for our children and young people, there are things that are essential to us achieving our other ambitions.



Better outcomes for children and young people

Delivering our ambitions

Strong Foundations

Abiding by the principles of our professional promise

- **Accurate, compassionate and timely communication** with families and settings is a top priority
- **A strong SEND partnership:** we have made great strides in collaborating across education, health, social care and our leaders will continue to lead, plan and deliver improvements together.
- **A strong and stable workforce:** the staff who work hard every day to deliver for young people in Hertfordshire need to have continued support and training, and their good practice recognised and spread. We will continue to develop and expand our [SEND Academy](#), providing even more training to schools, settings, staff, and the voluntary sector and creating opportunities to learn together.
- **Evidenced based decisions through insight & intelligence:** we have made great progress in developing the data we have access to and will continue to prioritise how we share this across the partnership, and how it informs our improvement work.
- **Robust quality assurance:** we developed a multi-agency quality assurance (QA) framework and SEND QA Board. We want to continue developing this as a fundamental requirement to knowing if our services are working well.
- **Innovation in Technology:** we will harness the opportunities that new systems and technologies, such as artificial intelligence, have to make processes simpler and improve experiences of services.



The outcomes we are aiming for

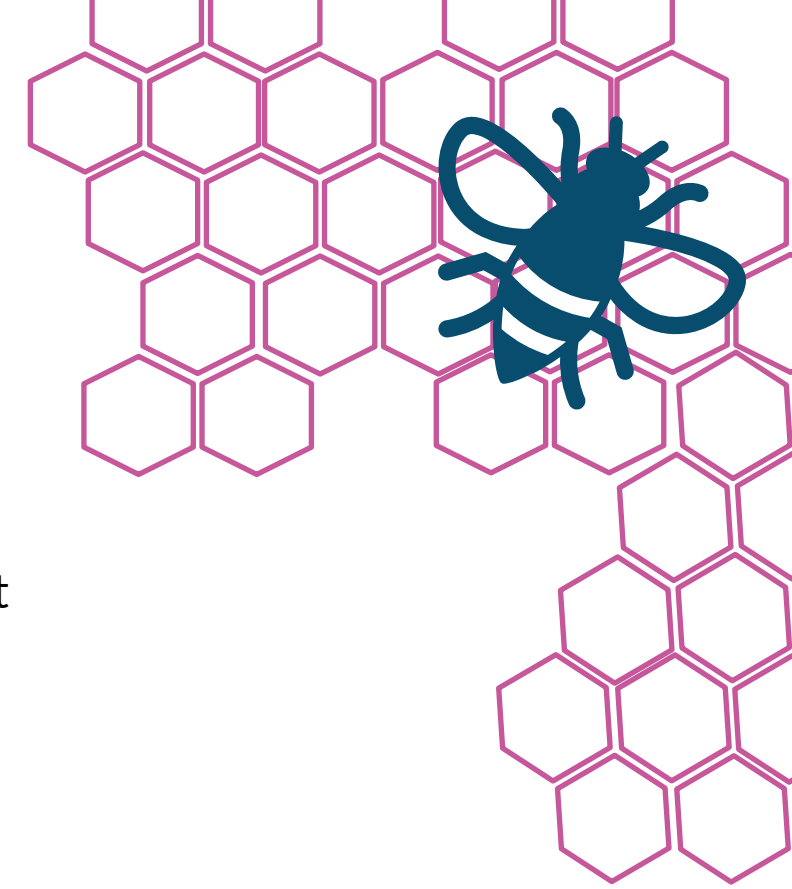
In everything we do, we aspire for all children and young people to succeed in our six Outcome Bee areas. These outcomes reflect what children, young people, and families have told us matters most to them.

For our SEND Strategy, we have developed a set of indicators aligned to each Outcome Bee. These indicators will be monitored throughout the life of the strategy to help us understand:

- Whether our actions are making a difference
- Where we need to adapt or improve
- How we can celebrate progress and success

By tracking these indicators, we aim to ensure that our strategy remains responsive, inclusive, and impactful for children and young people with SEND.

You can read more on Outcome Bee indicators at [How do we measure our progress?](#)



How we will deliver our strategy

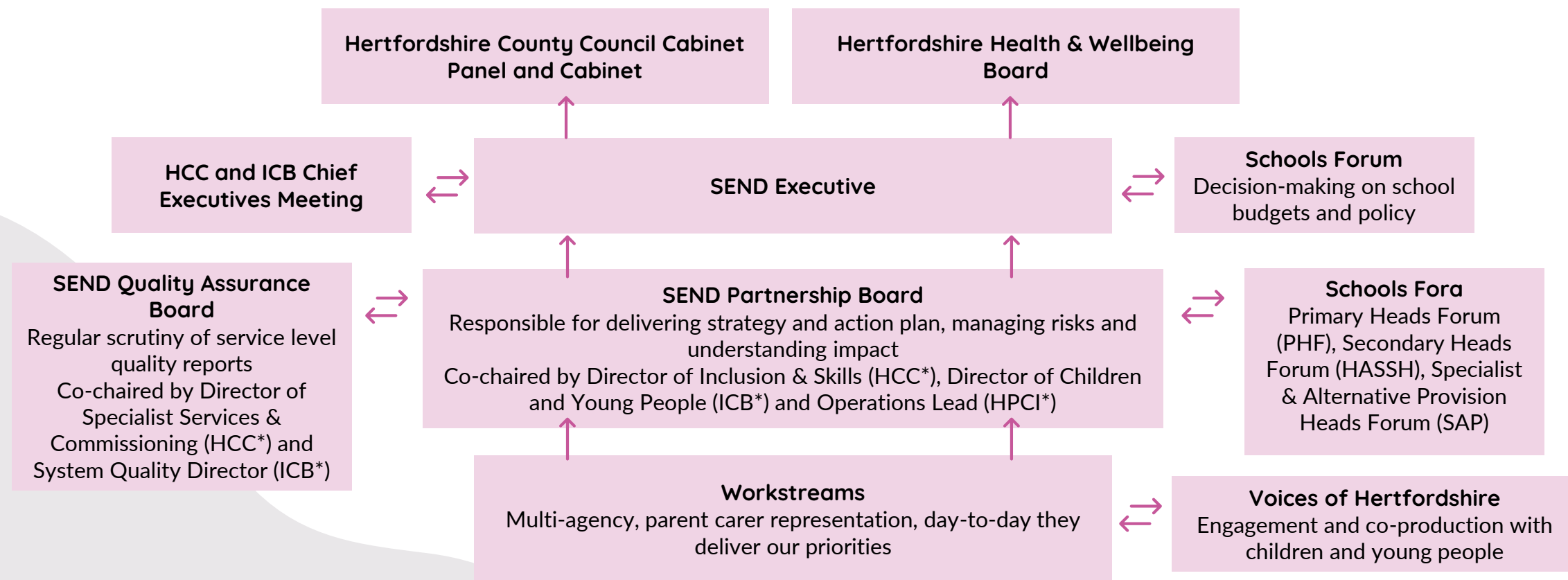
To deliver against our six ambitions and succeed in our seven Outcome Bee areas, we have developed a continuous improvement plan for the Hertfordshire SEND Partnership. This plan provides the detail on what actions we are going to undertake, and how we will measure whether these actions have made a difference. When we make changes or introduce something new, it's really important that we get it right the first time—so it works well for children and young people. That's why we take time to think carefully about what needs to be improved, and in what order, to make sure each step makes a positive difference

Every 12 months, we will produce and publish a report summarising the progress we have made and we will refresh the continuous improvement plan.

Upon publishing our SEND Priority Action & Improvement Plan in January 2024, we set-up new governance structures (the boards and meetings we operate to oversee improvement work) which were recognised by the DfE and NHSE as being strong and successful in helping us to deliver improvement. In developing this new strategy, we have considered what tweaks we need to make to ensure our governance continues to represent all partners and will help us deliver our ambitions.

SEND Strategy Governance:

This does not cover organisational only governance such as quality reporting methods in ICB, ICB Board, Children's Services Core Board. These do exist and work alongside SEND Improvement Governance.



Other partnership forums that also deliver on priorities and feed in:

- Early Years Strategic Board
- Mental Health, Learning Disability and Neurodiversity Health and Care Partnership (MHLDN)
- Hertfordshire Youth Justice Management Board
- Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership
- Families First Transformation Programme

*HCC – Hertfordshire County Council
ICB – Integrated Care Board
HPCI – Herts Parent Carer Involvement

Key Resources

Local Offer: [The Hertfordshire SEND Local Offer](#)

Support on a Page: [Services for children and young people](#)

Ordinarily Available Provision: [Ordinarily available provision - Hertfordshire Grid for Learning](#)

Updates on our Improvement Journey: [SEND Improvement Plan](#)

Other strategies this one links to

In Hertfordshire there are many services and organisations supporting all children and young people, and often supporting the same or similar groups of children and young people.

It is important to consider other strategies which support children and young people. The following have been reviewed to ensure our ambitions align:

[County Council Plan for Children and Young People \(2026-2031\)](#)

[Hertfordshire & West Essex Integrated Care Board Medium Term Plan](#)

[NHS 2025/26 priorities and operational planning guidance](#)

[Hertfordshire Early Help Strategy \(2022-2026\)](#)

[Hertfordshire School Improvement Strategy \(2021 – 2026\)](#)

[Hertfordshire Carers Strategy \(2022 – 2025\)](#)

[Adult Social Care Strategy \(2018 – 2033\)](#)

[Hertfordshire Sensory Strategy \(2025-2028\)](#)

[Hertfordshire All-Age Autism Strategy \(2025-2030\)](#)

