



Darlington Local Area Partnership
Special Educational Needs & Disabilities
SEND Strategy
2025-2029



Consultation
Document



This refreshed Darlington local Area SEND Strategy sets the Local Area’s priorities for the next 4 years.

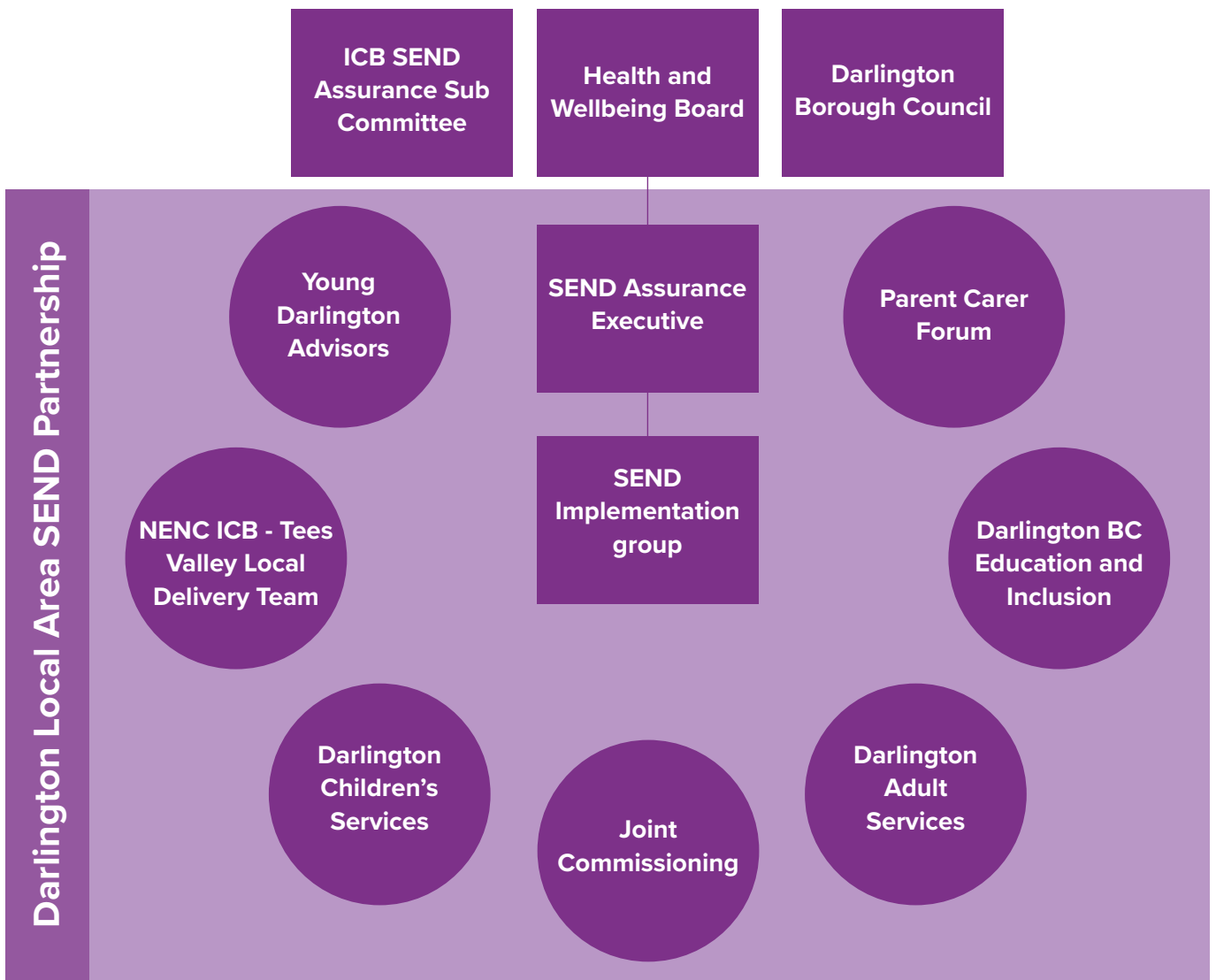
In Darlington we are committed to working in partnership across our local area to coordinate support, care and learning for SEND children, young people, and their families, so they are able to fulfil their ambitions and to thrive.

The Strategy builds on existing good practice and addressing those areas where services need to be strengthened. This includes:

- improved access to and experience of therapeutic, mental health, and physical health services;
- supporting more children and young people to attend an inclusive setting or school in Darlington where needs are met earlier; and
- broadening access to a wide range of short breaks and local community activities.

We are proud of the quality of the schools and early years provision in Darlington: we know our schools and settings work hard to deliver good outcomes for children and young people. We know however, that we need to work hard to improve some areas of our services and that we need to improve our communication with children, young people, parents and carers to improve our understanding of their experiences and to involve them more closely in the design and delivery of the services which support them.

Local governance



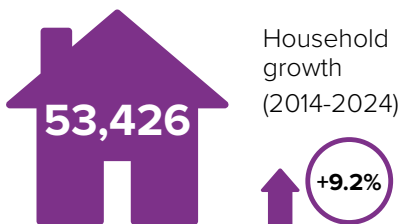
Darlington context

General

Population



Number of households



Economy



£530.50

Median weekly full time earnings for residents

85.9%

Workers earning the living wage

Economically active residents



81.6%

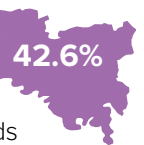


86.4%

Child poverty in Darlington

25.2%

Inequality in child poverty across Darlington wards



People

EHC Plans



285



791



80.6%

of EHC assessments completed in 20 week period

Data March 2024



80.7% with no identified special education needs

13.9% identified with special education needs

5.4% pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan

16436 pupils on Darlington schools roll

Place

32 villages and hamlets surrounding a historic town centre



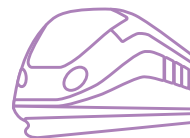
16 Parks

10 Nature Reserves

2 Rivers

4 train stations

Darlington, North Road, Dinsdale and Teesside Airport



Teesside International Airport



National and local drivers

This strategy is informed by related key national documents such as the Children and Families Act (2014), SEND Code of Practice (2015), National Autism Strategy (2021), the National Disability Strategy (2021) and the NHS Long Term Plan.

It is consistent with the values and ambitions outlined in the Darlington Council Plan 2024-2027.

Co-producing the strategy

Darlington's Local Area SEND partnership has developed this strategy for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) through co-production. It has been co-created by children and young people; parents and carers; and those who work with them across the partnership. The following set of priorities has been shaped into a clear set of actions the shared thoughts, words and phrases of children, young people, parents and carers (via the Darlington Parent Carer Forum), and strategic partners.

The priorities directly respond to the ambitions for children and young people in Darlington identified through a series of events and consultations undertaken in the last year, involving children and young people, their parents and carers, and those who support young people. Five key areas, building on the preparation for adulthood outcomes were used as headings in the consultation and form the framework for this strategy. It was agreed that this approach will encourage a more effective pathway into adulthood and enable children and young people to build on life skills and support their aspirations.

The voice of children and young people has been clear. This is their borough. They want their voices to be heard in shaping the future of Darlington.



Strategy framework

The strategy framework sets the Local Area's priorities for the next 4 years.

It is set out across the five key areas

Five key areas

1. Being as healthy as possible

2. Having good education, training and opportunities

3. Family, friends and relationships.

4. Into adulthood towards independence

5. Darlington - our town, community and environment

Each Key area is presented across the following four headings:

What Children and Young People said is important to them	What Parents and Carers said is important to them	What we will do	The Difference this will make
This is a summary of what Children and Young people said was most important to them when thinking about each key area.	This is a summary of what Parents and carers said was most important to them when thinking about each key area.	This is an expression of the commitments that the Local Area Partnership has made to children and young people with SEND in Darlington.	This sets out the difference the strategy looks to deliver for children and young people, parents and carers.



Being as healthy as possible

What Children and Young People said is important to them	What Parent and Carers said is important to them	What we will do	The difference this will make
<p>Having good mental health is important: Being able to talk to people who listen, understand and support you helps.</p> <p>To be healthy It's important to have a balanced diet, healthy eating habits and to drink lots of water - not focusing purely on fruit and vegetables but having a mix of everything, as well as a good nights sleep.</p> <p>Exercise in whatever way suits you best is good for your mental and physical health e.g. the gym, walking, sporting clubs, dancing, swimming.</p> <p>Not focusing on unrealistic health expectations from media.</p>	<p>Maintaining positive mental health and physical health is important.</p> <p>Effective and timely access to mental & physical health support.</p> <p>Having suitable education provision is important in ensuring good physical and mental health.</p> <p>It can be difficult to maintain a healthy diet, particularly where sensory needs impact this.</p> <p>Communication between health and education services needs to be improved.</p> <p>More inclusive opportunities for exercise and social inclusion are needed.</p> <p>Independence in respect of healthy lifestyle choices.</p>	<p>We will improve inclusive opportunities to be active in Darlington.</p> <p>We will support community organisations and community facilities to be more inclusive of children and young people.</p> <p>We will effectively manage waiting lists for health appointments especially access to mental health services.</p> <p>We will ensure the new public health strategy is fully inclusive of children and young people with SEND.</p>	<p>I will know when, where and how to access support if I am physically or emotionally unwell.</p> <p>I will be able to access support and advice in a timely way.</p> <p>I will be able to make a healthy meal or snack.</p> <p>I will be able to choose from and access a range of activities either independently or with support to help keep me as active as possible.</p> <p>People supporting me will talk to each other and work with me and my family/carers to plan my support together.</p>

Having good education, training and opportunities

What Children and Young People said is important to them	What Parent and Carers said is important to them	What we will do	The difference this will make
<p>'Need to be learning about real life issues, so we can know how to handle them when it happens.'</p> <p>Prefer practical/'fun' learning.</p> <p>More extra-curricular learning e.g. clubs, groups, after school activities.</p> <p>More support to help me plan my future: qualifications, further and higher education, advice and guidance on accessing different jobs (childcare, police, army, beauty therapist YouTuber, robotics etc).</p> <p>More volunteer/work experience opportunities needed from a younger age.</p> <p>No Bullying, including online.</p>	<p>Suitable education in a suitable school environment.</p> <p>To feel included, respected, valued and safe while at school.</p> <p>Availability and accessibility of information in relation to SEND support, improved and consistent SEND offer in schools and training / upskilling of school staff in respect of SEND.</p> <p>Skills for independence to be included consistently in education.</p> <p>Ensuring early identification of needs that are met flexibly, effectively and consistently through thorough and coordinated planning to prevent emerging needs escalating including for emotional, social & mental health needs.</p> <p>Choice and flexibility regarding appropriate, supported and fulfilling education and employment opportunities.</p>	<p>We will launch an Inclusion Charter across all Darlington education settings.</p> <p>We will work with education settings to address barriers to attendance for children and young people with SEND.</p> <p>We will work with education settings to include developing skills for independence as part of their offer.</p> <p>We will develop and implement a multi-agency strategy for Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) to support children and young people, families and educational settings.</p> <p>We will make sure that Preparation for Adulthood is central to all Education, Health and Care Plans and individual SEN plans.</p>	<p>I will feel safe, happy and valued in my nursery, school or college.</p> <p>I will go to my local nursery, school or college and my teachers will know how to support me to achieve my goals.</p> <p>I will enjoy my early years, school or college setting and will have good attendance.</p> <p>I will be able to achieve good qualifications to help me get a good job or higher education.</p> <p>I will know where and how to access information on jobs, courses and volunteering opportunities.</p> <p>I will be confident that I have the skills I need to move on to the next phase in my journey to adulthood.</p>

Family, friends and relationships

What Children and Young People said is important to them	What Parent and Carers said is important to them	What we will do	The difference this will make
<p>Love, care and support.</p> <p>Recognising that families are all different. Being loved and cared for as well as stability, security, trust and safety are important.</p> <p>Stability, security, trust, safety, communication, listening.</p> <p>Making friends is important.</p> <p>Healthy relationships are important e.g. friendships, family, school.</p> <p>Being provided for e.g. food, Wi-Fi, pocket money, shelter.</p> <p>Independence support.</p>	<p>Positive relationships with friends and family.</p> <p>To develop reciprocal relationships/ lasting friendships.</p> <p>Support to develop confidence and self-acceptance.</p> <p>Child/young person's voice is listened to.</p>	<p>We will support schools, education providers and health services to offer education on healthy relationships.</p> <p>We will work as a partnership to support individuals and families to greater empowerment.</p> <p>We will make sure that there is a range of high quality local short break opportunities available for eligible children and young people with SEND.</p> <p>We will hold regular events for Parents and Carers to discuss current SEND issues with local area Leaders. We will find a way to expand this to a children and young person's opportunity.</p> <p>We will listen to, and support, children and young people with SEND to raise their aspirations and achieve their ambitions.</p>	<p>I will know what a healthy relationship is and know how to manage my relationships with different groups of people.</p> <p>I will be able to access places and activities in the community where I can make and maintain friendships.</p> <p>We will be involved in more local decision making.</p> <p>My family/carers will be supported to support me achieve my dreams.</p> <p>We will be more aware of what is, and what isn't, happening in Darlington.</p> <p>I will have a better choice of short breaks available locally.</p>

Into adulthood towards independence

What Children and Young People said is important to them	What Parent and Carers said is important to them	What we will do	The difference this will make
<p>More support with independence from an earlier age.</p> <p>Help with transitions.</p> <p>More support with taxes, budgeting and finances.</p> <p>More work opportunities for under 18's.</p> <p>Life skills - knowing how to move into adulthood.</p> <p>Being able to do things on your own (not relying on anyone), walking to school yourself, cooking own meals, doing laundry yourself.</p>	<p>Improved preparing for adulthood support from an earlier age learning skills for managing finances, transport/travel training opportunities, support to develop confidence and self-acceptance.</p> <p>Choice and flexibility regarding appropriate, supported and fulfilling education and employment opportunities.</p> <p>Increase/improvements in the local post 16 offer.</p> <p>To be as independent as possible.</p> <p>That young people are appropriately supported to become active and contributing members of society.</p> <p>That young people's voices continue to be heard and listened to.</p> <p>Supported opportunities in respect of independent living skills including safe and appropriately supported housing options.</p>	<p>We will make sure that there are clear pathways into adulthood that have been co-produced.</p> <p>We will make sure good quality information and guidance is available for individuals, and their families, as they move from childhood to adulthood. This will include advice on:- finance; benefits; adult services in the NHS and Darlington BC; getting a job; getting a place to live; and adult rights and independence.</p> <p>We will make sure there are clear pathways into employment and opportunities for all.</p> <p>We will make sure that local housing and independent living opportunities are available for those who meet the relevant eligibility criteria.</p> <p>We will work with local +16 education setting to provide better life skills training.</p>	<p>I will know how to manage money and take care of myself.</p> <p>I feel confident to travel safely wherever I want to go.</p> <p>My views are listened too, I will be able to make decisions about the support I need.</p> <p>I will be able to choose where I live, who I live with and will feel supported to live as independently as possible.</p> <p>I will have better support towards work and if I have a job.</p>

Darlington - our town, community and environment

What Children and Young People said is important to them	What Parent and Carers said is important to them	What we will do	The difference this will make
<p>Having a variety of activities that they enjoy. The Dolphin Centre, parks and sports are popular and they enjoy activities such as bowling, shopping, gaming and funfairs as well as groups like Scouts, Brownies & Rainbows.</p> <p>They would like to see less crime and a calmer, cleaner environment with more nature spaces, more play areas with green spaces and more events for teenagers.</p> <p>More youth centres and a wider variety of shops/centres e.g. comic shops, gaming centres, youth centres</p> <p>Safer & better public transport with buses that run after 6pm</p> <p>Less potholes</p>	<p>Increased social & leisure opportunities for those with similar interests including for those with the highest need</p> <p>Safe and inclusive meeting spaces/ places to check in within the community.</p> <p>Increased understanding and acceptance from the whole community with inclusive community opportunities for all ages.</p> <p>To feel valued and to have a sense of belonging and involvement in the community.</p>	<p>We will create and develop a new Local Offer for Darlington. Making sure it is the main information and communication point for SEND locally</p> <p>We will work with local clubs and organisations to support children and young people with SEND to be included in activities and opportunities available across Darlington.</p> <p>We will make sure that community safety works on inclusion of children and young people with SEND, including looking a safe spaces in the local community.</p> <p>We will make sure children and young people with SEND are involved in service development and commissioning activity</p> <p>We will work with local transport providers to make sure public transport is more inclusive and welcoming</p>	<p>I will be able to choose from a variety of activities in Darlington that interest me</p> <p>I know that staff in youth clubs, leisure centres and shops will understand me and know how to communicate with me</p> <p>I can make friends at Inclusive Youth events across Darlington</p> <p>I will feel safer when I am out and about in Darlington</p> <p>I will be asked for my views and be able to change and shape services and facilities in Darlington for me</p> <p>I will be able and supported to use public transport in Darlington</p>



How will we know we have made a difference?

This Strategy will be underpinned by a detailed delivery plan created from the commitments we have made in this strategy.

We will measure impact through performance data gathered across schools, the local authority and the NHS. We will measure this against national and/or local data wherever possible.

The voices of children, young people and parents and carers will be captured through feedback received as part of the quality assurance and review process of both EHC plans and SEN support planning in Schools.

An annual survey and/or engagement sessions in schools and settings will provide the opportunity to gather evidence of impact on the experiences of children and young people.

We will work closely with Darlington Parent Carer Forum, and others, to ensure the voice of parents and carers is heard and understood.

The strategy and plan will be delivered through the SEND Implementation Group and monitored by the SEND Assurance Executive with updates submitted regularly to the Health and Wellbeing Board.

An annual report to the Health & Wellbeing Board will outline our collective achievements as well as any challenges encountered and joint solutions developed which will be publicly available.

Darlington Local Area Partnership

Through these commitments the Local Area SEND partnership looks to offer opportunities for children and young people with SEND to thrive and become active and valued members of the Darlington community.

