

**All Different, All Equal:**

**A strategy to  
SEND us forward  
2021-2024**



Designed by a student from The Brier School

## 1 Introduction

Between April and July 2021, Dudley Council conducted a review of the arrangements for children and young people with special educational needs and disability (SEND). The review involved a comprehensive consultation with a range of stakeholders involving schools, parents, children and young people and other partners.

This involved open and frank discussions about what the stakeholders would like to see happening in the future for children and young people with SEND. We would like to thank everybody who was able to contribute during this especially difficult time of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Throughout the review, we learned that SEND and inclusion is an issue that inspires a tremendous level of commitment and enthusiasm which in turn generates a great deal of debate and discussion. We learned that our response to meeting the needs of our most vulnerable children must be careful, measured and informed. We also learned that there is much commitment to do better in Dudley and this enthusiasm will form the basis for expanding and developing the best of what we do.

This strategy has been developed as a result of that committed inspired debate and represents an exciting opportunity to bring about positive change for children, young people and their families. We would also like to recognise the tremendous efforts on the part of Dudley's Parent Carer Forum in shaping this strategy and look forward to continuing to work closely with them over the next few years. Young people themselves have been instrumental in helping to develop Dudley's Inclusion Charter and we are passionate about ensuring that children and young people with SEND are placed at the heart of what we do.

The strategy describes how the Council will use its resources to remove barriers to learning, ensure that children and young people will feel that their achievements are valued, that they are happy and enjoy school, lead healthy lifestyles, feel safe in their learning environments and are appropriately supported in order to achieve their full potential.

It describes how the Council will work in partnership with other agencies and the voluntary sector to achieve these aims and work collaboratively to support the needs of families who deserve our help and support.

This document sets out the priorities for change and key areas of action for the local area which will help us to achieve our goals and also includes indicators of success which will demonstrate when we have achieved them.

We would like to thank all those who have contributed to and taken part in the review and hope that you feel that the strategy is a helpful and informative document that will significantly improve arrangements for children and young people with SEND in Dudley.

Signed by:

Catherine Driscoll Director of Children's Services



Cllr Buttery Cabinet Member



## 2 The Dudley Vision and underlying principles

Following Dudley's Joint local area SEND inspection in May 2019, significant action has already been taken across the local area to improve arrangements for children and young people with SEND. This strategy builds on existing activities and identifies what has yet to be completed, what is missing and how this can be pulled together in a single coherent local strategy.

**Our vision is:**

**To ensure that every child with special needs achieves their full potential and we help them to achieve positive outcomes with improved and enriched lives.**

This will be underpinned by the following underlying principles and values:

1. Our SEND children and young people are at the heart of all our improvements
2. SEND Improvements are a Dudley Partnership wide responsibility
3. Co-Production is the default start position for all initiatives
4. Having in place a skilled, motivated and effective SEND Team at the council
5. Ensuring that we have accurate and timely data on which to base effective decisions
6. Increasing the quality and effectiveness of our SEND Support Offer
7. Increasing the number of our SEND children and young people within mainstream settings
8. Embedding the SEND Improvements into the business as usual operations environment
9. Delivering a Sustainable SEND Service and System

The Dudley Local Area SEND Partnership made up of the Council, Dudley CCG, Dudley Parent Carer Forum, NHS Health providers, schools, colleges, employees, parents and carers and children and young people are working together to deliver positive outcomes and improved lives.

As a partnership, we guarantee that we will:

- Do what we say
- Move with purpose and energy
- Treat people as we would like to be treated
- Be the best we can

**Together, we will ensure that every child achieves their potential and we will help them to achieve positive outcomes and improved lives.**

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### 3. Context

The Local Area inspection was completed by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission in July 2019 and resulted in a written statement of action for Dudley which identified the need to significantly improve arrangements for children and young people with SEN and Disability.

Partners in the Dudley local area recognise that what is currently on offer is not good enough for our most vulnerable children and their families. This strategy sets out clearly to all partners how we intend to improve and describes the part that each individual and organisation in Dudley will play in this vital programme of activity.

We are determined to use our best efforts to make things better. All partners across education, health and social care including schools and families are committed to working together through a shared, collaborative agenda which delivers positive changes through innovative approaches over the next three years.

The main priority for Dudley is to ensure that children and young people are at the very heart of what we do. We are proud of the fact that the name and brand for our new strategy “All Different... All Equal...” has been developed by our children. Young people have clearly articulated their understanding of inclusion:

**“Inclusion is about socialising, doing things and being together, it’s about friendships and being a part of something. Inclusion is involvement, it’s about everyone, and it’s an interaction.”**

**Young Person’s Inclusion Group, 2019**

#### Some key facts....

The local area makes provision for the children and young people with SEND.

In Dudley there are:

- 97,356 children and young people aged 0-24 (ONS mid 2019)
- 2,743 children and young people who have an EHC plan (as at January 2021)
- 6,576 children and young people (aged 0-18) requiring SEN Support (as at January 2021)

This strategy is concerned with improving the arrangements and meeting the needs of these children and young people.

### 4. Coproduction with Dudley’s Families Young People and Partners

This strategy has been produced as a result of considerable investment of time and energy from all partners in Dudley:

**Families and Young People** have been key partners in developing the strategy. They have been an integral part of shaping the new way forward. They have helped service providers and commissioners to understand from a parental perspective what families think about the current arrangements. They have helped to identify key priorities and helped to shape the strategy. They have developed a new and stronger voice for parents and carers and they will hold the local area partners to account for delivering on the promises made.

Young people have made a considerable contribution to the development of the Dudley’s Inclusion Charter. Their views about what inclusion feels like, looks like and sounds like has helped to shape the Charter for Dudley. This work has been invaluable in developing an understanding of what young people want from the new strategy.

**Schools, settings and colleges** have expressed their views through the exploration of issues in four themed discussion groups. They raised a number of significant issues with the current set of arrangements which inhibited their ability to meet the needs of children and young people in Dudley. They have participated in developing new ideas about better arrangements, processes and support mechanisms which will enhance the likelihood of the needs of pupils being met in local mainstream schools and local special schools.

**The Local Authority (LA) and Partner agencies** were represented on all of the themed discussion groups and contributed their knowledge and understanding of the strengths and challenges of current arrangements. They provided an insight into possible future collaborations and helped to identify the part that they will play in bringing about the required improvements.

During these discussions a number of **compelling reasons for change** were identified. Parents, schools and settings expressed concerns that overall Dudley was not delivering a range of services and arrangements that met the needs of children with SEND and their families. Families have described their lived experiences of services and arrangements for children with SEND in Dudley as falling far short of expectations. These conversations have enabled all partners to identify new ways of operating and how new arrangements could be delivered to better effect. As a result, this strategy **is** one which belongs to all parents and partners in Dudley and will help to develop a shared understanding of the journey ahead and the part that they are all expected to play in bringing about the necessary change.

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## 5. The Consultation Process

The Council organised a widespread consultation in order to seek the views of all partners in the local area. This was facilitated by an external independent organisation called SEND4Change. A SEND Governance Group was established to oversee the development of the strategy with representation from parent carers and all relevant agencies.

The voice of young people has been heard and has informed the development of the strategy. The experiences, the views and the ambitions put forward by young people have been blended into the key components of the strategy and are the golden threads running through the core.

Key themes were identified by analysing feedback from parents, carers and schools and also the outcomes of the local area inspection and an analysis of the self-evaluation of organisations. Additionally, feedback has been gathered regarding a number of current initiatives relating to the PFA Strategy, the Local Offer, SEN funding Matrix and through other channels involving meetings with schools and colleges, ongoing work with the Parent Carer Forum and EHC Plan developments.

Four themed discussion groups were established which considered:

**Theme 1:** Improving Joint Commissioning and engagement arrangements (to ensure the local offer meets the needs of Dudley's families)

**Theme 2:** Improving the quality of EHC Plans and related processes (to ensure that children and young people's needs are identified and provided for)

**Theme 3:** Improving the SEND support offer made by Dudley's schools (so that all schools make good SEN provision)

**Theme 4:** Developing specialist provision and related approaches (so that those children who need specialist education have their provision made locally)

Each discussion group included parents and representatives from across education, health and social care. During the discussions significant evidence for change was gathered. This has influenced the new direction of travel and includes:

- 1) A review of existing planning documents and inspection reports
- 2) A collection of "raw" feedback from Dudley families and young people about their experience of the services that they receive
- 3) An analysis completed by SEND4Change of the Parent Carer Forum's "raw" feedback which summarises the key issues for families and provides suggestions for improvement
- 4) A record of all discussions and debates in the SEND Governance Group and the themed discussion groups
- 5) An analysis completed by SEND4Change of the themes arising from all sources which have been used to identify a set of priority actions.

The Governance Board subsequently approved the recommendations of the themed groups and these have now been compiled and described in this refreshed strategy.

## 6. The Refreshed Strategy

This document sets out unique activities for Dudley. It does not represent everything that needs to be done in Dudley, but recognises and identifies actions which are required as a matter of urgency. Dudley urgently needs to:

- 1) Improve the local offer relating to provision and arrangements for children and young people with SEND across the 0-25 age range
- 2) Assess the needs of children and young people with SEND more effectively
- 3) Increase the availability of local provision for its young people in a variety of settings

### In Dudley we will strive to .....

1. Plan and work together to best utilise all resources to ensure that there is a stronger approach to joint commissioning, the sharing of ideas and resources and supporting innovation across education, health and social care. This will be driven by a strong partnership between parents, carers, children and young people and partners in the local area. Children and young people will be at the heart of everything we do.
2. Effectively identify and assess the needs of Dudley's young people with SEND in a timely manner.
3. Ensure that there is a sufficient graduated range of high quality local provision ranging from those children with the least complex needs to those children with most complex needs.

**These three areas form the basis of priority actions for SEND for the next three years.**



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## 7 Priorities for change

This strategy sets out three key components for change which will help to strengthen the offer for children and young people with SEND in Dudley. These are shown in the diagram below:

### Three components of a new SEN strategy

1

#### Joint commissioning and engagement:

How to shape the local offer in Dudley based on engagement with families

2

#### Graduated assessment and planning:

Improving SEN support and EHC process in order to better understand the needs of Dudley's children and young people and how best to meet those needs

3

#### Graduated provision:

Ensuring that a range of suitable provision is available in Dudley

Each of the three components will focus on the following areas for improvement:

#### 1) Developing Collaborative Commissioning and Engagement activity:

The local area will improve how:

- commissioners in education, health and social care, shape the local offer in a co-ordinated and collaborative way
- we listen and learn from families and young people who use the services provided in Dudley
- we utilise our resources and energies to better effect to create good services and good provision in Dudley.

#### 2) Graduated SEN Assessment and Planning processes

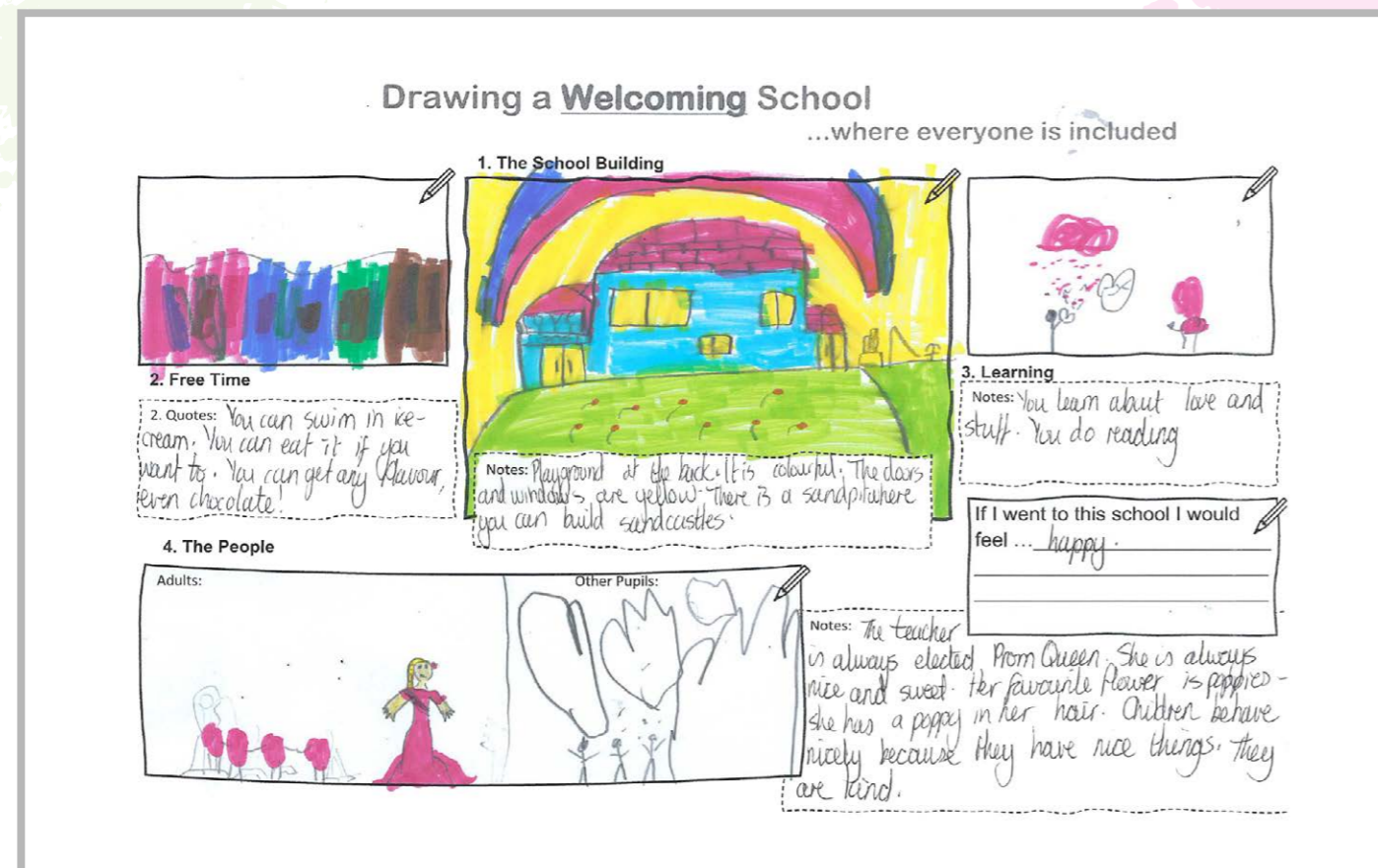
The local area will innovate and improve how:

- we identify, assess and plan for young people who require SEN Support
- we will improve the quality of Dudley's Education Health and Care plans and ensure that they are outcome focussed and in line with the individual's ambitions
- we enhance the way in which services engage with children and their families

#### 3) Graduated Provision

The local area will innovate and improve how:

- all mainstream schools and settings make and deliver their SEND provision and we will enhance the provision offer that is 'ordinarily available' in schools and settings
- Dudley creates a diverse range of opportunities for specialist enhancements to mainstream schools and settings
- Dudley ensures that it has sufficient special school capacity locally



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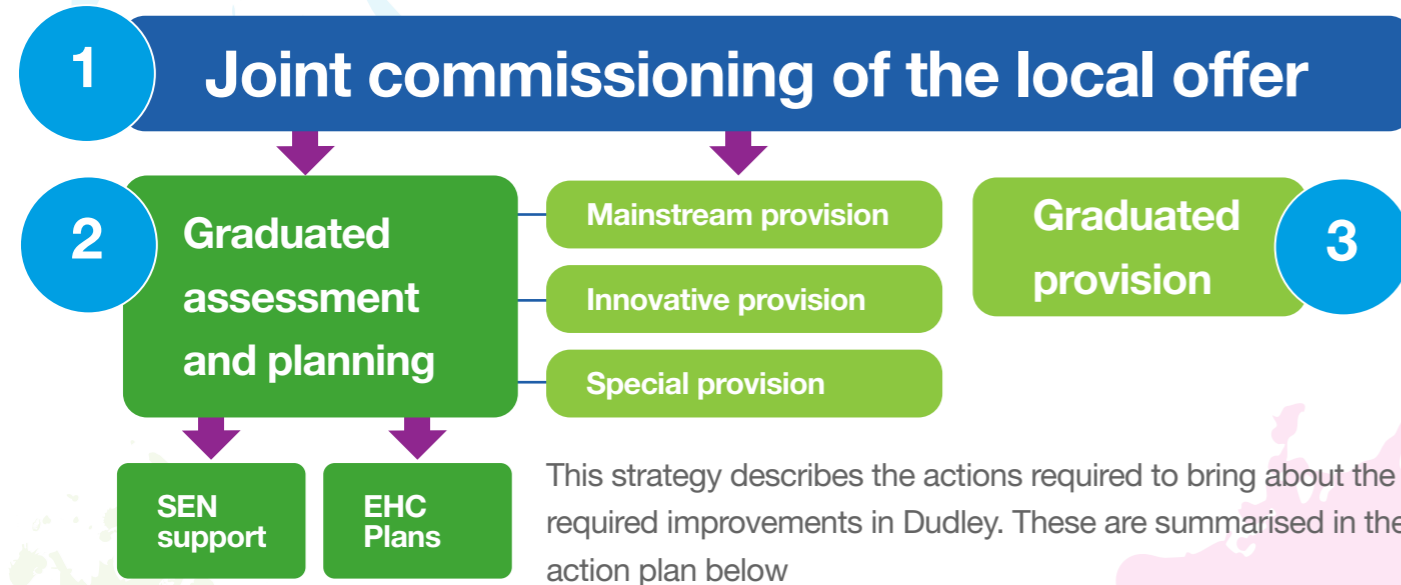




The three components of the strategy are interrelated and interdependent:

- Joint commissioning helps to shape the local offer
- Graduated assessment helps to identify which young people need to access additional resources and interventions and other elements of the local offer
- Graduated provision offers access to suitable learning environments dependent on the complexity of a young person's need.

### The Three components



## Priorities for Action

### Priority 1: Joint Commissioning of the local offer

#### Engagement

- Develop an engagement strategy which sits alongside the joint commissioning strategy
- Establish a joint commissioning board to further develop the interface between commissioners and families and young people which holds commissioners to account for delivering the joint commissioning strategy
- Parent Carer Forum (PCF) to further develop parent networks to ensure a wider reach across parents in the local area
- Develop, with the PCF and young people, a step by step guide to engagement for use by commissioners
- Ensure that there is feedback to PCF and children and young people (this is what you said, this is what we will do...)

#### Commissioning

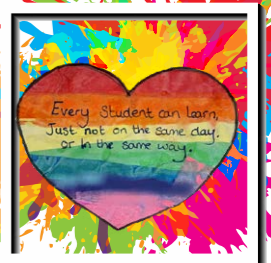
- Further develop the shared data bank of knowledge to inform commissioning activity
- Publish a schedule of commissioning activity priorities for the next two years including an innovative approach to speech and language therapy (SALT) in order to develop a new joint health and education response which will develop children's communication and language skills
- Ensure therapy services are included in commissioning of specialist and innovative provision
- Ensure that there is a quality assurance framework which allows families to feedback about their perspective on commissioned services
- Ensure that universal services that are commissioned are inclusive

#### We know we have been successful when.....

- Families feel that they are listened to and an engagement strategy is in place
- There is a joint commissioning Board which includes representatives from the Parent Carer Forum
- Commissioners feedback the outcomes of engagement activity
- There is a new joint Communication and Language Service

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## Priority 2: Graduated Assessment and planning

### Improving the SEN Support process and the “assess, plan, do, review” cycle

- Identify best practice in Dudley and develop a format and process for developing SEN Support Plans
- Provide Guidance on SEN Support and a set of SEN Support templates
- Refocus SEND services on supporting schools with the delivery of an assess, plan, do, review cycle so that schools are able to achieve the new SEN Support standards and deliver a consistent assessment and planning process

### Improving the quality of EHC plans

- Develop Dudley’s criteria (based on the SEND Code of Practice) to support decisions to assess (or not) and ensure that these are widely shared and understood
- Introduce a robust quality assurance framework for EHC plans
- Increase the focus of the SEND team on good customer service and effective conflict resolution
- Develop a supportive process for those children and families where the decision was not to undertake a statutory EHC assessment
- Improve the timeliness and quality of annual reviews
- Review the role of the advice givers in the EHC process
- Review the templates used to gather statutory advice in order to improve the quality of the advice provided so that it contains SMART targets which can be incorporated into an EHC plan
- Improve the co-ordination of the EHC process by:
  - Evaluating the benefits of an on-line EHC management system
  - Establishing a “health hub” for gathering health related advice

### We know we have been successful when.....

- Families have increased confidence in SEN Support planning processes
- SENCOs use SEN Support templates
- Criteria for EHC assessments are widely understood
- A robust quality assurance process is in place which results in improved EHC Plans
- There are fewer complaints to the SEN team about the EHC process
- Statutory timelines are met
- There are fewer appeals to the SEND Tribunal, complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman and requests for judicial reviews
- Advice from Health and Social Care colleagues is received in a timely manner and is of a quality that supports the aspirations of the child, young person and family

## Priority 3: Graduated Provision

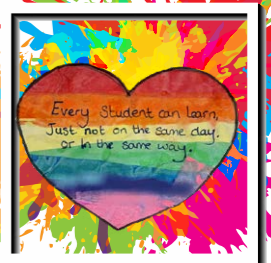
### Mainstream SEN support offer

- Set out the inclusive vision and intent for all providers in Dudley in order to establish a shared understanding across all settings and stakeholders
- Publish a set of aspirational inclusive standards (education for all)
- Further develop peer to peer support networks and partnership working
- Provide resources to support the development of locality partnerships
- Improve the use of data and knowledge about SEND to inform the planning made by schools, settings, partnerships of schools for children and young people in their locality.
- Ensure that the new funding matrix does what was intended and provide longer term funding allocations to support children access mainstream settings
- Develop a CPD programme for staff within schools and settings with a focus on ASD, ADHD and SEMH

### Develop the “Innovative Provision” offer for the 0-25 age group by:

- Establishing an “innovation group” which includes input from children and young people and the PCF to explore and develop innovative ideas with schools and groups of schools
- Developing specialist spaces and ensuring the availability of specialist equipment in mainstream settings
- Developing highly adapted mainstream and specialist environments
- Developing resource bases with planned pathways through age phases
- Developing tailor made solutions for individual pupils with access to a menu of options which may include tutors, access to leisure and social activities and equipment
- Developing time limited assessment provision
- Offering early intervention for pupils with SEMH to provide timely support which avoids the need for permanent exclusion
- Offering outreach from specialist provisions.

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### Developing short term, medium term and long term plans to increase the special school offer by:

- Completing and publishing a special school sufficiency exercise
- Analysing reasons for external placements and ensuring that the quality of placements remains high especially where there are concerns about the quality of these provisions
- Developing a local option, where possible,
- Maximising capacity in local special schools
- Considering decanting phases (such as post 16) into spare capacity in other available buildings and utilising new space
- Developing hub and spoke provisions linked to special schools
- Further developing post 16 provision at schools and local colleges

### We know we have been successful when.....

- Schools use the published inclusive standards to support their school improvement planning
- Schools have established SEN networks and share good practice and are able to support and learn from each other
- Funding is devolved to groups of schools to support inclusive practice
- Staff in schools have access to a comprehensive programme of SEN CPD
- An innovations group has been established and has identified a number of projects to develop 'innovative' provision
- A sufficiency exercise has been completed and plans are in place so that more young people have the opportunity to attend Dudley's local special schools
- Families in Dudley have the choice of high quality local specialist provision which, over time, will lead to a reduction in the number of placements in external independent non-maintain provision. Any funding released will then be diverted into local specialist provision
- A new local Post 16 Centre has been established which (in line with Dudley's PFA strategy) results in increased levels of confidence in children, young people and their families as the young adults start their pathways into adulthood.
- There is a visible upturn in the outcomes for young people leaving education and seeking employment in Dudley. These measurable outcomes are consistently monitored to ensure that they are maintained and improvements are achieved.
- There is a reduction in complaints regarding SEND processes and a significant reduction in the number of Tribunals

## 9. Measuring Success

**Ultimately the way to measure the success of the strategy will be to consider the positive impact that the new priorities have had on the outcomes for Dudley's young people with SEND.**

Dudley will need to adopt a more scientific approach and be more thorough in the analysis of the outcomes for young people. A set of agreed measures will need to be identified, baselined, tracked and monitored over the period of the strategy and the years ahead. These measures will include:

- 1) education outcome and attainment across all key stages
- 2) exclusion rates
- 3) absence rates
- 4) NEET (Not in Education Employment or Training) figures
- 5) Other relevant targets

These measures will be tracked through a SEND data dashboard which will be established to monitor performance. Regular performance reports will be provided to the SEND Improvement Board and aspirational and ambitious targets will be set for each area. Additionally an annual report will be provided reflecting on progress during the previous year and how the strategy will be taken forward in the following year.

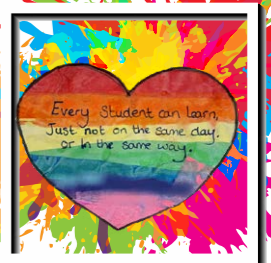
## 10. Delivering Change

**This strategy will need to be accompanied by a detailed implementation plan which sets out specific actions to be delivered by specific people, within a specific timeframe.**

This implementation plan will also need to hold individuals to account for delivering the priority areas and will become embedded into the business as usual operations environment.

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# Inclusion

Here comes the first day of month September,  
couldn't believe I had to soon holiday surrender.  
I was always the shy quiet kid in the back,  
big crowds giving me a heart attack.  
Talking to someone was not a nature of mine;  
thinking about it gave me shivers through my spine  
Being alone was the only way I thought I could shine,  
as the bullying in primary gave me a hard time  
Was it just because I was the quite kid in sight?

First day of secondary, nerve wrecking experience.  
Lots of feelings and lots of emotions,  
Sitting in the corner unspoken

As comes lunchtime everyone makes friends,  
I still have no courage to shake hand  
Sitting on the table I eat alone,  
finally a group of kids approach close.  
I wonder is the same bullying going to carry?  
Sitting in silence I still keep eating on.

"Hello!" is the first word I hear,  
"You want to be friends?" is what the other person volunteers.  
They sit down for lunch and carry on the conversation.  
Finally I try to come out of my bubble;  
trying to make my words double  
We talk about our backgrounds and exchange info about likes and dislikes,  
this gave me a confidence spike.  
Slowly we became the bestest of friends,  
Someone who I can depend

Finally feeling included made me smile.  
Never felt so understood,  
every opinion was heard of mine.  
Compassion and support was all I lacked,  
Maybe this is all what I was missing all these years back?

Being the quiet kid was not disadvantageous,  
It was just in my nature.  
Lots of people with different personalities,  
Making this world full of diversity.  
Surround yourself with the people that appreciate you for you,  
And watch how that makes your personality flourish through.  
And don't forget to include that quiet kid in the back!

**Samanpreet Kaur**, Future voice