

Blackburn with Darwen Council

Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND) Strategy

2017 – 2020

DRAFT

Introduction

This strategy has been developed with the help of Blackburn with Darwen families. The purpose of this strategy is to set out how Blackburn with Darwen Council, Blackburn with Darwen' Clinical Commissioning Group and 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.

The commitment of stakeholders to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND and their families demonstrates a real strength of partnership across agencies. By further developing these existing partnerships, joint planning and delivery of services that are co-produced with children, young people and their families, we are confident that Blackburn with Darwen is a place where children and young people with SEND will have every opportunity to:

- learn and achieve with the right support from early years through to further education/training
- live independently in their own community
- secure employment that meets individual aspirations and skills
- feel safe in their community
- access health services and guidance
- access short breaks and respite
- participate in society and contribute to their communities

Context

On the 1st September 2014 the Children and Families Act came into effect. Part 3 of the Act introduced significant reforms. These reforms placed new duties on Local Authorities (LAs), Clinical Commissioning Groups and their partners, for how services and support are developed and delivered for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND).

The overarching objective is to secure the best outcomes for children and young people with SEND to support them to achieve well in their early years, at school and at college and lead happy and fulfilled lives.

The key principles that underpin these reforms include the requirement of LAs and their partners to have regard to:

- the views, wishes and feelings of the child or young person, and the child's parents
- the importance of the child or young person, and the child's parents, participating as fully as possible in decisions, and being provided with the information and support necessary to enable participation in those decisions
- the need to support the child or young person, and the child's parents, in order to facilitate the development of the child or young person and to help them achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes and effectively preparing them for adulthood

To ensure reforms are being effectively implemented a SEND inspection programme has been introduced. Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) are tasked with jointly providing an independent external evaluation of how well a local area effectively carries out and meets its statutory responsibilities in relation to children and young people with SEND.

What stakeholders, including families, have told us?

The content of this strategy has been shaped by a programme of engagement activities that were designed to ensure this Local Area SEND Strategy was genuinely coproduced with stakeholders and reflects the views of our local community.

Families have made it clear that they want tailored support, that is delivered at the right time by professionals who 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 transparent. Families feel that the offer of education and enrichment activities post 16 is limited where there is no clear pathway to employment.

Families have highlighted that transition from children's to adults' services is an area of concern that worries them the most. The Local Authority acknowledges these concerns and has set this as a key priority to be addressed as part of this strategy.

Professionals across the local area have said they would welcome a programme of workforce development. This would need to help them to meet the challenges of a multi-agency approach in a changing environment, supported by improved information sharing and communication systems.

The strategic priorities within this strategy have been designed to address the areas stakeholders have identified as important to them.

Our Vision for Blackburn with Darwen

Blackburn with Darwen Council and Clinical Commissioning Group are committed to working with partners to support children and young people with SEND and their families to realise our vision that families will live ordinary lives wherever possible within their local community.

Priorities

1. Involve all key stakeholders, including children and young people with SEND and their families, in strategic decision making and service developments to ensure provision is coproduced to provide best value and to meets the needs of families locally
2. Remove barriers to support successful preparation for adulthood, including independent living, employment, participation in society and contributing to the community
3. Ensure effective early identification of SEND to secure appropriate support at the earliest opportunity
4. Ensuring family expertise, understanding and strategies for supporting the needs of their child influences policies and practice within education, care and health to improve inclusion, attainment and well-being
5. Develop clear and transparent eligibility and funding criteria that is effectively communicated to all stakeholders through our local offer
6. Plan effective transition between education, health and social care from early years to adulthood, ensuring that information and strategies to support children and young people are communicated effectively to professionals involved in each phase of transition
7. Expand the range and choice of provision for young people from the age of 16 years to enable young people to access a range of quality opportunities in safe and supportive environments in partnership with education/training providers and employers

8. Strengthen our joint commissioning arrangements between the local authority and the CCG to enable children and young people's needs to be met locally wherever possible
9. Commitment to personalisation of our systems, processes and professional practice, to ensure that services and support are funded and tailored to the individual needs of our children and young people
10. Develop our workforce to ensure they are knowledgeable, competent and confident to effectively communicate, empathise, and support children and young people with SEND and their families
11. Continuous improvement of the local offer to provide families with detailed information on services and support that is available for them
12. Improve communication channels to support effective and secure information sharing between professionals
13. Promote inclusive practices in education settings to ensure children and young people with SEND have full access to the whole range of opportunities available within the setting

Who is responsible for implementing the strategy?

- Blackburn with Darwen Council (including: Children's Social Care, Schools & Education, Adult Social Care and Public Health)
- Blackburn with Darwen Clinical Commissioning Group
- East Lancashire Hospitals Trust
- Lancashire Care Foundation Trust
- Blackburn with Darwen Parents in Partnership
- The voluntary and community sector
- Blackburn with Darwen Housing Providers
- Blackburn with Darwen Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice & Support Service

We will address our priorities by:

- Communicating and listening to the views of children and young people with SEND and their families and acting on them wherever possible
- Involving children and young people with SEND and their families in decision making
- Improving planning for transition to adulthood
- Strengthening joint commissioning of services between the Council and CCG
- Developing the SEND workforce
- Refining the education, health and care planning process
- Developing more robust communication systems and information sharing
- Ensuring eligibility and access to services/support is clearly set out in our Local Offer
- Continual development of our Local Offer
- Robust systems for early diagnosis/identification
- Continual review of the SEND provision across Blackburn with Darwen
- Promoting personalisation and person centred approaches

Reporting & Governance

Blackburn with Darwen Children's Partnership Board (CPB) has oversight of this area. The CPB is a formal sub-group of the Health & Wellbeing Board, and leads on the Start Well programme area which seeks to ensure the best start for children and young people.

The CPB has six key priority areas, one of which is to ensure effectiveness of the local area in fulfilling their duties for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

A local multi-agency SEND Inspection Readiness Group meets regularly and focuses on operational issues around implementation of the SEND reforms and the connection between the SEND Code of Practice and the inspection framework. This group reports into the CPB who in turn reports to the Health & Wellbeing Board.

The Children's Partnership Board is chaired by the Director for Children's Services and membership includes the Executive Member for Children's Services.

We will know we have made a difference when:

- Young people and families tell us that they have accessed services/support without delay
- Young people and families tell us that they are listened to and that their views have been reflected in service developments
- A wider range of post 16 educational/training opportunities are made available
- Professionals confidently signpost families to appropriate services
- Local Offer consultations result in increasingly positive feedback
- Services have been jointly evaluated and commissioned
- Young people and families tell us that services and support meets their individual needs and that they feel well supported by professionals
- Professionals report that they understand their role and the role of others in supporting families
- Professionals are confident that they have the skills to effectively and sensitively engage with children, young people and families
- Young people and families tell us relationships with professionals are positive and are solution focussed
- Young people and families tell us that they are confident and happy to contribute to, and question, support decisions
- Data tells us children and young people with SEND make good progress
- A wider range of social/community activities that provide inclusive opportunities for community participation are available