

# Milton Keynes SEND Strategy 2021-2025

Caroline Marriott, Head of Special Educational Needs & Disability  
Dr Jennifer McLoughlin, Senior Leadership Educational Psychologist



milton keynes council

# Milton Keynes SEND Strategy

## 2021 – 2025

### Introduction

The Children and Families Act 2014 introduced the biggest changes to special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in a generation; a new statutory duty on the Local Authority to ensure that the views, wishes and feelings of children, young people and their parents/carers are at the centre of decision making and they are given the right support and information to ensure they can participate in decisions which help them to achieve good outcomes.

In Milton Keynes we have made good progress in implementing the reforms, and we want the many strengths of Milton Keynes, evidenced through the 2018 Joint Area Local Inspection, to be the experience of all families.

### Contents

	Page Number
Aims and Purpose of this SEND Strategy	3
Special Educational Needs	3
Vision	4
Co-Production and Communication	4
Our commitment to Inclusion in Milton Keynes	6
Strategic Priorities – overview	8
Priority Area 1: Inclusion	9
Priority Area 2: Emotional and Social Wellbeing and Mental Health	11
Priority Area 3: Complex Needs and Specialist Provision	13
Priority Area 4: Transitions and Preparing for the Future	15
Priority Area 5: Autism	17
How will we make sure this SEND Strategy is delivered?	19
How will we know if we are successful?	19
Closing Statement from the Head of SEND Services / Children’s Service Director	20

## Aims and purpose of this SEND Strategy

This document is a Local Area strategy, and its delivery is the responsibility of education, health and care services. It describes our strategic vision and the outcomes we want for our children and young people with SEND. It describes the context in which we work, the principles underlying how we work and our strategic priority areas for the next 4 years. It aims to:

- Meet the requirements of the Children and Families Act in a way that is aspirational for all children and young people
- Set out how we will work towards our vision for children and young people with SEND in Milton Keynes
- Develop the effectiveness of the Local Area in:
  - Identifying children and young people's special educational needs and/or disabilities
  - Meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND
  - Helping to deliver improved outcomes for every child and young person with SEND in Milton Keynes
- Build on areas of acknowledged strength in Milton Keynes services for children and young people with SEND
- Progress areas for development through a clear and shared focus on key Priority Areas, identified through both the 2018 inspection and our on-going partnership work
- Promote inclusion whilst being realistic in a challenging financial context

## Special Educational Needs

'SEND' stands for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. A child or young person with SEND is likely to need extra help that is additional to or different from their peers. This extra or different help is known as special educational provision.

The SEND Code of Practice 2015 gives a legal definition of Special Educational Needs (pages 15-16):

*A child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her. A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she:*

- *has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or*
- *has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions*

Children and young people may have needs in one or more broad areas of need and these can change over time:

- Communication and Interaction
- Cognition and Learning
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health
- Sensory / Physical

Young people aged 14 and over may have needs which impact on their ability to prepare for their futures, and the Preparing for Adulthood Outcomes Framework is a useful tool to consider special educational needs in four areas relating to the transition to adulthood:

- Employment
- Independent Living
- Community Inclusion
- Good Health

Most children and young people will have their needs identified and met at an early stage and they will access support through their school or setting (this is called SEN Support). Children and young people with the most significant needs will have an Educational, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The EHCP is statutory and sets out clearly the child or young person's SEN, along with the provision they need to help them overcome the barriers to learning that their needs present.

## Vision

Our strategic vision statement was co-produced during a remotely delivered workshop with parent representatives and key partners from across education, health and care:

*Together we support and empower children and young people with SEND to live well, learn well, and lead happy and fulfilling lives.*

A key aspect of this vision statement, which was felt to encompass the Milton Keynes approach to working in the best interests of our children and young people with SEND, was the word *'together'*. Partners in the workshop felt that the word *'together'* also reflected a key aspiration for this SEND Strategy, which is to develop parental confidence in the local area and across all agencies who work with their children and young people.

## Co-Production

Co-production is defined as 'doing with', in an equal and reciprocal partnership. It is an equal relationship between the people who use services and the people responsible for services. They work together, from design to delivery, sharing strategic decision-making about policies as well as decisions about the best way to deliver services.

In Milton Keynes we are committed to working together with parents and young people to develop our co-production approach in both individual plans and support as well as service and strategic developments. We know that there are many barriers to true co-production, such as time pressures, restrictive systems, differing expectations and understanding of systems and agencies, tensions stemming from perceived power imbalances and so on. However, we also know that co-production has many benefits, not only of improving the experience for all involved in SEND but also ultimately in leading to greater effectiveness through a better 'fit' of services offered which are available to meet the needs and expectations of families. The intention is that this SEND Strategy, through an annual reviewing cycle, will become fully co-produced with all stakeholders.

Our co-production values aim to be a 'golden thread' running through all SEND Strategy activities and are integral to our partnership working across education, health and care. These values are a commitment to:

- Hear all voices and value all expertise, perspectives and experience
- Be open to new ideas and flexible approaches
- Work honestly and transparently in the best interests of our children and young people
- Work together from the start, communicate clearly and share information where needed

In practice, recognising the barriers that exist to co-production and working towards our 'golden thread' values, we will adopt an approach in Milton Keynes where we work towards true co-production. We will aim to:

- Identify key people and services/organisations and develop partnerships, systems and processes that support co-production
- Build common ground and shared language within and between key people, services/organisations and partnerships
- Co-explore needs and barriers
- Co-develop and then co-deliver solutions wherever possible
- Evaluate and adapt

We believe that this approach in working towards co-production will develop processes and services which are:

- Relationship-driven so that barriers and challenges can be addressed, and solutions found together
- Developed using first-hand experiences
- Fit for purpose
- Meeting needs
- Accessible
- Evaluated using feedback from those who use the services

## Effective Communication

In Milton Keynes we are striving to ensure that we develop and use effective communication skills and strategies with children and young people, their families, with schools/settings and with the wide range of services, agencies and organisations we work with who support our children and young people. Throughout the development and implementation of this SEND Strategy, we intend to offer training events, workshops and other means of communication about Inclusion and the other Priority Areas outlined in this document. Through these communications, we aim to promote and develop our shared ethos and commitment to disadvantaged/vulnerable learners, minority ethnic groups and those with SEND.

## Our commitment to Inclusion in Milton Keynes

In developing this SEND Strategy, it became apparent that a commitment to inclusion for children and young people with SEND in Milton Keynes should be an integral aspect of all Priority Areas within this SEND Strategy. In 2018, children and young people with SEND from across Milton Keynes took part in a workshop exploring what 'inclusion' meant to them. Through this exploration of inclusion and sharing their own experiences of being and feeling included and/or excluded, those children and young people developed a set of 'stepping-stones' that would need to be achieved in order to lead to an experience of inclusion.

Over the course of several workshop sessions the SEND Strategy working group explored how to meaningfully include the work of those children and young people within this SEND Strategy, and from those 'Stepping-Stones to Inclusion', a commitment to inclusion was developed for all agencies to adopt, as set out on the following page.

## Our Commitment to Inclusion:

*From their earliest years, we will support children and young people with SEND to enjoy and achieve and prepare for their future*

Celebrate my **success** so that I feel confident, capable and ready

Don't underestimate me, have high **expectations** of me so that I feel like I can reach my potential

Give me opportunities to speak and **communicate** to me so that I feel heard and valued

Always give me the **opportunity** to be included, but don't force me, so that I feel at **ease** and can **enjoy** myself

**Get to know me** and what I like so that I feel recognised

Make sure I get **encouragement** from people who I trust and who don't judge me so that I feel supported

Make **adjustments** for me so that I feel included and as independent as possible

## Strategic Priorities

To support the delivery of our strategic vision and demonstrate our commitment to inclusion, key priority areas have been identified and co-produced within the SEND Strategy working group and were taken to the Additional Needs Strategy Group Board for final agreement.





## Priority Area 1: Inclusion

We will ensure that there is a commitment to inclusion amongst all our services and support for children, young people with SEN/D, their families and their schools/settings, and that there is effective communication about the importance of adopting inclusive principles in practice.



**We are working towards these outcomes:**

1. There is a commitment from all services, support agencies, schools and settings to ensuring they engage in inclusive practice through their knowledge and understanding of:
  - a. the SEND Strategy Commitment to Inclusion
  - b. the HI and VI Outcomes Frameworks used across Milton Keynes to support children and young people with sensory impairments
2. There is a focus on ensuring ease and timeliness of access to support and services at all ages and stages for children and young people with SEND to ensure they continue to feel included
3. Across all services, support agencies, schools, settings, parents and carers, there is a clear understanding and application of the graduated approach to identification of and response to need. This will ensure that children and young people with SEN/D do not feel underestimated but have appropriate and timely adjustments made for and with them, so that they feel included. To achieve this there will need to be a clear communication strategy across education, health and care about the importance of inclusion and how embedding inclusive principles in everyday work with children and young people with SEND supports their development and promotes achievement and enjoyment
4. There is a clear system in place for monitoring and evaluating progress towards embedding inclusive principles across education, health and care services, so that appropriate assessment and tracking of educational progress and achievement takes place.

**To achieve these outcomes, we will:**

Action Reference	Inclusion – Strategic Actions
I1	Demonstrate commitment, across Education, Health and Care services, to inclusion and inclusive principles through knowledge, understanding, use and review of the SEND Strategy Commitment to Inclusion and the HI and VI Outcomes Frameworks
I2	Develop structures and processes in services and settings which ensure that access to support is timely and appropriate
I3	Promote and develop the Milton Keynes Graduated Approach to early identification of and response to SEND including improving the consistency and quality of SEND support across ages and stages, and improve communication about the importance of inclusive principles and practice to ensure the inclusion of all children and young people with SEND across education, health and care, through use of effective communication strategies, training events and workshops on inclusion that promote a shared ethos and commitment to disadvantaged/vulnerable learners, minority ethnic groups and those with SEND
I4	Ensure robust quality assurance and evaluation processes are in place across education, health and care services, and that information from monitoring and review is used to foster and promote the development of inclusive practice, so that appropriate assessment and tracking of educational progress and achievement takes place.

## Priority Area 2: Emotional and Social Wellbeing and Mental Health

We will ensure that children and young people enjoy positive mental health, emotional and social wellbeing and feel a sense of connectedness and belonging within their local communities.



**We are working towards these outcomes:**

1. There is a consistent offer of mental health and wellbeing services across education, health and care within Milton Keynes
2. Children and young people with SEND receive the right level of support at the right time from Education, Health and Social Care providers
3. There is an emphasis on developing and promoting preventative whole school and community approaches to wellbeing and resilience, as well as provision of training and workshop events to upskill both professionals and families in looking after their emotional wellbeing and mental health
4. Early identification for children and young people with mental health needs is possible through development and effective use of clear, graduated pathways
5. A range of intervention options is available for children and young people with SEND which provide opportunities to start to address identified emotional, social and mental health needs

**To achieve these outcomes, we will:**

Action Reference	Emotional and Social Wellbeing and Mental Health – Strategic Actions
WMH1	Ensure a consistent offer to all children and young people with SEND across Education, Health and Care
WMH2	Develop clear processes to ensure that children and young people with SEND, and their families, receive the right support at the right time, so that children and young people are enabled to both access and successfully engage with education and make progress, OR so that their mental health does not negatively impact their access to and engagement with education
WMH3	Develop and promote preventative whole school approaches to wellbeing and building resilience
WMH4	Develop clear, graduated pathways of early identification for emotional and social wellbeing and mental health, including development of a pathway of graduated support for children and young people experiencing emotionally based reasons for avoiding school (EBSA)
WMH5	Offer a range of early intervention options to support children and young people start to address emotional and social wellbeing and mental health needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide training and workshops for schools, settings, parents, carers and children and young people to raise awareness and develop knowledge, understanding and skills in looking after emotional wellbeing and mental health</li></ul>

### Priority Area 3: Complex Needs and Specialist Provision

We will effectively and efficiently meet the needs of children and young people with the most complex needs, whilst ensuring they remain engaged with their local community wherever possible and appropriate.



**We are working towards these outcomes:**

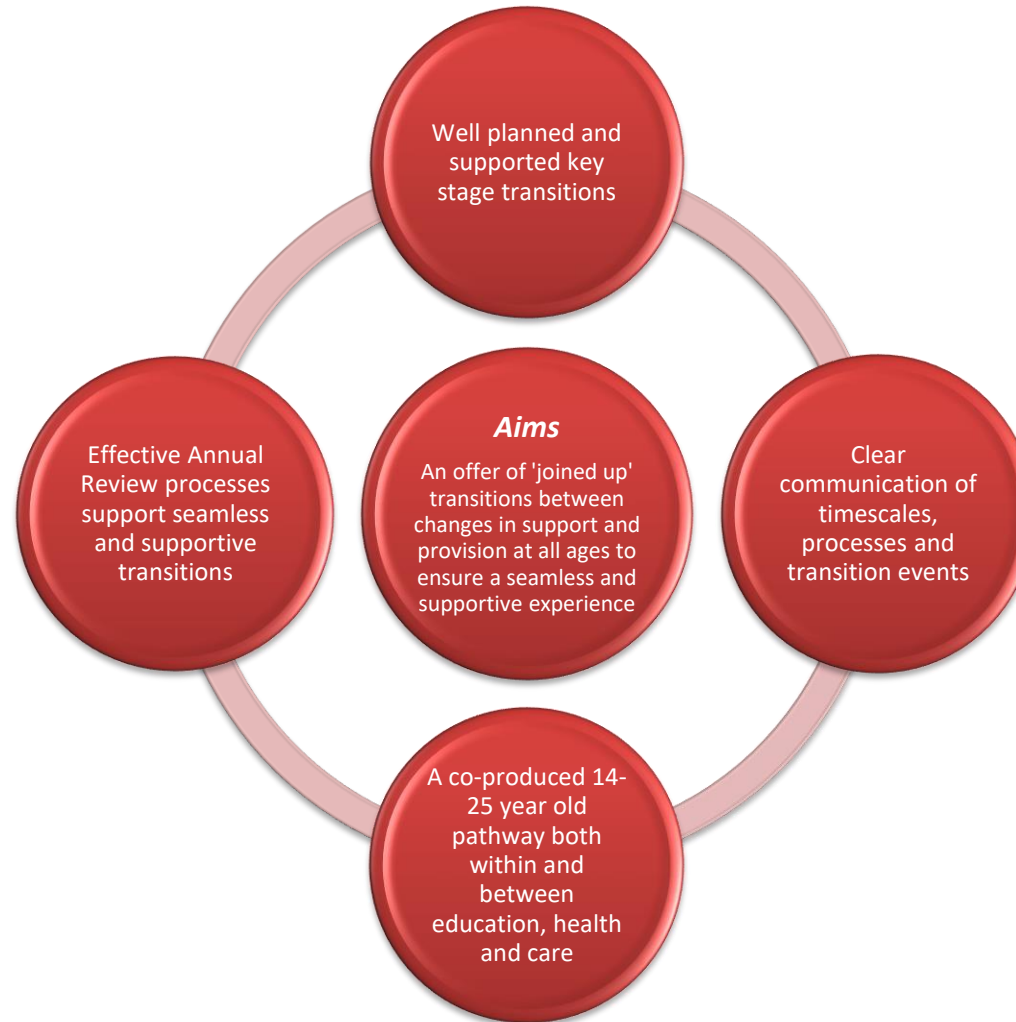
1. Having a clear commissioning and place planning strategy to ensure that the right provision is available at the right time for all children and young people with complex needs.
2. Having a clear, accessible, local offer of support for children and young people with complex needs and their families.
3. Actively supporting children and young people to be close to home wherever possible, including preventing in-patient admissions away from the local area and through building creative, bespoke packages of education and care with existing local specialist providers of education and care
4. Having clear policies and guidance in place to monitor, manage and review the support of children and young people who miss school for health reasons; children and young people missing in education effectively using the CETR process for those children and young people where this is appropriate.

**To achieve these outcomes, we will:**

Action Reference	Complex Needs and Specialist Provision – Strategic Actions
CNSP1	Ensure robust place planning across Education, Health and Care for children and young people with complex needs
CNSP2	Develop a local offer of support which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaging and working with all schools and settings to ensure they take responsibility for children and young people in their area and in their care and ensure that their needs are holistically met and can make progress towards their agreed outcomes</li> <li>• Ensuring there is a skilled SEND and complex needs workforce and leadership across mainstream and specialist provision</li> <li>• Seeking understanding, through feedback on the views and experiences of children and young people with complex needs and their families who are living within the multiple systems of education, health and care, and use their knowledge, experience and perspective to improve our offer to children and young people with complex needs</li> </ul>
CNSP3	Build links and relationships with local specialist providers of education and care so that bespoke packages of care in the local community can be developed
CNSP4	Work in partnership so we can respond to children and young people in crisis in a timely and effective way
CNSP5	Work with relevant partners within Milton Keynes Council to ensure allocation of funding is appropriate to need and development of specialist provision within Milton Keynes
CNSP6	Co-produce, maintain, monitor and review policies and guidance which enable the active support and management of the needs of particular groups of children and young people, such as those with medical needs who cannot attend school for periods of time, and children and young people who are missing in education or only receiving part-time education etc.

## Priority Area 4: Transitions and Preparing for the Future

We will ensure that we offer 'joined up' transitions between changes in support and provision for children and young people of all ages, where different agencies / services work in partnership to ensure a seamless and supportive experience.



**We are working towards these outcomes:**

1. Transition for children and young people with SEND going into reception, secondary schools and further education or training will be well planned and supported wherever needed
2. Clear, well-communicated timescales and events for transitions so that expectations can be managed effectively
3. A 14-25 co-produced pathway that includes Education, Health and Care will be in place, recognising the different ages of transitions for different services and the need for a range of opportunities for young people in relation to community inclusion and participation; support for employment and development of independence
4. A commitment from Education, Health and Care to engage in EHCP Annual Review processes fully and effectively to support positive transitions, and provision of training and development to all services to develop knowledge and skills in this area

**To achieve these outcomes, we will:**

Action Reference	Transitions and preparing for the future – Strategic Actions
TPF1	Effective transition planning between schools/settings and in collaboration with SEND Services where appropriate; gap analysis of where services and provision are more limited; co-ordinated processes and planning of transitions through known gaps such as 16 to 18 year-old provision; support for children and young people with autism during transitions; transition into employment; transition to Higher Education etc.
TPF2	Development of parent/carer and child / young person guidance, fact sheets, event webpages, Local Offer pages, Facebook page and other methods of communication to support transition stages in education, health and care and manage expectations sensitively
TPF3	Continue to develop a multi-agency approach and pathway to co-ordinate education, health and care transitions between 14 and 25 years old, which includes gaining views of young people and their families so that their lived experiences drive forward improvements in transitions support (a 'you said, we did' approach)
TPF4	Development of effective use of Preparing for Adulthood paperwork within SEN Support Plans, EHC Plans and Annual Review processes, including emphasis on value of having detailed health and care information and support of health and care colleagues at appropriate times

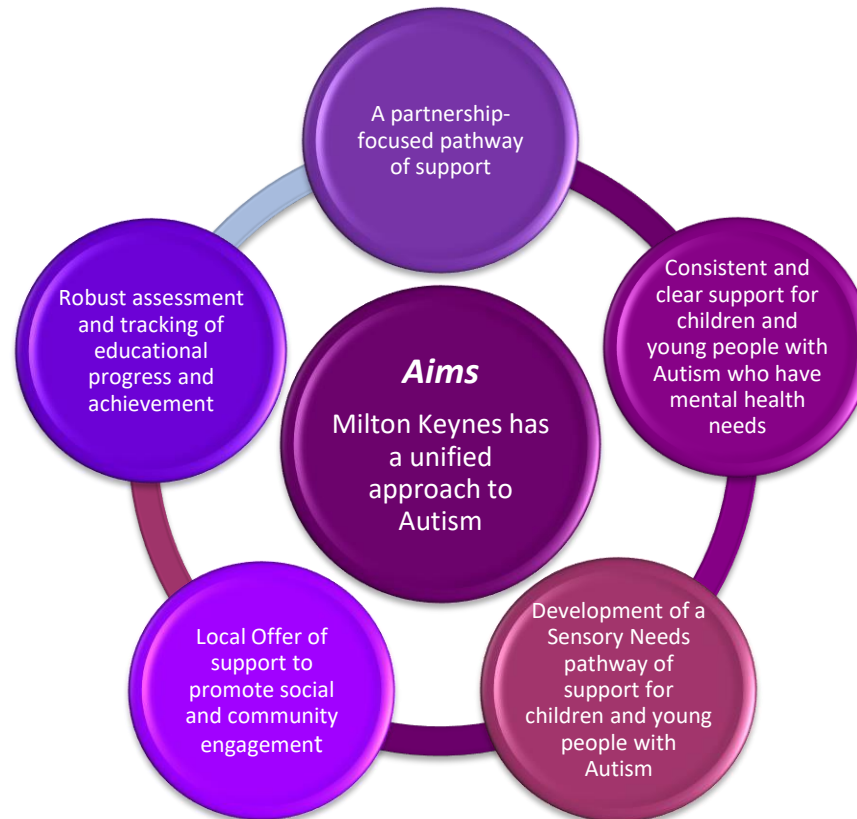


## Priority Area 5: Autism

Autism has been identified as a Priority Area within the SEND Strategy for the following reasons:

- A high number of children and young people being diagnosed with ASC
- Increasing demand in services and support for children, young people and families, post-diagnosis
- As the demands for services rise, there is an increasingly urgent need to identify and address gaps in service and provision.

The aim through this Priority Area is that Milton Keynes will have a unified, partnership approach to Autism in which children, young people, families and schools/settings receive consistency and cohesion in the delivery of services for Autism, from early identification, through to diagnosis, post-diagnostic support and community engagement.



**We are working towards these outcomes:**

1. There will be a clearly communicated, partnership-focused pathway of support for all children and young people (aged 0-25 years) with autism from early signs to post-diagnostic support, which additionally addresses the more specific needs of girls with autism, so that every child/young person can both access and engage meaningfully with their education and make progress towards fulfilling their potential
2. There will be a commitment from Education, Health and Care to a consistent, supportive approach to identifying and managing the mental health needs of children and young people with autism
3. We will have a Sensory Needs pathway which provides resources and services to children, young people, families, and schools/settings
4. There will be a Local Offer of support for children and young people with autism to support their community engagement where possible

**To achieve these outcomes, we will:**

Action Reference	Autism – Strategic Actions
A1	Develop pathway of support (0-25 years) across education, health and care services which includes a graduated approach of signposting, information and advice, assessment, intervention planning and support, diagnosis and post-diagnosis, which is delivered in line with best practice (i.e. assessment over time), but offers timely support along the way, including parent/carer training and training for professionals from education, health and care. This should include consideration of how best to support the needs of girls with Autism and those aged 16-25 with Autism and should identify the support needed to ensure that all children and young people with autism are enabled to access and engage successfully with education
A2	Build links between SEND Services, CAMHS and other local mental health service providers to develop an approach to supporting the mental health needs of children and young people with Autism who experience mental health difficulties
A3	Co-production and delivery of a Sensory Needs pathway of support for children and young people with Autism who experience sensory difficulties as part of their autism
A4	Development of the Local Offer to include an Autism specific directory as well as a suite of options available to support leisure / community participation where appropriate

## How will we make sure this SEND Strategy is delivered?

We will deliver our strategy using a workstream approach involving all key partners: parents/carers; children and young people; Education, Health and Care providers and SEND Services professionals.

Each workstream will have co-leads from Education, Health and Care. The Parents and Carers Alliance (PACA) and other parent groups will have focus groups aligned to each workstream with a named lead who will represent PACA on each workstream and act as an equal partner in the delivery of jointly developed action plans, based on the strategic actions for each priority area outlined in this document. The workstreams will meet regularly and report directly to the Additional Needs Strategy Group (ANSG). Please contact PACA if you wish to be involved in any of the focus groups: [pacamk@gmail.com](mailto:pacamk@gmail.com).

## How will we know if we have been successful?

We will evaluate our success against the differences we make to the lives of our children and young people with SEND. Progress against the strategic actions within each priority area workstream will be monitored and scrutinised by the ANSG. Specifically, the ANSG will look at a range of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) developed within the Priority Area Working Groups and workstreams, including both qualitative and quantitative data from:

- A cycle of multi-agency audits of the quality of Education, Health and Care Plans, SEN Support Plans and Annual Review paperwork
- Feedback from parents, carers, children, and young people on services and processes they have experienced (through use of surveys, workshops, focus groups, consultation, conferences and other views and opinions posted on the Local Offer and Facebook page)
- Feedback on service structure, capacity, processes, and experiences from practitioners across education, health and care who work to support children and young people with SEND and their families.

This data will be considered in conjunction with our Commitment to Inclusion, to ensure that we have at the heart of our discussions and decisions the hopes and aspirations of the children and young people with SEND in Milton Keynes.

Progress and development of the SEND Strategy will require effective communication with all partners. There will need to be a clear communication strategy including the planning of channels and regularity of communication, and opportunities for review and feedback from key partners (i.e. training and workshops; SEND/SENCO meetings; Local Offer; Facebook page; priority area workstream working groups and methods of data collection, collation and reporting etc.). To provide feedback or questions in relation to this SEND Strategy document and the working groups focusing on the Priority Areas, please email: [Local.offer.feedback@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:Local.offer.feedback@milton-keynes.gov.uk) with the subject header: 'SEND Strategy', and your email will be directed to the person most appropriate to answer.

This strategy has set out the vision and priority areas in pursuing high aspirations for all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities both in terms of their lived experience but in their outcomes, progress and achievements.

This strategy is being delivered with the context of a growing city, with an increasing number of children and young people being identified with SEND Support needs, an increasing number of EHCP's and a growing demand for services. Developments and progress across all priority areas will only be achieved through genuine partnerships and co-production. All partner's will need to be relentless in their determination to improve experiences and outcomes for all children, young people and their families.

**Special Educational Needs and Disability**  
**Milton Keynes Council**  
**Civic**  
**1 Saxon Gate East**  
**Central Milton Keynes**  
**MK9 3EJ**

