



Wakefield SEND Strategy 2026-2028



Introduction

Wakefield Families Together is an umbrella term to describe our partnership that brings services together, to join up how we work, so that it's easier for everyone to find and access support when they need it, at the earliest opportunity. All partners are committed to the Children & Young People's vision and are ambitious in how it is shaped, designed, developed and delivered. This Strategy sets out how the partnership will work to transform the whole system of Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND), to ensure all families and partners know where to have one conversation to get to the right service with the right offer.

Our equal partnership with parents, children and young people is central to our ambition to ensure, through a well-informed, flexible, empathetic approach we meet most special educational needs in local mainstream schools. Where mainstream schools are not deemed appropriate to meet the needs of children and young people, we will create more local special school places.

Building on extensive consultation our focus will be to further develop and implement:

- **Inclusive practises:** so that children and young people with SEND have their needs met
- **Reasonable adjustments** in our work with schools and partners to build confidence and reduce demand for specialist provision
- **SEND training** for school staff and the wider early help workforce to provide and deliver on a curriculum that meets need.
- **Clearer information and navigation support for families:** We will work with Best Start Family Hubs to deliver SEND navigation support.

Children and young people have told us they want to feel listened to, included and understood—whether they have a diagnosis or not. They want the right support to get a good education, have meaningful friendships, develop independence and feel safe in their communities. These messages are at the heart of our strategy.

Statutory context

This Strategy builds on the foundations laid by the previous SEND Strategy (2021–2024) and aligns with:

- The Children and Families Act 2014
- The SEND Code of Practice (2015)
- The Equality Act 2010
- The SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan (DfE, 2023)

We are also responding to Ofsted/CQC area SEND inspection feedback, our self-evaluation and extensive consultation with children, young people, parents, carers and professionals across Wakefield.



Looking back at the 2021-2024 SEND strategy and what we achieved together

Over the past four years, Wakefield's SEND Strategy has set out a clear vision: for children and young people with SEND to be happy, healthy, and safe, thriving in communities where families and services work together to help them reach their potential. This ambition has been underpinned by a strong partnership approach, with the SEND Strategic Partnership Board overseeing progress and ensuring that the voices of children, young people, and their families are central to decision-making.



Successes against the strategy have been significant

The Local Offer has become more visible and accessible, with increased champions and improved communication between partners and families. The Wakefield Families Together model has been embedded across SEND services, strengthening joint commissioning and integrated working.

Emotional and mental wellbeing has been a priority, and pathways for emotional and mental health support are now clearer, with options for self-referral and a more integrated offer across universal and specialist services. The development of a 0–18 pathway for ASD diagnosis is a notable achievement, and there are plans to expand this further.

Needs-based support and provision have also improved. Integrated working between education, health, early help, and social care has been strengthened, and specialist services have been redesigned to have greater impact. Robust processes for early identification of needs are in place, and educational outcomes for children at SEN Support or with EHCPs have improved, with regular strategic reviews and quality assurance audits helping to maintain high standards.

Efforts to reduce exclusions and improve attendance have been supported by the Strengthening Inclusion project and early intervention using the Wakefield Families Together model. Data collection and analysis have improved, enabling more targeted support and challenge. The development of a continuum of inclusion support and a core training offer for all settings has helped to ensure consistency of inclusive practice.

Transitions and preparing for adulthood have been a particular focus, with effective identification of SEND across all education phases and guidance for transitions now embedded. Preparing for Adulthood outcomes are considered from Year 9 onwards, and there are strong links with Further Education providers and the NEET strategic board to support young people into employment, independence, and community participation.

The response to Covid-19 has been proactive, with positive elements of service delivery captured and embedded into future models. Technology has been used to improve efficiency and impact, and commissioned services have been adapted to meet increased demands. Closer strategic links and communication channels with partners have been maintained, ensuring a joined-up approach to recovery.

A culture of learning and continuous improvement has been fostered, with increased strategic influence of parents and carers, creative ways to capture the voice of children and young people, and engagement in peer reviews and best practice sharing both locally and regionally.

Despite these successes, there are areas that remain in development

There is ongoing work to further reduce gaps in services, particularly for older age groups and at key transition points. The expansion of neurodevelopmental pathways, including conditions such as FASD, is a priority. Ensuring consistent inclusive practice across all settings requires continued development of training and support, and further work is needed to refine outcome measures, especially for emotional wellbeing and Preparing for Adulthood outcomes.

Supporting transitions to adulthood remains a challenge, with a need for continued focus on mapping and supporting pathways into employment, independent living, and community participation. Co-production with parents, carers, and young people is being strengthened, with efforts to widen their strategic influence and embed their voices in service design and evaluation. Regular audits and reviews continue to be essential to maintaining high standards and effective support across all services.

In summary, Wakefield's SEND Strategy has delivered improvements in provision and outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The partnership approach, focus on inclusion, and commitment to continuous improvement have driven progress, but there remains important work to do to ensure that every child and young person with SEND can thrive and achieve their potential.

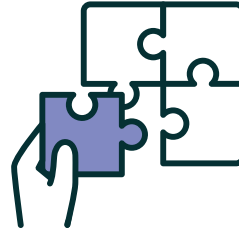


Our level of need is

Wakefield SEND Statistics Nov 2025



4,111
TOTAL EHCPs



7,662
TOTAL SEN
SUPPORT

Breakdown of need for EHCP

Primary Need	Count
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	1,397
Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)	1,295
Social, Emotional and Mental Health	660
Severe Learning Difficulty (SLD)	261
Physical Disability (PD)	138
Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD)	93
Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulty (PMLD)	65
Visual Impairment (VI)	65
Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD)	61
Hearing Impairment (HI)	55
Multi-Sensory Impairment (MSI)	3
Down Syndrome (DS)	4

Our SEND Offer is designed to ensure children and young people aged 0–25 with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive the right support at the right time. The Local Offer acts as a central hub, bringing together information on education, health, social care, and community services, alongside guidance for families and practitioners. It promotes early identification, inclusive practice, and co-production with parents and carers, while signposting to resources such as Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), short breaks, and preparing for adulthood pathways. This joined-up approach reflects Wakefield’s commitment to improving outcomes through strong partnerships and accessible, transparent information. Families can explore the full range of services and support via Wakefield’s Local Offer website.



WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE OVER THE NEXT 2 YEARS



Our Education – Support in Schools

Our Ambition is to ensure inclusive, high-quality education for all children and young people with SEND, with the right support in the right place at the right time.

We will do this by

- Investing in inclusive practice and quality first teaching across all schools
- Expanding SEND training for teaching staff, SENCOs and school support staff
- Increasing access to in-school support and develop the Local Inclusion Support Offer (LISO)
- Strengthening accountability and oversight of EHCP provision and delivery
- Creating more special school and alternative provision places in line with sufficiency planning.
- Promoting a graduated response and early intervention approach before escalation
- Improving communication between schools, parents and professionals across the partnership

Children and young people told us

I want teachers who understand me and know how to help.

Schools need to do more to stop bullying and help us feel safe.



Our Health – Better Support for Families

Our Ambition is to work in joined-up ways across education, health and care to ensure that families are supported from the earliest possible stage.

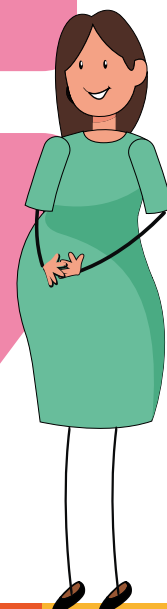
We will do this by

- Providing clearer information and navigation support so families can easily access services.
- Developing clearer pathways for children without a formal diagnosis
- Addressing the needs of neurodiverse children and young people without requiring a formal diagnosis.
- Making it easy to access emotional wellbeing and mental health support
- Enhancing short break options and support for parent carers
- Working with health services to ensure consistent and proactive medical support is provide

Parents and carers told us

We need early support, not just when we reach crisis.

It shouldn't take a diagnosis for our children to get the help they need.





Our Safety & Feeling Loved – Belonging and Better Communication

Our Ambition is to ensure every child and young person feels safe, valued and included in their community.

We will do this by

- Strengthening anti-bullying policies and practice in all schools
- Identifying and supporting children and young people at the earliest opportunity when SEND is suspected and implement support and reasonable adjustments promptly.
- Strengthening responses to safeguarding for children with SEND
- Expanding inclusive social and recreational opportunities, including during school holidays
- Improving clarity and timeliness of information through the Local Offer and targeted communications
- Using Family Voice to hold services to account and help us to co-design improvement.

Children and young people told us

I want to be treated like everyone else. I'm not a monster.

School just ignored the threats. I didn't feel safe.



Our Futures – Moving On

Our Ambition is to ensure smooth, well-planned transitions into adulthood with access to education, employment and independent living.

We will do this by

- Starting preparation for adulthood early (from Year 9 or earlier)
- Developing post-16 and post-18 pathways including college, employment and supported internships
- Working with adult services to ensure consistent handover and ongoing support
- Working with housing, community access and social inclusion services to improve services
- Increasing young people's voice and involvement in planning their own future
- Developing resources and training around SEND awareness for all who work or volunteer with children and young people, along with awareness for children and young people themselves.

Children and young people told us

Help me live by myself and support my family.

I want a job, friends and to feel like I belong.



Delivery and Accountability

How will we know we are making a difference?

- By setting measurable targets across key new priority areas and continuing targets show that we are improving.
- Our annual Report to families, schools and the public will show the progress made and data will support this.
- Our governance and quality assurance system will have embedded children, young people and parents lived experience and informed improvements.
- Our SEND developments will be aligned to other Wakefield strategies (e.g. Belonging, Early Help, Inclusion) to join up the SEND system of support.
- The Wakefield Parent Carer Forum and local services will tell us our partnership has strengthened.

Conclusion

This strategy is not just a document—it is a commitment to action, change and shared responsibility. Together, we will create a Wakefield where all children and young people with SEND can thrive.

This strategy will be reviewed bi-annually and updated in partnership with children, young people, families and professionals.

The Children's Health Service App

To get the latest information, advice and local support from Wakefield Families Together direct to your mobile phone download the Children's Health Service App.

www.hdff.nhs.uk/services/childrens-services/wakefield-0-19-service

