



Wakefield Joint Commissioning Framework 2026-2028

*Supporting Wakefield Early Help Partnership Strategy,
Wakefield Early Years Strategy and Wakefield SEND Strategy*



Wakefield District
Health & Care
Partnership

wakefieldcouncil

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.

To support our strong partnership we have structures, systems and processes in place to enable joint commissioning. These arrangements allow us to work together to design, fund, procure and deliver services that improve outcomes for children and young people.

How We Approach Joint Commissioning

In Wakefield we have strong partnerships that underpin our approach to joint commissioning arrangements. Since 2021 Wakefield has had a Children's Alliance to bring together commissioners and providers of children's health and care services. The arrangements for the Children's Alliance mean that we approach joint commissioning creatively and explore which model will deliver the best outcomes for children.

Our work together falls into three broad categories:

- Joint commissioning where a pooled budget funds a jointly developed specification
- Co-designed and aligned pathways
- The development of shared resources

Wakefield Children's Alliance

An integrated approach based on trust, collaboration and innovation

Aligning strategies to simplify, streamline, unblock systems and processes across different pathways

More responsive to need at an earlier point in the journey of the child

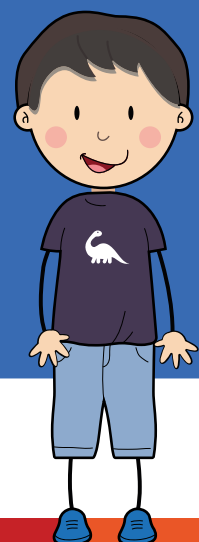
Remove service overlap/duplication, respond to gaps and join up provision

Provide effective, seamless and accessible commissioning and provider delivery

Better use of collective resources

Work together to achieve joint positive outcomes for children and young people

[Watch the Wakefield Children's Alliance video](#)





How Joint Commissioning Decisions Are Made?

The Children's Alliance will identify challenges and opportunities that require a partnership response to create the best solution. Partners will come together to design the right pathway to meet needs and improve outcomes for children.

Where a change in service or funding is required to align with the pathway, or deliver something new, this proposal will be considered at Joint Commissioning Panel. Joint Commissioning Panel also oversees funding agreements that support joint and aligned commissioning, including Section 256 and Section 75 agreements.



What Our Joint Commissioning Approach Has Delivered 2023-26

SENDIASS

The SENDIASS service is a jointly funded arrangement between the Local Authority and the Integrated Care Board, agreed through the Joint Commissioning Panel process. The most recent contract was awarded in 2026 to **Family Action**. This is a four-year contract with an option to extend for a further two years. The current contract commenced on 1 April 2026 and provides families of children and young people with SEND with information, advice and guidance about available support services, in line with the Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice 2015.

Iverson Trust

The Joint Commissioning Panel has overseen the commissioning of **The Iverson Trust** (formerly known as PACE), which is a jointly funded arrangement between Wakefield Council, the Integrated Care Board and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA). The service supports parents affected by child exploitation and works across statutory and voluntary agencies, and with families, to strengthen safeguarding arrangements for children and young people at risk of exploitation outside the home.

Autism Education Trust

The Autism Education Trust (AET) is a nationally recognised programme commissioned jointly by education and health partners to build workforce confidence and capability in supporting children and young people with autism. In Wakefield, AET training is delivered as part of our inclusive practice offer, providing evidence based training, tools and accreditation pathways for practitioners across early years, schools and post 16 settings. This contributes to earlier identification, improved quality of provision and more consistent, inclusive practice across the system.

Aligned Commissioning

PINS

This was a Department of Education funded project across 2024-25 and 2025-26. The project was co-designed by the ICB and the LA. The learning from this and the redesign of Speech, language and Communication Pathways will support the Wakefield design/implementation of Experts at Hand, as a partnership approach.

Emotional Wellbeing Pathways

There is a wide breadth of support offered to support children and young people's emotional well-being from the Risk and Resilience Framework, the 0-19 service (school nursing) up to our specialist CAMHS offer and crisis support. However, the narrative through a range of feedback and complaints has been one of a disjointed service and duplication. The Children's Alliance has been able to review the offers and to work together to look at the duplication and the gaps in the provision and develop a vision which gives an aligned pathway which is moving towards a single point of contact.

Family Hub Offer

Wakefield's Family Hub offer benefits from our approach to aligned commissioning. Partners use Family Hub buildings to deliver emotional wellbeing support, appointments with a paediatrician and infant feeding support.

Whilst the commissioners of these services may be from different organisations and the providers are varied; we work together to ensure that the offer is joined-up and does not duplicate.

Our data shows that the offer from partners has increased and the number of families who access this support is also rising.

Wakefield Awareness Support Project & Family Workshops

Through ICB funding Kids have delivered a needs led support offer for families who feel at crisis (often neurodiversity is a factor) since 2020. The service has consistently evaluated positively by parents, carers and young people. Using the expertise and lived experience of neurodiversity of the local Kids service has allowed us to trial parent carer workshops on SEND and has led to the commissioning of workshops by the LA, across a range of which are associated with neurodiversity, from behaviour and communication to toileting. This aligns with a pilot project on Early Behaviour Support commissioned by the ICB.

Speech, Language & Communication Pathways

As part of our joint approach to early intervention, Wakefield is developing a Communication Champion model across education settings to build workforce capacity and support early identification of speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). Co-developed with health partners, the model aligns with the shift to an Episodes of Care approach, enabling effective triage into targeted interventions where needed while ensuring inclusive, day-to-day support is embedded within settings. This strengthens joint working, improves referral quality, and supports earlier, more effective intervention for children and young people.

Parent Carer Forum

The Parent Carer Forum (PCF) is a key strategic partner within the Wakefield SEND system, supporting co-production by ensuring the voice of parents and carers is embedded in the design, commissioning and evaluation of services. The PCF provides both support and constructive challenge, contributes to strategic decision-making forums, and delivers a range of engagement and support activities that strengthen links between families, services and the wider system, ensuring services are shaped by lived experience and responsive to local need.

Short Breaks

The Section 75 agreement between Wakefield Council & West Yorkshire ICB provides Short Breaks to children and young people across a range of needs.

Our partnership has ensured that:

- The Dynamic Purchasing System has developed – it now includes 30 providers to meet a diverse range of needs.
- Star House provides overnight short breaks to children with complex needs – we have worked together to ensure the model is efficient.
- Our Short Breaks panel supports a joint assessment of need and matches children to the right offer.

Shared Resources

Shared Data Platforms

A SEND Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) is in place and a chapter on children's emotional & mental wellbeing has been developed.

Work is continuing to create a dynamic shared view of children's health, education and care needs.

Joint Leadership

A Joint Service Director of Children's Health & Wellbeing leads on joint commissioning for the partnership. The role has been in place since 2021 and this way of working is now embedded.

Innovative Joint Funding and Delivery arrangement for Children in Care

The partnership has worked together to deliver the right sufficiency for children in care. This includes:

- Joint funding for 2-bedded residential homes
- Joint funding & delivery model for The Croft to meet the needs of children with complex needs
- Joint pathways between the Enhanced Outreach Team and the Emotional Wellbeing Team
- These arrangements are supported via a Section 256 agreement and the Complex Care Panel
- Wakefield has been able to demonstrate improved stability, engagement in education and progress to adulthood by working together to design and deliver these offers.

Joint Commissioning Priorities

Joint commissioning is a key pillar of SEND reform, driving stronger integration between local authorities, health partners and wider services to improve outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

The reforms will support the Wakefield partnership to continue working collaboratively to assess needs, plan provision, and align or pool resources to deliver a coordinated, system-wide offer.

To fulfil the ambition of the Experts at Hand model, services must be jointly commissioned within local area SEND partnerships, with both organisations acting as equal partners in planning, decision-making and delivery, supported by clear governance and accountability arrangements.

This clear direction will inform our joint commissioning priorities for the next 3 years.



SEND Reforms

The Joint Commissioning Panel will oversee the commissioning of Experts at Hand, ensuring education and health partners jointly agree the model, resources and delivery arrangements.

Supporting Neurodiverse Children

Neurodiverse children can access needs-led support in the community. They have access to a formal diagnosis if this is essential to their wellbeing and preparation for adulthood.

Single Point of Access for Emotional Wellbeing & Mental Health

The Wakefield Emotional and Mental Wellbeing offer is accessible via a single point of contact. The single point of contact will assess need and allocate children and young people to the right support first time.

Transition to Adulthood

Pathways to adult health services are in place and well understood for all children and young people who will need extra help after their 18th birthday.

Children's Alliance Performance Dashboard

There is a shared understanding of demand for children's health and wellbeing services and the impact and outcomes of the services that we provide to meet those needs. Overlapping needs are well understood.