

Meeting:	Executive Member for Education, Children and Young People
Meeting date:	7 October 2025
Report of:	Maxine Squire, Assistant Director, Education & Skills
Portfolio of:	Councillor Bob Webb

Decision Report: Inclusion and Belonging Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Alternative Provision strategy 2025-2030

Subject of Report

1. This report seeks Executive approval for the approval of **York's Inclusion and Belonging Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy 2025–2030**. The strategy sets out a clear, ambitious, and collaborative vision to improve outcomes and life chances for children and young people with SEND and their families across the city.
2. It has been fully co-produced with our SEND partnership and families.
3. This strategy responds to:
 - York's SEND continued improvement journey following on from the existing SEND strategy.
 - Parent/carers feedback via York's SEND Local Offer and forums.
 - The Council's statutory responsibilities under the Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice
 - Priorities in the York Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Children and Young People's Plan
 - Ofsted/CQC Area SEND Inspection findings.
4. The strategy focuses on making sure our children and young people feel that they are valued and visible, around early identification and intervention, providing the right support at the right time, and ensuring children and young people are well-prepared for adulthood. The plan also addresses the need for a confident and skilled workforce and improved mental health support for children and young people.

5. Families have told us that we need to think broadly around inclusion and belonging and that all children and young people need to be covered in this plan, with a focus on those children and young people who are too anxious to go to school, for children who are not in school, who are educated at home, who are in alternative provision, or at risk of exclusion.
6. This strategy is aligned with the Autism and ADHD Strategy 2025–2030, with the actions outlined in the Inclusion and Belonging SENDAP Strategy designed to support and complement its key priorities.

Benefits and Challenges

7. Now more than ever, we need a clear inclusion and belonging strategy. This flexible strategy anticipates national SEND reforms from Autumn 2025 and aligns with the Children and Wellbeing Bill to support safeguarding and raise standards. Grounded in the March 2023 SEND and AP Improvement Plan, it prioritises support for children in local mainstream schools. Implementation will be driven by an action plan, overseen by the SEND Partnership Board.
8. While writing a strategy before major national reform may require earlier revision, this risk is mitigated by focusing on key priorities from the SEND and AP Improvement Plan and the regional SEND change programme, including mainstream inclusive education.

Policy Basis for Decision

9. This strategy aligns with the core strategic vision for York including a Vision:
 - A city where children and young people with SEND are valued, included, and supported to achieve their full potential. The following strategies have underpinned this work.
 - One city for all (2023-2027)
 - Draft Autism and ADHD strategy
 - York Health & Care Partnership Children and Young People's Plan
 - Health and wellbeing Strategy
 - Children and Young people's plan
 - Young People Belong in York
 - Existing SEND Strategy York (expires 2025)

- Children and Young Peoples Mental Health Strategic Transformation Plan 2025 – 2030
- Serious Violence Response Strategy
- Early Help
- Contextual Safeguarding
- Preparation for adulthood
- Neglect

10. The Strategy focuses on the following strategic priorities:

- **Voice and Influence and Working Together with Families**
Embed co-production and clear communication with families at every level.
- **Early Identification and Support**
Strengthen universal and targeted services to identify needs early and intervene and meet need effectively.
- **Providing the right support at the right time: Inclusion in Education**
Promote inclusive practices in all settings, with increased confidence, skills, and capacity in mainstream schools. This also includes high-quality provision and sufficiency to develop sustainable and diverse SEND provision, including specialist places where required.
- **Preparation for Adulthood**
Ensure effective transition planning from the earliest years through to independence, employment, and adulthood.

11. There is also a strong emphasis on leadership and accountability to strengthen governance, improve data-sharing, and promote shared responsibility across education, health, and care.

12. This strategy aligns with the Council Plan 2023–2027 and its vision of creating a city for all.

Financial Strategy Implications

13. There are no direct financial implications of this report, individual organisations are responsible for resourcing the commitments in the strategy, and for City of York Council all commitments will be delivered within existing budgeted resources.

Recommendation and Reasons

14. The Executive Board is asked to:
15. Consider and approve the contents of the Inclusion and Belonging Special Educational Needs and Alternative Provision Strategy 2025-30.
16. The strategy sets the priorities for the local area and provides the strategic framework to ensure that partners commit to delivering continuous improvements in the lived experience of children, young people with special education needs and disabilities.
17. Executive Board is recommended to approve this strategy. The reason is that it aims to improve the educational health and emotional wellbeing outcomes for all York's children and young people with SEND and achieve improvements in their provision. It is aligned with the national agenda around inclusion and belonging.
18. Not to implement the strategy is not recommended as the new strategy is setting the direction for the new and improved SEND offer for children, young people and families.

Background

19. This report has been brought to the Executive Board as a key decision as the current York Strategy for special educational needs will expire in September 2025.
20. This strategy has been reviewed by People Scrutiny in July 2025. The strategy will return to Scrutiny following any changes to the national SEND reforms. It aligns to the Autism and ADHD Strategy.
21. More than ten years on from the implementation of the Children and Families Act, 2015, there is a national Special Education Needs and Disability crisis. The need for a clear strategic SEND partnership plan is needed.
22. Despite substantial investment in the SEND system, many families, children, and young people as well as schools, local authorities and health partners feel deeply frustrated and let down. Services remain fragmented and inconsistent, with widespread delays, poor coordination,

and a lack of accountability, leaving too many children without the support they urgently need.

23. The Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Needs Assessment (2024) sets out the key information to inform this strategy. It was created with support from professionals working in education, health, and social care in York. The views of parents and carers of children and young people with SEND, as well as staff who work with these families are also included.
24. Further headline data includes information from The Autism and ADHD Health Needs Assessment (May 2024) tells us that compared to 2021, the children and young people's autism service has seen a 50% rise in monthly referrals, and just over a quarter of children and young people have been on the waiting list for more than a year.
25. Additionally, York has experienced a significant increase in the number of children requiring support through an Education, Health, and Care (EHC) plan, rising from 1,317 in June 2024 to 1,693. Concurrently, requests for support to the Learning Support Hub, which provides outreach services to educational settings, continues to grow. Families continue to report challenges navigating the system, feeling they must advocate persistently to secure appropriate support.
26. There is continuing financial pressure to the local authority generated by the costs of EHCPs and out of city placements. This strategy supports the need for more inclusion in mainstream settings and enabling children and young people to belong to their local setting and community.
27. This strategy builds on York's existing strengths and ongoing improvement efforts. The city is well-positioned to shape an ambitious and effective plan, drawing on the strong foundations already in place. The partnership remains committed to advancing the work of the York Schools and Academies Board (YSAB), supporting a citywide drive to ensure greater consistency in inclusive practice across all schools and educational settings.7.9. The strategy aims to collaborate across our partnerships to harness the inherent creativity and unlock talent by through providing opportunities, experiences, environments and touch points and collective pathways to unlock the inherent curiosity and creativity of this cohort of young people and to inspire into greater things.
28. York being in a unique position to maximise the potential given its creative and innovation-based economy.

29. These strengths include joint working and participation, the graduated approach offer, KS4 outcomes and progress. Extensive work has been carried out by the new attendance team structure and multi-agency action group. Attendance Leads meetings demonstrate this positive impact on attendance and although suspensions rates are above national average the data shows reductions across primary and secondary sectors. Permanent exclusions are below national.
30. The first phase of the five-year strategy will prioritise establishing greater consistency in inclusive practice across settings, workforce development, enhancing the York Local Offer, and improving transparent communication and access to information for families. A key focus will also be on strengthening support for children and young people awaiting neurodevelopmental diagnoses. The implementation of the SEND Hub in York will represent a significant milestone in delivering these priorities.
31. This strategy is supportive of the key work around preparation for adulthood and within this the need to build and develop further the successful work around independent travel skills, to support our young people.
32. All partners have a role to play in building a more inclusive society and in providing services in a high-quality manner which serve neurodivergent individuals well. Health services and council services have a duty in statutory guidance to plan services, develop partnerships and commission together in response to need. This strategy supports this work.

Consultation Analysis

33. The strategy has been shaped continually through extensive consultation in 2024-25, this has led to real, meaningful amendments to key areas of the strategy.
34. The phases of consultation are set out below:
35. The initial phase focused on ensuring alignment with key strategic priorities across York. This strategy is closely aligned with the Autism and ADHD Strategy and has been shaped by feedback gathered throughout the development process. It also shares several key

priorities with the draft York Health & Care Partnership Children and Young People's Plan.

- One city for all (2023-2027)
- Draft Autism and ADHD Strategy
- York Health and Care Partnership Children and Young People's Plan
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- York Economics Strategy
- Children and Young People's Plan
- Young People Belong to York
- Existing SEND Strategy York (expires 2025)
- Children and Young Peoples Mental Health Strategic Transformation Plan 2025 – 2030
- Serious Violence Response Strategy
- Early Help
- Contextual Safeguarding
- Preparation for Adulthood
- Neglect

From Autumn 2024 to July 2025 the following consultation activities have taken place:

- The Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Needs Assessment (2024)
- Parent/carers forum listening events - Autumn term 2024-Spring term 2025.
- Parent/carers workshop – June 2025
- DFE /York Mainstream Inclusion Review - June 2025
- Feedback from Autism and ADHD strategy, Scrutiny - May 2025
- York Primary SENCO Forum – June 2025
- City of York Safeguarding Partnership Board – June 2025
- Multi Agency Strategy task and finish groups Spring and Summer term – April and June 2025
- Parent/Carer and practitioner Surveys - May 2025 (approx. 320 parents)
- Parent/Carer forum strategy activity workshop event - June 2025 (20 parents)
- National Development Team for Inclusion partnership training event two events - March 2025

- Publication of the [Core Connectors report](#) which has provided valuable insights into young people's experiences of health and social care in York
- Publication of the [Listening to Neurodivergent Families](#) in partnership with the Land, York Carers Centre, York Disability Rights Forum and Parent Carer Forum York in January 2025.
- Executive group briefing feedback – June 2025
- Scrutiny review and feedback – 9th July 2025
- Full city-wide consultation 15^h July – 7th September 2025
- Drop in for consultation 15th and 21st July.
- Feedback from city wide consultation on Autism and ADHD Strategy July-September 2025.

Options Analysis and Evidential Basis

36. Option 1: That the Executive agrees to adopt the *Inclusion and Belonging Strategy: Special Educational Needs and Alternative Provision 2025–2030*. The strategy has been clearly articulated and widely consulted on, with key stakeholder feedback reflected in the final version. It will provide York's SEND Partnership with a clear strategic direction and framework for the next five years, while retaining the flexibility to adapt to national SEND reforms expected in Autumn 2025.
37. Option 2: do not adopt the strategy the risk is that there will be no current strategic plan and the existing SEND strategy for York will expire.

Organisational Impact and Implications

38. **Financial**, contact: Mike Barugh, Principal Accountant: The focus on the strategy is to support children and young people to belong, in their settings and communities and that services are provided in a way that is sustainable in the longer term.
39. **Human Resources (HR)**, contact: Lisa Pannitt, HR Advisor: There are no staffing implications identified in this paper if it is agreed to adopt York's Inclusion and Belonging Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy 2025–2030. However, there may be future staffing implications if any proposed changes impact on staff.
40. **Legal**, contact: Chris Coss, Head of Legal Services: The strategy is underpinned by the legislative framework of part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014, the SEND Regulations 2014, SEND (Budget)

Regulations 2014, SEND (Detained Persons) Regulations 2015, and the detailed guidance in the SEND statutory Codes of Practice (2015) made under section 77 of the same Act, which sets out key responsibilities around information, advice and support, joint working with schools/health agencies and other partner agencies, the identification, assessment and meeting of needs, capacity issues, Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans, the requirements of the Local Offer (publishing available services) and preparation for adulthood.

41. **Procurement**, contact: This strategy supports the requirement to commission services appropriately and that are value for money.
42. **Health and Wellbeing**, contact: Peter Roderick: By prioritising improved outcomes for children and young people, ensuring they receive the right support at the right time to thrive, this Strategy will be supporting the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and in particular the Big Ambition to 'START GOOD HEALTH AND WELLBEING YOUNG'. This strategy is also aligned to the All-Age Autism and ADHD strategy 2025-2030, developed in conjunction with health partners. This strategy is aligned to the Autism and ADHD strategy.
43. **Environment and Climate Action**, contact: Garry Taylor, Director of City Development: This strategy aligns to the York Economics Strategy, a city fit for the future, and aims to strengthening links between education and business to help young people in this cohort to thrive while maximising the potential of career opportunities to provide the workforce of the future. This is also supported through our supported internships pathways. Furthermore, by promoting mainstream inclusion in settings and developing more Enhanced Resource Provisions in schools, this supports the need for fewer out of area placements, children attending settings locally and more sustainability around transport.
44. **Affordability**, contact: Director of Customer and Communities. The strategy focuses on supporting children and young people in their local area and in aligning services around support.
45. **Equalities and Human Rights**, the Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) will be provided with this report. This strategy focuses on the needs of the most vulnerable groups and promoting inclusive education.
46. **Data Protection and Privacy**, Contact Information Governance: The data protection impact assessment (DPIAs) screening questions were completed for the recommendations and options in this report and as

there is no personal, special categories or criminal offence data being processed to set these out, there is no requirement to complete a DPIA at this time. However, this will be reviewed following the approved recommendations and options from this report and a DPIA completed if required.

47. **Communications**, contact: The communication of the strategy is supported by the City of York's Communications Team.
48. **Economy**, contact: through initiatives such as poverty-proofing schools and providing families with information and support to help manage the cost-of-living crisis.

Risks and Mitigations

49. There are no known risks to this strategy being implemented.

Wards Impacted

50. All Wards are affected by this key decision.

Contact details

51. For further information please contact the authors of this Decision Report.

Author

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Report approved:	Yes
Date:	21/07/2025

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Date:	21/07/2025

Background papers

- The Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Needs Assessment (2024)
- Background paper: Inclusion and Belonging, SEND and AP Strategy 2025-2030

Annexes

- Annex A: Inclusion and Belonging Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Alternative Provision Strategy 2025-2030
- Annex B: Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) completed
- Annex C: Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) completed