

# A Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

for

Special Educational  
Needs and Disabilities

in

Central Bedfordshire

## Executive Summary

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) in Central Bedfordshire 2021 focuses on children and young adults aged 0-25 years who are residents of, or who are educated within, Central Bedfordshire.

The JSNA aims to provide Central Bedfordshire SEND Partnership Board, departments with responsibility for commissioning and service delivery and local leaders with an up to date understanding of the needs of local children and young adults with SEND to:

- Inform the strategic, system wide priorities to improve independence and outcomes for children and young adults with SEND, and their families, in Central Bedfordshire
- Inform commissioning at both strategic and operational levels, so that services and support are tailored to need and based upon the best available evidence
- Inform the wider system so that all relevant future plans in the local area are considered through the lens of independence and inclusion, reducing the social and environmental barriers to living with as much independence as possible.

This JSNA recognises the importance of looking ahead, not just considering the needs of children and young adults with SEND now but also seeking to understand more about their needs as they become adults.

This is underpinned by the principal of ‘preparing for adulthood’ – outlined by the SEND Code of Practice 2015 and centred around four key areas; higher education and / or employment, independent living, participating in society, and being as healthy as possible in adult life. The Code sets out the expectation that children and young adults with SEND will be supported to be aspirational and plan and prepare for adulthood from an early stage.

This JSNA represents a collective commitment to improving the outcomes for children and young adults with SEND in our local area, and has been developed in conjunction with:

- Central Bedfordshire SEND Partnership Board
- Children and young adults with SEND who are residents of or educated in the local area
- Parents and carers of children and young adults with SEND
- Professionals who work with and for children and young adults with SEND.

## Summary of key findings

The following section presents a summary of the key findings extracted from the main SEND JSNA.

- Local children and young adults with SEND set out the clear message that they wish to be placed at the centre of discussion and decisions wherever possible. Local children and young adults summarised their expressed needs in co-production activities as follows: Speak to me as well as my parent; ask me what I want; use simple language; I want to know what is going on.
- Parents and carers felt that they would benefit from more support from services in Central Bedfordshire and that services themselves could work better together to support families. This would help families to not have to repeat their story many times
- Professionals focused on the need for systems of data collection and process to be completed in order for improvements to be more targeted
- Parents and carers felt that it was difficult to get information about the services available to their family. The Local Offer is being developed to meet this need.

## Population of children and young adults with SEND

- The population of children and young adults with special educational needs and disabilities in the local area is dynamic and growing. There are currently 6,379 children with SEND in Central Bedfordshire, equating to 14.6% of the school population or one in every seven children.
- The Jan 2021 census records 9.6% (491) of children on Free School Meals as having an EHCP, and 23.3% (1199) of children on FSM with SEN support. In contrast 3.7% (1717) of all school aged children have an EHCP 11.4% (5213) of all school aged children have SEN support. This suggests that there is a higher proportion of children with EHCPs and SEN support experiencing financial disadvantage
- Public Health profiling identifies that children with SEND in Sandy and Biggleswade report the greatest levels of emotional need, and this is partially reflected in indices of multiple deprivation for Central Bedfordshire

## Prevalence of need

- The most prevalent primary needs for boys accessing SEN Support were Emotional, Mental Health (SEMH), Moderate learning difficulty (MLD), Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) and Specific learning difficulty (SPLD).
- For girls accessing SEN support the greatest prevalence was Social, Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) at a virtually identical rate to Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD), Social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) and Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)
- The most prevalent primary needs for boys with an EHCP were Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Social, emotional and mental health (SEMH), Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN), and Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD).
- For girls with an EHCP the most prevalent needs were Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Severe learning difficulty (SLD), Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN), and Social, emotional and mental health (SEMH),
- Boys are significantly overrepresented in the cohort of children with SEND. Almost two thirds of children accessing SEN Support and almost three quarters of children with an EHCP/ Statement were boys despite making up less than half of the school population. This matches national patterns.
- Children with an EHC plan are more likely to be excluded from school than compared with national averages. 9.8% of children with an EHCP have been excluded compared to 8.9% nationally. Exclusions for those receiving SEN support is 6.5%, matching the national average.
- Young adults with SEND are more likely to come into contact with the Criminal Justice System at an earlier age and are considerably less likely to receive an informal community resolution outcome.

## Identification and assessment of need

- Children being ready to learn as toddlers and ready to start school are vital foundations for good health and development. Significant efforts have been made by the Healthy Child Programme 0-19 Service to align Health Visiting reviews with the need to identify SEND needs. Outcomes of this are being evaluated in 2022.
- The increase in birth rate along with an increase in life expectancy for children born with complex disabilities and congenital conditions, along with improved tools for identification of need have all contributed to the doubling in the number of EHCP over the past four years.
- Central Bedfordshire in 2021 is, by central government headline figures which exclude exceptions, reporting 20 week timescales marginally better than the national or statistical neighbour average.
- Appeal rates locally have returned to match national averages after a period of small increase in recent years.

## Services for children and young adults with SEND

- There is a wide variety of commissioned services and support available for children and young adults with SEND, and their families in the local area.
- The promotion of services and support is being developed and the local offer is being improved
- There are opportunities to strengthen the Local Authority, Public Health and CCG Commissioners working together to align the decision-making processes for Education, Children's Community Health and Healthy Child Programme services.
- Positive outcomes are identified in community services from needing to engage in online consultations in the early 2020s; Therapy services offered more appointments in during 2020-21 than in previous years.

## Supporting independence

- In Central Bedfordshire, participation in education at 16 is good. 1.6% young people who attend college rather than a school sixth form become NEET at the age of 17. As at December 2020, 87.9% of 16-17 year olds with SEND in Central Bedfordshire were in learning, compared with 88.2% across England and 89.8% across the East of England.
- The accommodation offer for adults is under review in 2021 and will include SEND needs

## Special education provision for children and young adults with SEND

- Central Bedfordshire has 4 special schools, and a total of 132 schools serving 45,861 pupils, some of which are maintained by the Local Authority and others which are Academies or Free Schools
- In June 2020 Central Bedfordshire maintained approximately 1850 EHC plans for pupils in Reception to Y14. This equates to approximately 4.4% of the total mainstream YR-Y14 cohort within CBC schools.
- The prevalence of pupils with an EHCP are generally level in Central Bedfordshire Council schools compared to the Central Bedfordshire population as a whole, suggesting Central Bedfordshire schools are probably not a net importer/ exporter of SEND EHCP pupils from out of the local authority area
- The number of pupils attending a school in Central Bedfordshire with SEN Support has increased by 300 in the last 5 years and increased slightly faster for CBC residents (by 350). During this time the national percentage of mainstream pupils requiring SEN support has increased from 11.6% to 12.1% while the CBC figure has remained level.
- In March 2021 there were 148 children spread across 48 schools on part time timetables

## Placements

- 3.4% of the children in care cohort have a disability, with 63.4% placed in residential accommodation.
- 60% of those in external residential accommodation have SEN.
- in June 2021 6 were placed out of area

## SEND strategy and accessible versions

The SEND JSNA functions as a reference document to inform local area decisions and an evidence base on which a SEND strategy can be designed. Following this, the development of a SEND strategy will aim to set out how identified needs will be met locally. Finally, there is also a need to co-produce an 'easy read', accessible summary of the findings of this SEND JSNA appropriate to local families, children and young adults with SEND.

## Areas for Focus

### 8.1 Overarching strategic areas for focus

1. To maintain a regular monthly operational SEND local area team with membership of senior professionals representing Education, Health, Children's and Adult Social Care.
2. To develop diagrammatic SEND pathways showing the relationship between education, health and social care and to publish them on the local offer.
3. To develop the local legal framework for jointly commissioning integrated services between Health, Social Care and Education for children with SEND, such as a Section 75 (NHS Act 2006) agreement.
4. To support Parent Carer Forums to reach a wider audience, including families of children and young adults with SEND of all ages and backgrounds.
5. To support Parent Carer Forums to develop questions in the annual PCF survey which enable services to identify areas for improvement.
6. To develop a full local strategy for SEND, building on the assessment of need and local data to set out methods of delivering measurable outcomes.
7. To develop an evidence based prioritisation framework in order to balance the expressed needs of parents with organisational needs to provide the best level of health and care to the greatest number of people.
8. To convene a committee of senior representatives in Health and Social Care to address the needs arising for those families who may feel dissuaded from contributing to co-production by the actions and behaviours of other parent groups.

### 8.2 Areas for focus for identifying SEND

9. To review the outcomes for SEND of the timing of the fifth Health Visiting touchpoint, locally delivered at 3¼ years of age.
10. To review further opportunities to capture the voice of the child in EHC plans
11. To further develop co-production with young people across the local area building on provider findings.
12. To review out of area follow up and data recording.
13. To review the graduated response taking account of parent and professional views, and legal obligations.

### 8.3 Areas for focus for meeting needs

14. To continue to support the Schools for the Future programme to increase local capacity for special schools and for specialist provision in mainstream schools
15. To work with further education providers to increase the range of local provision and reduce the need for young people to access provision away from home.
16. To identify and support the emotional wellbeing of children, young adults and their families.
17. To support the recovery from services affected by COVID.
18. To improve the quality and timeliness of EHC plans
19. To provide a FAQ guidance for parents setting out what needs may be met, and the reasons why some needs cannot be met.
20. To improve the take up of personal budgets

## 8.4 Areas for focus to improve outcomes

21. To develop guidance for practitioners to improve quality of outcomes for children with SEND
22. To explore and analyse outcomes for children with SEND by ethnic group
23. To review policies and practice to ensure schools are supported to gain EHCPs for behaviour where this would best support the child.
24. To capture data on the numbers of children leaving SEND services at the age of 18
25. To consider the transition from SEND services at the age of 25 for any young adults not known to Adult Social Care who will no longer receive care; to consider a process in Education to identify and refer any unmet emerging Adult Social Care needs.
26. To incorporate SEND needs into the development of the Accommodation Strategy for Adults with Care and Support Needs.

## 8.5 Technical areas for focus

27. To develop systems of collection and processes for reporting Health and Social Care SEND data across health and social care to area leaders.
28. To improve data recording for post-16 population
29. To align caseloads between education, health and social care using NHS Numbers, working towards a single patient SEND record accessible across health systems/ providers

## Committee Services

The Central Bedfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board oversee Joint Strategic Needs Assessments. If you have any concerns these can be raised with the board or its members by contacting Committee Services.

## Contact Committee Services

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Chicksands, Shefford  
SG17 5TQ

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