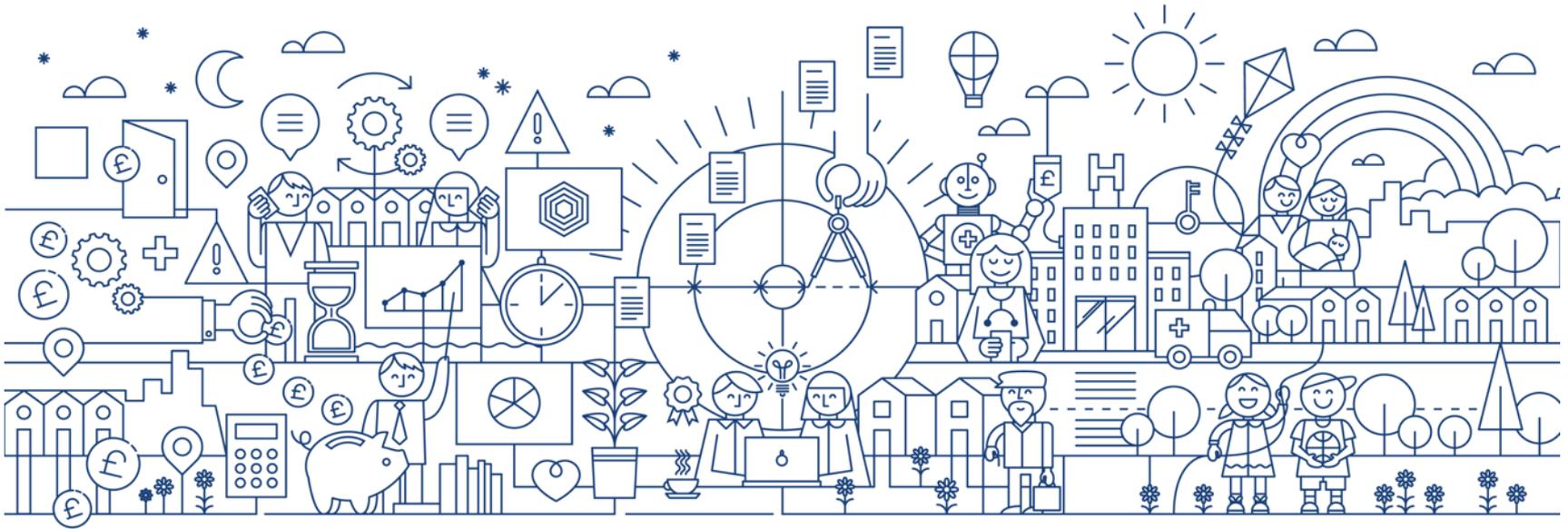


Buckinghamshire High Needs Review Final Report

CONFIDENTIAL

November 2019



Version Control

Version	Date	Author and description
V0.1	15 November 2019	FOS and draft
V0.2	17 th November 2019	RE review of first draft
V0.3	20 th November 2019	FOS edits to first draft
V0.4	25 th November 2019	AC review & edit of second draft
V0.5	28 th November 2019	AC edit to second draft
V0.6	31 st December 2019	OS final edit & review
V1.0	7 th January 2020	Draft version distributed to Steering Group
V1.1	15 th January 2020	Revised version post Steering Group review
V2.0	14 th February 2020	Final report post meeting 7 th February

This report was commissioned by Buckinghamshire County Council as part of the work agreed in the Contract signed October 2019, and as such is governed by the terms and conditions as set out in the aforementioned document.

Contents

Item	Page number
Executive Summary	<u>5</u>
Project Methodology	14
Key Findings	18
Reframing the Problem & Inclusive Ambition	31
Opportunities	<u>35</u>

Introduction

IMPOWER were commissioned by Buckinghamshire County Council to conduct a three-month project to review the SEND system using our avoidable demand analysis approach. This report provides a summary of the key findings and recommendations.

It first describes what we were asked to do, sets out the methodology, and then concludes with a set of findings and associated recommendations. It draws on detail that can be found in the following appendices:

- A. Case Reviews Analysis**
- B. Behavioural Insights Analysis**
- C. Parent Survey and Focus Groups Analysis**
- D. Partner Survey Analysis**
- E. Inclusive Ambition**
- F. Benchmarking Analysis**
- G. Demand/Cost Baseline and Projections**
- H. Valuing SEND Trial**

Executive Summary



Introduction

Buckinghamshire County Council and IMPOWER worked together from August to November 2019 on an avoidable demand analysis of the SEND system. The programme of work was designed to answer four main questions:

- What is the current picture for children with SEND in Buckinghamshire?
- Where are there opportunities to identify alternative ways to support children and young people with SEND that will help them achieve the best outcomes?
- What specific interventions could make a difference? Where in the child/young person's journey would these make the difference?
- What is our inclusive ambition across different elements of the SEND system for children and young people in Buckinghamshire?

EDGEWORK was used to answer these questions. EDGEWORK is IMPOWER's unique approach to understanding and delivering change in complex systems such as public services. This requires a different mindset, an ability to work with people - not just datasets - and a unique set of methods and tools (our Inventive Methods). Using these methods and tools, three main activities were undertaken:

- SEND demand baseline and trajectory;
- Influenceable demand analysis through case reviews, partner and parent surveys and workshops, and panel observations;
- Inclusive ambition setting, through a partner workshop.

Context

The SEND Service, **under new strategic leadership**, has embarked on an **ambitious programme of change** which it has been developing and implementing over the last few months through the SEND Improvement Plan.

The plan is starting to embed and have a **positive impact in terms of both the morale of the service, but also the strengthening of relationships** across the system.

The service has identified **8 key areas of focus and priority** aimed at championing good practice, improving the service and fundamentally **improving outcomes**.

Significant progress has been made; key improvements observed during the project included:

- A service **restructure** to ensure geographical alignment and an **increase in strategic and operational capacity**.
- Securing of **additional funding** to recruit additional **operational staff** to increase capacity.
- **Increased engagement** and joint working with schools through forums such as the Schools Surgery.
- **Revision of panel & decision making** processes to encompass an **outcomes focus** and create wider collective decision making.
- Development of a **revised SEND strategy** underpinned by engagement across key stakeholders and partners.
- Development of a **Sufficiency strategy** to ensure adequate resources to support needs.
- **Ordinarily Available Provision** – developed in collaboration with SENCOs and consultation with partners & head teachers, this document sets out the expectations of all settings for children with SEND and support for areas of need

Context (cont.)

- Building on **positive relationship with FACT Bucks** and engaging parents in the change with representation on the eight focus groups.
- **Development & ongoing consultation** on a potential banding system with Special Schools to ensure consistency of approach and allocation of resources.
- Focus on **quality practice reviewing EHC plans** and embedding **strength based practice**, and ensuring key documents reflect this approach.

Whilst **the leadership is new and starting to embed** changes as highlighted, the impact and longer term outcomes of these changes will need time to come to fruition. There are some **key building blocks being put in place** by the service as part of the Improvement Plan, which **need to be further embedded** to help ensure a fundamental **shift of culture to improve outcomes and deliver value**, including:

- Ensuring that the revised SEND strategy for 2020, through the engagement already underway, encompasses an ambitious inclusive ambition with key stakeholders within the influenceable system to ensure roles are clear and there is collective responsibility
- Maintaining and building upon the engagement and communication strategy that is underway, with staff, parents, schools and partners, to ensure increased trust and confidence
- Ensuring strength-based practice is the norm and is embedded at the heart of all EHC plans to establish a clear link between needs, outcomes, and the support provided.
- Through the transformation work underway and initiatives such as the School Surgeries, ensuring that all pathways and processes are clear so that children & young people, parents / carers and professionals are able to navigate the system and access services where appropriate to prevent needs escalating.
- Ensuring the performance management framework is shared and jointly owned within the service but also across key partners, to underpin shared & inclusive ambition developed through the revised strategy that everyone can coalesce around and work towards.

The Challenge Nationally

Through our work on High Needs and SEND across the country, we are seeing a number of consistent challenges, regardless of how well Ofsted view the effectiveness of local provision and support. These challenges are not dissimilar to those faced by BCC at present, further highlighting the fact that this is a national crisis the sector is facing, and not just a specific local issue. Key findings we have fed into the ongoing SEND Review include:

- Opportunities for effective early intervention are missed across the system.
- System spend and focus is on specialist support - with no evidence of impact or value.
- Demand for specialist support is growing rapidly and budgets are commonly overspent; in the last 5 years, spend has increased by over £1 billion across High Needs.
- Current behaviours/ practice in the system direct demand towards specialist support and there is increasing parental dissatisfaction and increasing numbers of tribunals.
- Demand for EHCPs, special school and AP is increasing with LA budgets typically overspent.
- Support is not tailored to needs and resources are inequitably allocated between & within LAs.
- Professionals and agencies are not joined up around the needs of cohorts.
- There is no clarity or consistency on outcomes achieved for children with SEND.

The Challenge Locally

Buckinghamshire CC, whilst implementing an ambitious improvement and transformation programme, are carrying out this work against a backdrop of challenges which mirror those at a national level:

- **Demand for EHC plans and specialist schools is rising.** This is putting further pressure on financial resources. Projections indicate (before adjustments for inflation) that by 21/22, cost could increase from the 19/20 high needs allocation of £86 million to £94 million, an increase of 10%.
- There are **demographic challenges within Buckinghamshire**, levels of need vary widely across the county particularly between the north and south, with stark difference in complexity to the majority of needs presented in Aylesbury from those in Amersham for instance. This also impacts the level of expectations from parents.
- Potentially, there are greater **opportunities to intervene earlier.** Many early intervention services are available within the county, but in 10 of 14 cases reviewed (and based on interactions with staff) these are sometimes considered to be difficult to access, either because pathways were not clear or because there were capacity constraints.
- The IMPOWER INDEX indicates that Buckinghamshire has a low SEN support rate, but has a high EHCP rate; 2.4% of children have an EHCP, compared to 2.0% amongst statistical neighbours. This suggests that the graduated approach may potentially not be having the desired impact, leading to escalating needs.

The Challenge Locally (cont.)

- The service now has a **new stable leadership team** and has been working to restructure & transform the service to affect **positive change & improved outcomes**. The service has in the past been **impacted by changes in leadership** which meant that sometimes there has been a perception of a lack of a consistent strategic direction and processes by key stakeholders.
- The SEND strategy is currently being revised, **underpinned by a series of engagement events** with key stakeholders within the influenceable system. Ensuring an **inclusive consistent vision and strategy owned by key stakeholders** through this process will aid the ongoing rebuilding of relationships and trust in the system and **encourage positive cultural change through collective responsibility and ownership**.
- **Some parents / carers do not feel their input is valued**, with 61% of respondents to the survey stating they had not been involved in trying to improve services. Whilst it is not possible to always involve everyone at any one time, the service is trying to re-address this balance **through strengthening and building upon the relationship with FACT Bucks and ensuring parent representation and engagement** at all key events and change activities, for instance within each of the 8 Focus Groups
- The **historic perceived lack of co-production with some parents / carers on support planning** has resulted in strained relationships with some (but not all) parents and sometimes a strong sense of frustration. This is **influencing both behaviours and demand** which the service is trying to **positively address** and manage through increased positive engagement and a significant culture shift.

The Challenge Locally (cont.)

- Whilst there are **some excellent examples of inclusivity across mainstream and special school settings**, ensuring there is a consistent approach and understanding will be critical going forwards to ensure that pupils are able to **achieve the best possible outcomes**. The service is building upon this, for example through its **ongoing consultation on the feasibility of a Special school bandings system and the development of the Ordinarily Available Provision** strategy.
- **Needs, provision, finances and outcomes are not well connected**. The current approach does not create a clear link between needs, provision, outcomes & cost, which may mean that children are not getting the right provision to effectively support needs and outcomes. It is difficult for the service to establish whether value is being achieved.
- **There are challenges with tracking outcomes**. The SEND service has been working to improve its performance framework and monitoring, which has resulted in significant improvements in performance, particularly against statutory measures. However, there are system challenges in tracking qualitative outcomes for children and young people.
- The **SEND Service has previously had limited capacity, both strategically and operationally**, which made the challenge of the delivery of any cultural change or transformation initiatives significantly harder. This has been addressed in part by the introduction of additional strategic capacity through the new leadership team, a restructure of the existing service, increased investment in operational resource (currently being finalised) and increased transformation and change resource. However, it will take time for these resources to embed and bring about change, and significant investment in cultural change will also be required.

Opportunities

Strengthen the Local Offer

- Ensure a clear offer through the revised Local Offer that is accessible to parents/carers and professionals, encouraging self-serve information and advice.

Continue to drive earlier identification & support

- **Build confidence among parents/ carers** and professionals in the capability of the system to provide the right support at an earlier stage.

Embrace a strengths based approach to conversations

- Continue to embed strengths based practice at key interaction points across a family and child's journey, building positive relationships and identifying appropriate levels of support for children and young people.

Adopt a needs codification tool

- **Clearly identify and codify needs at an earlier stage** to enable more tailored support, and undertake a continuous drive to reduce needs wherever possible – in turn this enables an opportunity to **ensure support is stepped up/ down appropriately & regularly assessed**

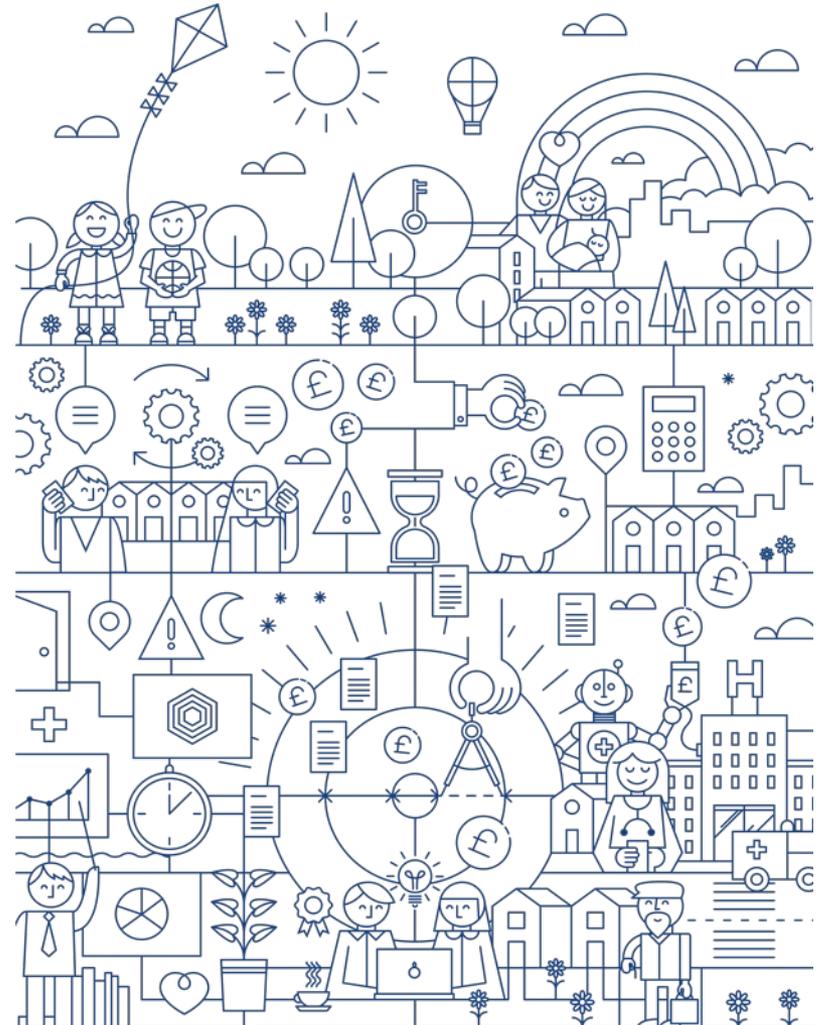
Optimise decision-making

- Continue to embed robust decision-making around EHC plans through the new panel approach, ensuring that plans are the best way forward to meet a child or young person's needs.

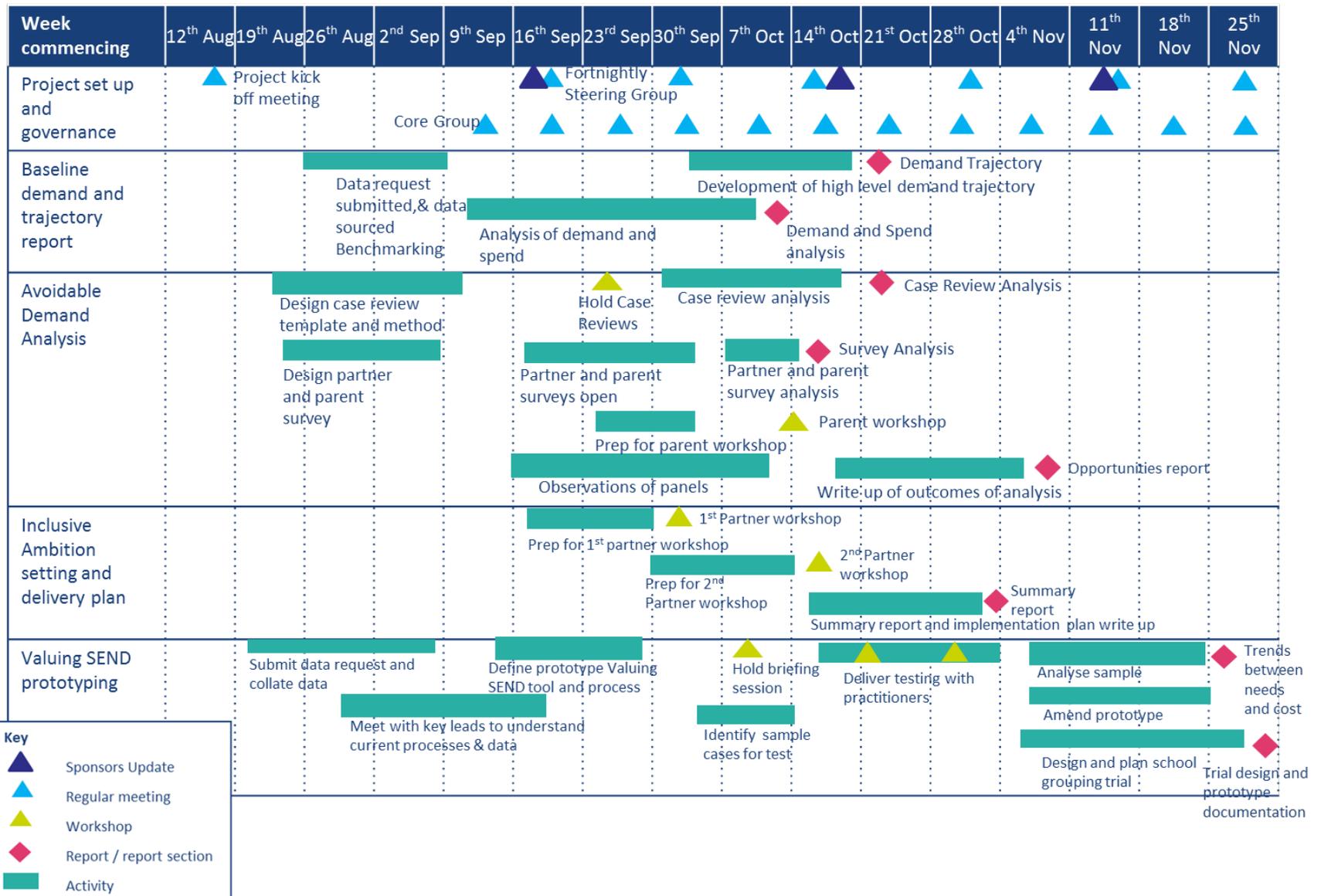
Develop and embed capabilities to drive inclusion

- Work with parents, carers and professionals to give primacy to inclusion and long term independence in the planning of support for children and young people.

Project Methodology



Project Overview



Introduction | Project Activity

The table below sets out the key activities undertaken to gather insight and shape recommendations:

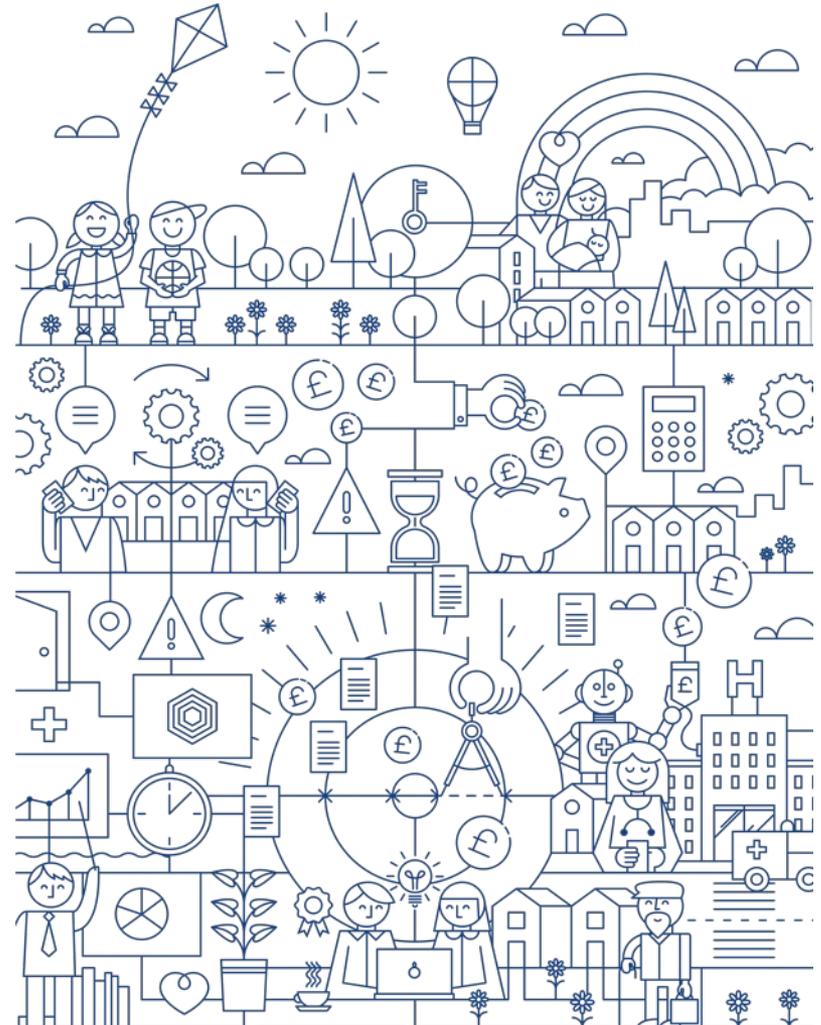
Project Activity	Objective	Who was involved
Local demand and benchmarking	Understand demand trends and benchmark against statistical neighbour and national averages. Use local data to gain a further in-depth knowledge of the local landscape.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BCC performance team ▪ Children’s Finance team
Demand & Trajectory Analysis	Understand existing baseline and future demand and spend trajectory.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BCC performance team ▪ Children’s Finance Team
Case Reviews	Identify opportunities to prevent, reduce or delay escalation of needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Approximately 20 reviewers from across the SEND system including social care, education and health
Parent/Carer Survey	Understand the experience and expectations of parents and identify future opportunities to support earlier/differently.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 250 responses received
Professionals Survey	Understand the experiences of professionals working in the SEND system and future opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 225 responses were received from professionals across a range of services
Parent engagement sessions	Understand first-hand the experience of parents and their ideas and thoughts for improvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 13 parents ▪ FACT Bucks parents representative
Inclusive Ambition Partner Workshop	Share and explore initial findings with those working across the system to develop recommendations for change and build an inclusive ambition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 15 professionals from across the High Needs system ▪ FACT Bucks Parent representative

Introduction | Project Activity

The table below sets out the key activities undertaken to gather insight and shape recommendations:

Project Activity	Objective	Who was involved
Panel Observations & Comms Review	Understand current messaging and use MINDSPACE to identify opportunities to influence behaviour and expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Allocations meeting for EHC plan requests ▪ EHC Plan document review ▪ Placement decision sheet review ▪ SEND Placement Panel ▪ EHC Assessment Decision Advice Sheet review ▪ Weekly SEND Surgeries ▪ Weekly Schools Surgery ▪ SEMH working group ▪ Shout out for SEND conference ▪ Local Offer website
Valuing SEND information and trial session	To share and explore the concept of a Valuing SEND tool with SENDco's to understand its potential application in Buckinghamshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Approximately 15 SENDcos from across the county ▪ Head of SEND Service

Key Findings



Key Findings | Summary

1

Rising demand is leading to increasing costs which are not sustainable

2

Maximising potential opportunities to intervene earlier will help reduce unsustainable demand for specialist services

3

Revised SEND strategy provides an opportunity to realign and communicate an inclusive vision within the influenceable system

4

Empowering and supporting parents and professionals to not see an EHCP as a default solution

5

Relationships and a joined-up approach across all parts of the SEND system are key

6

Ensuring clarity & consistency around expectations of mainstream settings is key to achieving better outcomes

7

Provision is not consistently linked to needs and outcomes

8

There are challenges with performance oversight in tracking individual needs and outcomes

9

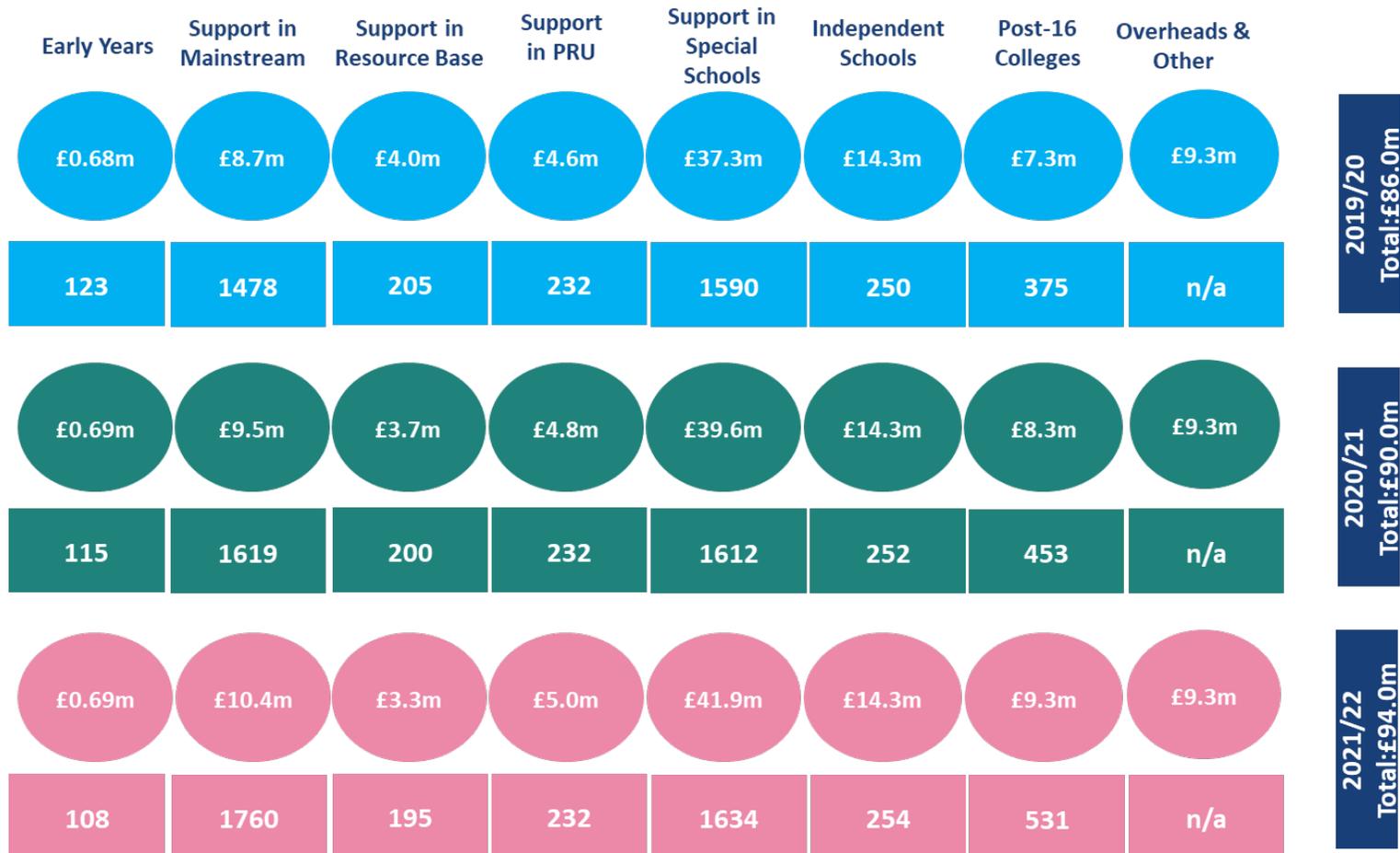
The SEND service has a growing capacity to implement strategic or operational change and improve outcomes

These findings are evidenced in detail on pages 20-30.

Finding 1 | Rising demand is leading to increasing costs which are not sustainable

The High Needs Block Funding (HNBF) allocation has been over spent for the last three financial years and an over spend of **£3.46m** is currently forecast for 2019/20.

Demand has risen by 10% over the last two years and if it continues to rise at the same rate, costs will potentially increase by approximately **£7m** by 2021/22, from **£86m to £94m** (excluding inflation). This is not a financially sustainable position for the council.



Finding 2 | Maximising potential opportunities to intervene earlier will help reduce unsustainable demand for specialist services

Could anything have been done differently to prevent/ delay/ reduce the need for specialist support?



As part of establishing the demand baseline, 18 cases were reviewed by a multi-disciplinary group of professionals and a representative from FACT Bucks.

In **78%** of cases reviewed, it was felt that the need for specialist services could have been reduced, prevented or delayed. With other local authorities who have undertaken this exercise, this number has ranged from 35% to 69%

Case reviewers often selected this answer when they felt that available services had not been used. In **70%** of those cases, the interventions that would have made a difference were available but the child or young person did not access them or accessed them too late.

Reviewers identified challenges with accessing a range of services, especially therapies due to capacity issues experienced by both BCC and partners.

In **89%** of cases reviewed, need was identified by age 5. However, an opportunity was missed to identify need and provide support in early years, with little evidence of health professionals raising concerns about SEND before a child started nursery.

This was a discussion point across the reviews in terms of reduced numbers of health checks and access to early help and what the impact on identifying needs early on might have been or will be in the future

Finding 2 | Maximising potential opportunities to intervene earlier would help reduce unsustainable demand for specialist services

30% of parents / carers surveyed agreed that their child had benefited from the graduated response.

The IMPOWER INDEX indicates that in Buckinghamshire, 6.8% of children receive SEN support, compared with 8.6% amongst statistical neighbours.

This may suggest children with lower levels of need are not being identified and supported.

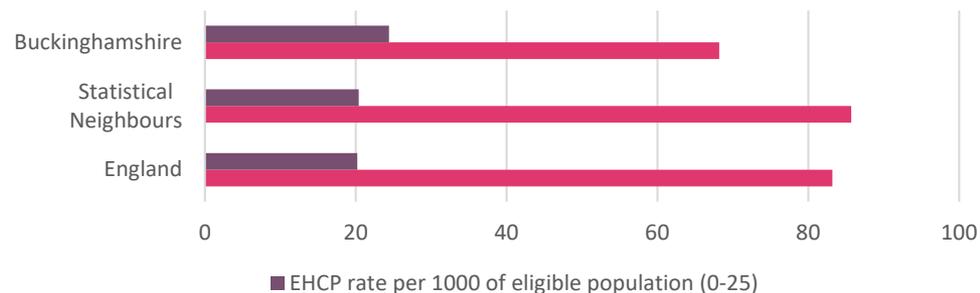
Buckinghamshire has a comparatively low SEN support rate, but has a high EHCP rate; 2.4% of children have an EHCP, compared to 2.0% amongst statistical neighbours.

This suggests that needs potentially escalate because they are not met early enough.

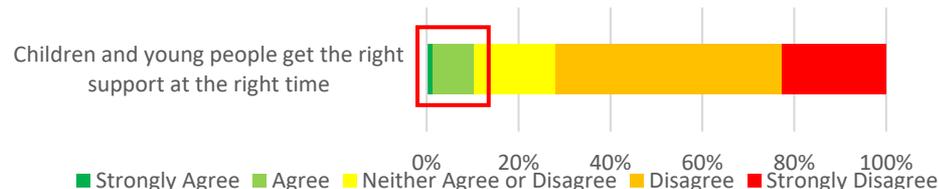
10% of the professionals surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that children got the right support at the right time.

25% of parents / carers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that their child received the right support at the right time

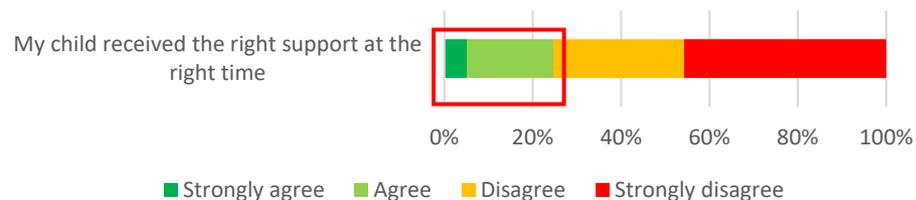
SEN Support and EHCP rates



Professionals' Survey



Parent/Carers' Survey



Finding 3 | Revised SEND strategy provides an opportunity to realign and communicate an inclusive vision within the influenceable system

36% of professionals strongly agreed or agreed that they were clear on the vision for SEND services and what it is trying to achieve.

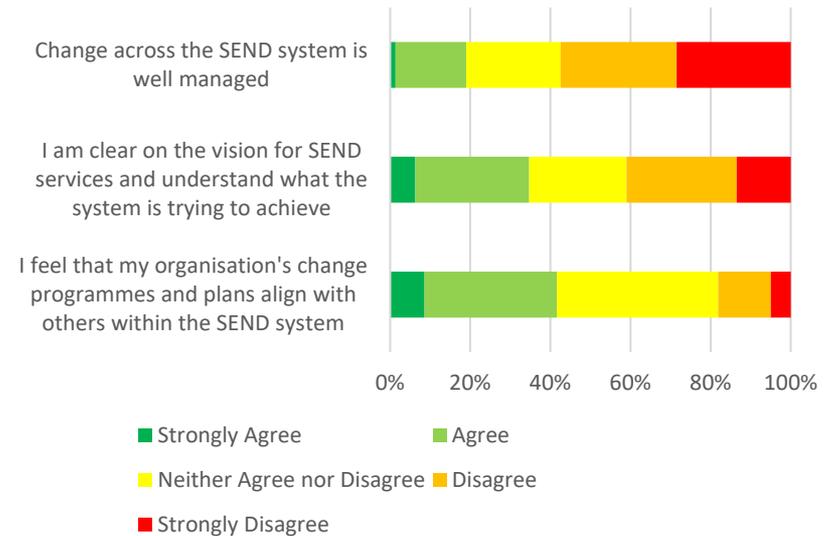
25% of parents / carers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed there is a clear vision for the SEND system.

Engagement with both professionals and parents through the Inclusive Ambition workshop highlighted that there is agreement on key principles for the SEND system, including that it must be:

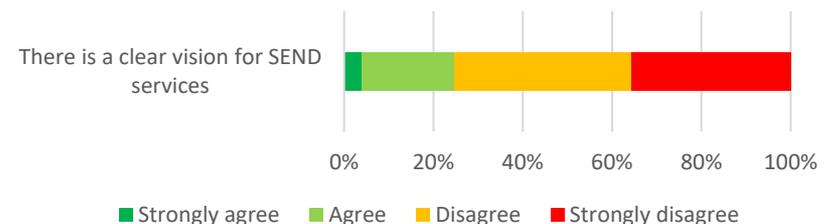
- strength-based, outcomes-focused,
- child-centred; and
- utilise early intervention.

This aligns with the existing vision, but provides an opportunity to recommunicate and reinforce that this is not just a shared but an inclusive vision for which there must be collective ownership .

Professionals' Survey



Parent and Carers' Survey



Finding 3 | Revised SEND strategy provides an opportunity to realign and communicate an inclusive vision within the influenceable system

A revised strategy, to replace the 2017-2020 SEND Strategy, is in the early stages of development and will be launched in April 2020.

The development of this is being underpinned by an engagement strategy to bring together different views across the influenceable system with key stakeholders.

This co-production is critical to increasing buy-in with key partners, including parents, to ensure and promote collective ownership and an agreed consensus.

Feedback received has been that partners have been frustrated with the changes in leadership within the service. This has led to a perception of a changing strategy, with long term aspirations losing out to emerging and short term issues.

"I would like to see a long-term coherent strategy for education, SEND and linked agencies. Once created it would be good for leaders at county level to stay around ... so we can stop the cycle of short term fire fighting. This would allow for the schools and services across SEND to work together to address the needs for the whole county..."



Professionals' survey

Finding 4 | Empowering and supporting parents and professionals to not see an EHCP as a default solution is critical to achieving better outcomes

There is an opportunity to raise awareness of the different support and training already available for parents from across the council, partners and voluntary sectors.

At the parent engagement sessions, parents fed back that some people were not aware of the support available, or were concerned about the stigma attached to asking for help, particularly if this involved Social Services.

A reflection from the inclusive ambition and parent engagement workshops was that sometimes SENDCOs did not feel empowered, or felt their lack of specialist knowledge prevented them from putting in place resolutions rather than defaulting to the EHCP process.

A robust induction programme for new staff is also being created by the service to help ensure that people are equipped with the right skills and operate in a strength based way from the beginning.

The website for the Local Offer is currently being revised; a brief review of the existing offer was undertaken to help inform future changes based on our experience of best practice elsewhere.

Finding 5 | Relationships and a joined-up approach across all parts of the SEND system are key

The perceived lack of joined-up working and shared responsibility was a key theme to emerge through engagement during the project.

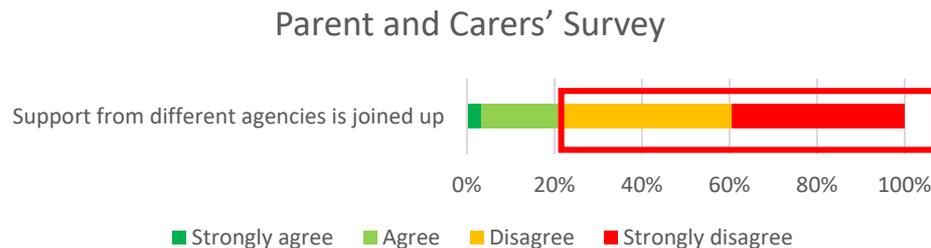
79% of parent / carer survey respondents disagreed that support within the system was joined up. This lack of cohesion is leading to confusion and some friction, particularly with parents / carers, where conflicting messages arise.

During engagement sessions, such as the parent / carer forum and Shout Out for SEND day, participants highlighted the number of people involved in their support and how this sometimes leads to inconsistent messaging where there is a lack of joint working and co-production.

Buckinghamshire must ensure that the system is joined up both in terms of pathways and process but also in terms of its practice and approach. This must be based around co-production in order to ensure that expectations of parents / carers are managed at each point of contact to prevent needs escalating.

"You definitely have to tell your story over and over..."

Parent focus group



"Why are there so many therapists?"

Young person at Shout Out for SEND

Finding 6 | Ensuring clarity & consistency around expectations of all settings will help achieve better outcomes

At all the engagements, the lack of clarity around expectations was raised - not just at mainstream schools but across all settings within Buckinghamshire. The service is taking positive steps to address this through:

- The development of an Ordinarily Available Provision document which sets out expectations of all schools (this was developed in conjunction with SENCOs and in consultation with partners and headteachers).
- Ongoing consultation and development to assess the feasibility of special school bandings to help drive consistency of approach and allocation of support and resource.

Young people at the Shout Out for SEND day reflected support was not consistent across settings. This perceived lack of clarity makes it harder for all staff to manage the expectations of parents and young people, who might receive different advice from different professionals as a result.

The council has recently started a series of engagement sessions both with professionals and young people. This is a positive step in starting to manage expectations and clarify roles and joint working, however it is essential that this positive engagement continues.

Finding 7 | Provision is not consistently linked to needs and outcomes

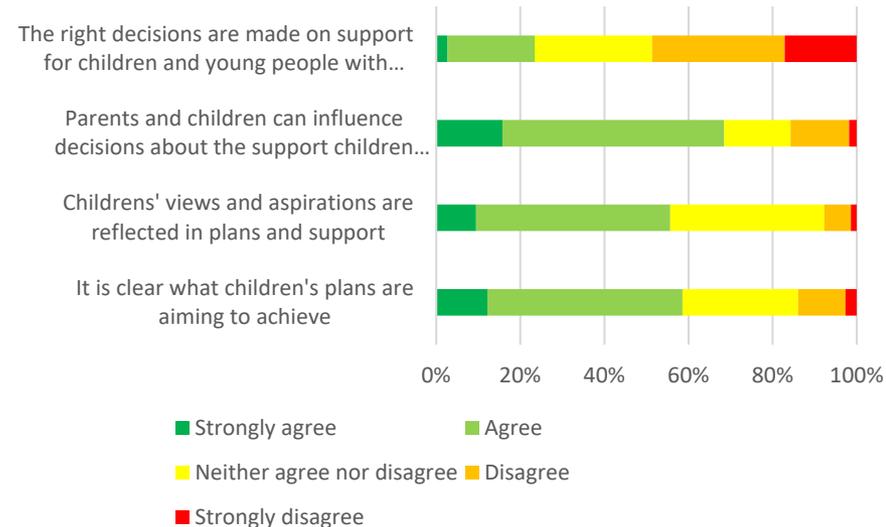
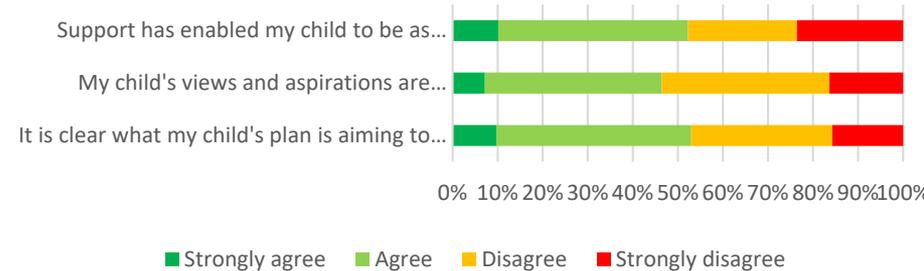
In **39%** of cases reviewed, case reviewers did not think outcomes were clear.

In these cases, outcomes were regarded as vague or impersonal, and focussed more on risks and behaviours as opposed to supporting the management of need.

Reflecting the range of experiences and expectations, parents / carers and professionals had very mixed views about whether the system was needs and outcomes focused:

- **50%** of parents / carers surveyed agreed that their child's plan had clear outcomes, reflected their views and aspirations and supported their child to be as independent as possible.
- **58%** of professionals surveyed agreed that it is clear what children's plans are trying to achieve, but only **39%** thought support enabled children to be as independent as possible.

Parent/Carer Survey



Finding 8 | There are challenges with performance oversight in tracking individual needs and outcomes

The quality of data and performance reporting for statutory measures has greatly improved in recent months. However, performance monitoring across the services does not capture whether needs have been met and outcomes achieved.

The Integrated Services Board receives a performance report, whole-system in its focus, looking at a range of measures across health, social care and education. However, it does not include measures of need and outcomes beyond key indicators.

Whilst the board also receives finance reports, cost is not explicitly tied to performance and outcomes in reporting, which means it is difficult for the service to determine whether it is delivering value in terms of what is achieved through the support provided.

There could be a greater awareness at an operational level of performance to help identify successes but to also to help identify issues earlier.

While there was a general appreciation of the need to be cost effective, officers are not always aware of the cumulative cost of the support they provide across services and plans.

Finding 9 | The SEND service has a growing capacity to implement strategic & operational change and improve outcomes

Historically, management changes within the SEND service have contributed to a sometimes negative perception of the service and a feeling of a lack of a consistent strategy or plan. However, recent appointments have stabilised and started to shift perceptions.

The new leadership of the Integrated SEND service is well regarded by parents and professionals and is increasing in capacity to provide a strong base to support change. Currently, positive changes are underway to the system, but there is a risk that strategic change capacity is absorbed by short term issues that arise. The transformation agenda could be disrupted as a result, so this must be closely monitored.

At an operational level, a lack of capacity has also been a significant challenge within the SEND team, with officers currently holding case loads of c350. This has driven communication problems across the system, as the team lack capacity to respond to queries in a timely manner.

Parents highlighted unanswered phones and emails, being unaware of processes, and not being informed about decisions and the reasons behind them.

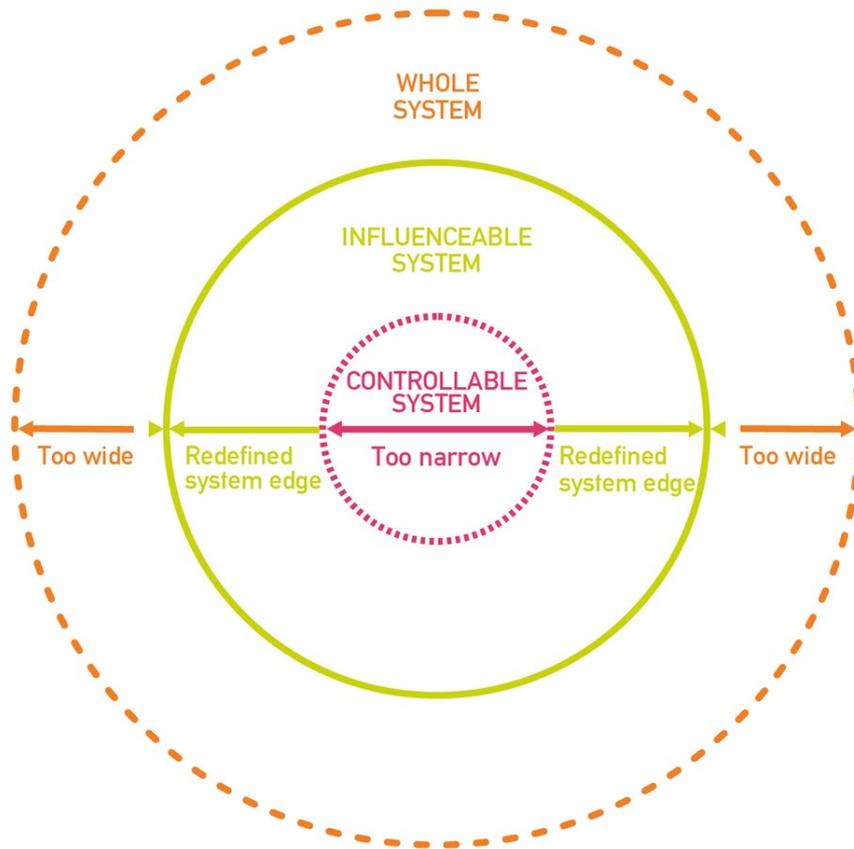
Commitment from the Local Authority has resulted in a significant number of appointments being made to resolve this, with a significant investment in operational roles.

There is a lack of clarity about the current role of the team and its relationship with early intervention services. This means that the SEND team is contacted about a whole range of issues that should be directed to the Family Information Service and the Local Offer. It is recognised that there is ongoing restructuring service improvement activity underway within the Early Help service.

Reframing the Problem & Inclusive Ambition



Reframing the problem



Reframing the problem

IMPOWER believe that to manage complex systems you need to **reframe the problem** by **widening the lens**, to look beyond the ‘controllable system’, to the ‘influenceable system’. This diagram is used to explain this thinking. It is central to EDGEWORK and how we think about the public sector challenge.

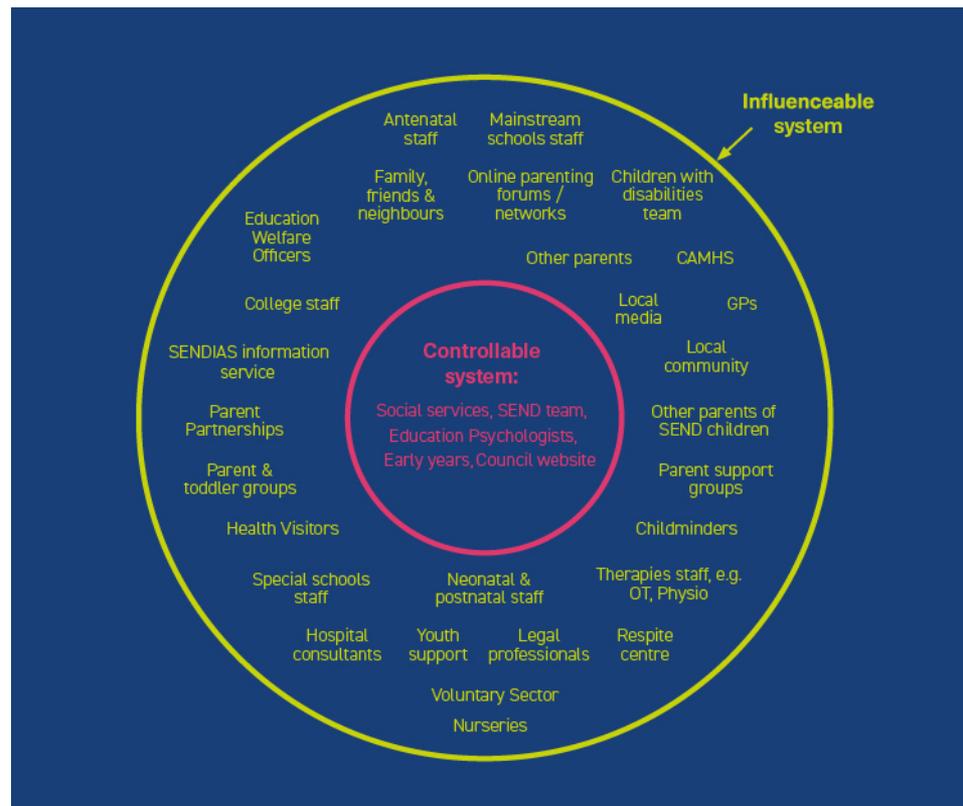
Leaders often focus on the controllable system – the things under their direct influence. We believe that the focus should be expanded to the middle ground – the influenceable system.

This is particularly important:

- **When managing demand** – by widening the scope to include the partners and stakeholders we can influence, we are able to manage the demand they drive to our controllable system more effectively.
- **Building confidence in leaders** – to define the wider space they are operating in; managing that space and knowing it is working.

SEND influenceable system

Nowhere is the concept of widening the lens more appropriate than SEND. The diagram below is an example of the controllable and influenceable parts of the system for the SEND service; it is imperative that when considering a new vision and strategy that all of these stakeholders are considered.



Draft Inclusive Ambition

An Inclusive Ambition workshop was held by Buckinghamshire and facilitated by IMPOWER. An inclusive ambition is a common aspiration that everyone can work towards together. An inclusive ambition was developed by attendees, looking into the future around how they would want the system to be in the next 5 years.



Child-led

Provision not only takes into account a child's views and is child-centred, but is child-led. The child is the driver of their support which helps them reach their potential, be as independent as possible and prepares them for adulthood.



Empowering

All professionals take and share responsibility for children with SEND. Schools are supported to help a child, instead of a child receiving external support services in school. Professionals in mainstream schools feel empowered to support children with SEND. Provision is so embedded in schools that the terms 'inclusion', 'special' and 'different' become irrelevant.



Needs and outcomes-focused

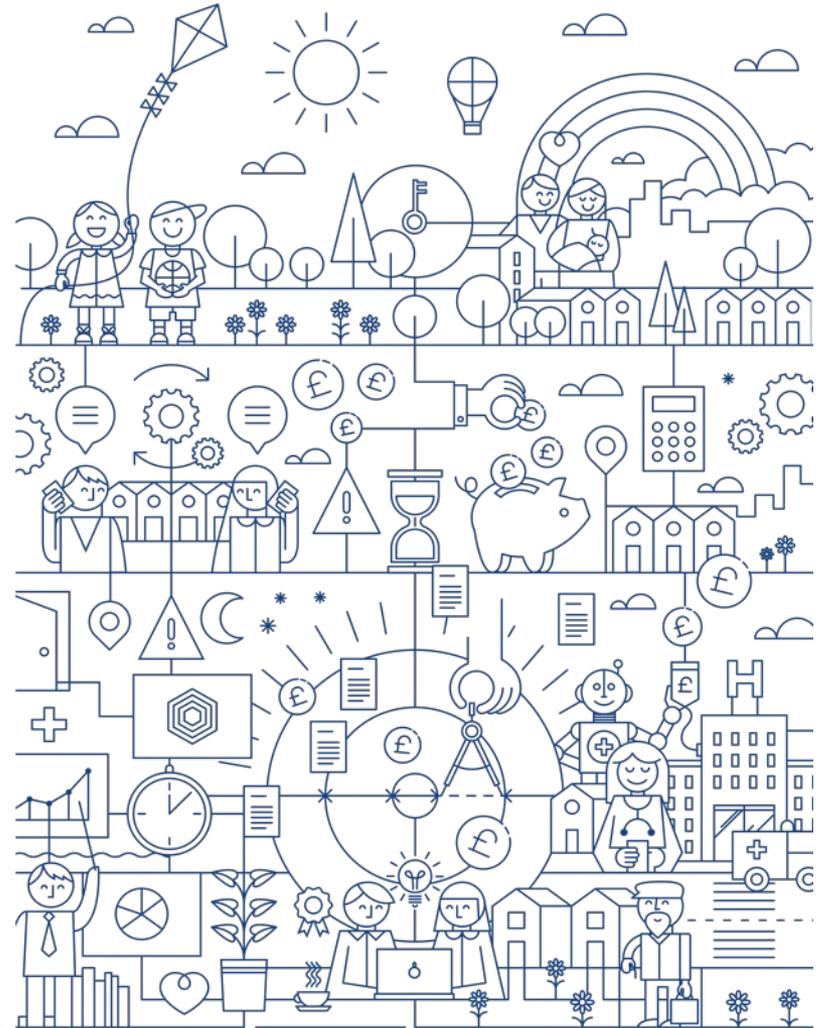
Children, parents and professionals co-produce common final goals. Everyone has access to the provision they need. Outcomes are not about managing behaviour in a setting but truly meeting need. Children are not judged based on a diagnosis but given the individual support they need. Diagnosis is not a barrier to receiving support. Parents are involved throughout.



Consistent and joined-up

Everyone understands how the system works and has a shared language and vision. Professionals and parents understand their respective roles and know what good looks like. Support is equitable and consistent, while still being flexible enough to meet needs. Processes are clear, efficient and effective. Children have a smooth journey through the system, with well-managed transitions.

Opportunities



Opportunities

Opportunity area	Related activities
1. Strengthen the Local Offer website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure a clear offer through the revised Local Offer that is accessible to parents/carers and professionals, encouraging self-serve information and advice. ▪ Use behavioural insights to shape messaging to Local Offer website users ▪ Promote the Local Offer and how to access it widely, thinking about the different routes that parents already use to access support and ensuring it is easy to find.
2. Continue to drive earlier identification and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work with Early Years practitioners to increase awareness of SEND and how best to meet needs. Consider using an ‘Inclusion kitemark’ to encourage best practice around meeting the needs of young children with SEND. ▪ Strengthen workforce development core offer to include priority training areas (e.g. Nurture, ELKLAN, restorative practice) ▪ Facilitate best practice sharing between schools by further developing SENCO networks
3. Embrace a strengths based approach to conversations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to embed strengths based practice at key interaction points across a family and child’s journey, building positive relationships and identifying appropriate levels of support for children and young people. ▪ Develop SENCO training offer on good communications practice with families, to include strengths-based conversations ▪ Work with parent/ carer forum to develop accessible guidance, responding to parents’ concerns through their journey with their child’s education and supporting trusting relationships between families and agencies

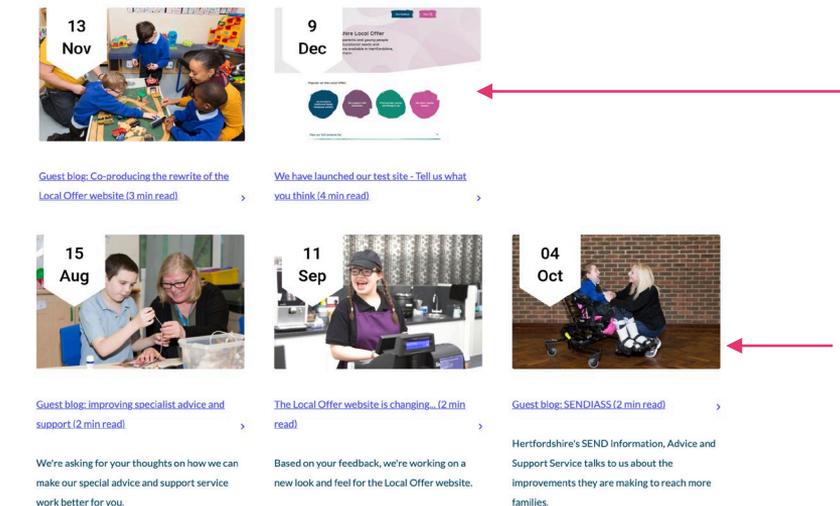
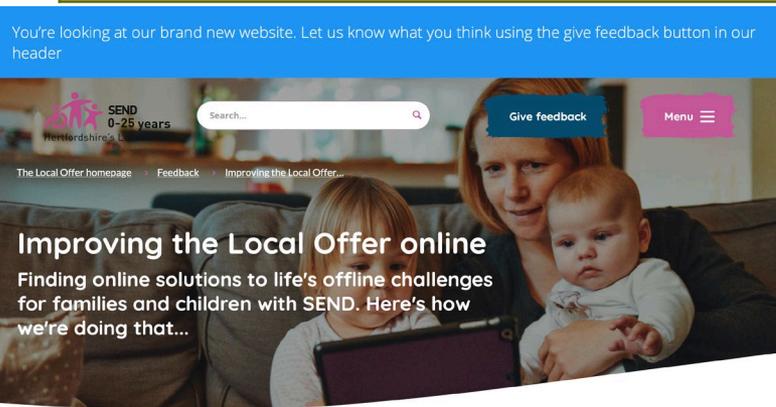
Opportunities

Opportunity area	Related activities
4. Build capacity to tailor support to needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Needs could be more clearly identified and codified at an earlier stage via a needs codification tool to enable more tailored support and a continuous drive to work towards outcomes and reduce needs wherever possible ▪ Use the resulting consistent needs profiles to ensure support is stepped up/ down appropriately and regularly reviewed
5. Optimise decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strengthen panels using behavioural insights to ensure focus is on child's needs and thereby enabling grip of cost and outcomes ▪ Work with partners to ensure appropriate completion of documentation, allowing decisions to be based on a full understanding of child's needs in the round
6. Develop and embed capabilities to drive inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review documentation to ensure a focus on independence from the point of EHCP being issued ▪ Consider using an Ethical Leadership training programme for headteachers, to build inclusive practice at the most senior levels ▪ Use school networks to support peer-to-peer challenge around inclusion at headteacher level, e.g. hold exclusion management boards in local areas, to be chaired by a different head at each meeting

Opportunities – best practice examples | Hertfordshire County Council

1. Strengthen the Local Offer website

Hertfordshire County Council have recently re-launched their Local Offer website, having co-produced new content and structure with their parent/carer forum to make it as easy as possible to access information about support around SEND, both from agencies, the third sector and peers.



There is a feedback prompt at the top of every screen meaning feedback can be given in real time whilst interacting with the website.

The visuals and images used make pages memorable. Parents describe themselves as getting lost in the pages of the Warwickshire local offer.

The parent / carer forum are invited to write about the coproduction process and how they have influenced and agreed it. Coproduction is highlighted throughout the website and contributions from parents are the norm. SEND parents trust other SEND parents so this is a very effective way of information sharing.

Content is regularly updated. Contributions from many different people are included such as local authority officers, parents and families, the information and advice service. Timings are given indicating how long each will take to read.

Opportunities – best practice examples | East Sussex County Council

2. Continue to drive earlier identification and support

2. Summary of approach

Based on feedback from surveys, a county-wide capacity-building and professional development programme was developed, focused specifically on the areas highlighted as development needs by SENCOs and teaching staff. In response to audits outlined above, CPD in 2018 has included:

- Workshops for new-to-role SENCOs delivered by ISEND service professionals;
- Targeted workshops for trainee teachers and newly-qualified teachers on specific areas of SEND; and
- Targeted SEND training for class teachers based on an innovative model that includes opportunities to plan and deliver lessons with colleagues.

CPD sessions run through local SENCO hubs have also been established and are becoming embedded across East Sussex. Local SENCO hubs have accessed co-ordinated advice and guidance from colleagues from health services, parent support services and ISEND services – the agenda is set by SENCOs based on current issues experienced in schools.

A lead SENCO Programme has provided a model for building additional capacity for school-to-school support and improvement focused on SEND. Mental health and emotional wellbeing are key areas of focus, and a new advisory SENCO role has been created. Part of this role entails delivering bespoke workshops for schools, which have been running during this academic year.

3. Source

LGA 'Developing and sustaining an effective local SEND system'

Opportunities – best practice examples | Warrington City Council

5. Optimise decision-making

Summary of approach

Interventions trialled to influence behaviour and impact on demand:

- Changing the form used to present EHC cases
- New terms of reference for panel
- Cases presented in band order to 'anchor' lower band first in people's minds
- Personal e-mails sent to partners to help encourage attendance & weekly nudge text reminders
- 'Priming' the environment by using a white board to track decisions live
- Awareness raising sessions with a range of professionals on thresholds & panel expectations

Evidence of impact:

- Panel time has halved from 4 to 2 hours through more focused decision making with better information
- A higher proportion of requests for statutory assessment were declined, with 20 fewer assessments
- 13% of requests for new resources were declined and 43% were agreed at a lower level than requested
- 44% of requests to increase top-ups were declined and 16% were agreed at a lower level of support.
- 33% of placement change requests were also declined and 17% were agreed at a lower cost than the existing placement.
- Council estimate savings of **approx. £500k after 12 months**

Source

Area SEND Inspection Report, November 2016

Opportunities – best practice examples | Leeds City Council

6. Develop and embed capabilities to drive inclusion

Summary of approach

Funding for inclusion, including for the early years, allows funding resources to be used to meet children and young people's needs whether or not there is an EHC plan or statement of special educational needs in place. The local area monitors whether this additional funding is making a positive difference in meeting children and young people's needs and responds appropriately if not. Schools and settings, including the college visited, reported satisfaction with the funding process as it currently stands.

Leaders make effective use of resources by allocating funding and decision making to area inclusion partnerships (AIPs). Leaders of groups of schools ensure that the funding is targeted to those young people most in need. As a result, permanent exclusions are low, and even non-existent, in some areas of Leeds.

Joint actions between local services and schools have led to very low rates of permanent exclusion. Consequently, more children benefit from greater continuity in their learning.

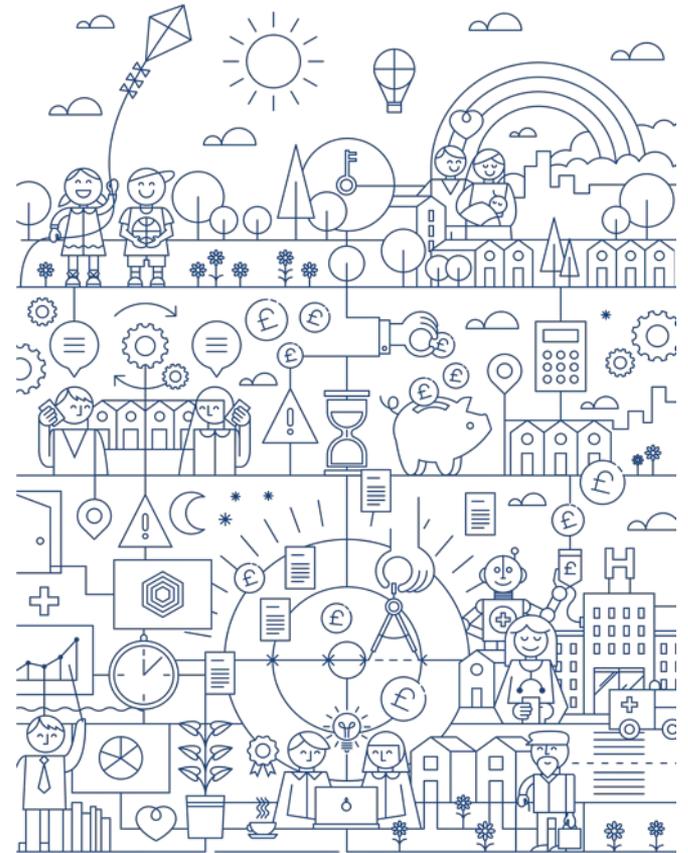
Source

Area SEND Inspection Report, December 2016

Contact

IMPOWER Consulting Ltd
112-114 Middlesex Street
London, E1 7HY

enquiries@impower.co.uk
impower.co.uk



Disclaimer

The Customer is responsible for determining whether the scope of the work we have been asked to carry out is sufficient for the purposes of this report.

It should be noted and it is expressly stated that no independent verification of any of the documents or information supplied to us has been made. We make no representation or warranty and give no undertaking as to the accuracy, reasonableness or completeness of the information contained in this report or any document or information supplied to us.

In this report we have assumed, having raised queries as we saw appropriate: that all of the information supplied to us was, when given and remains, true, complete and accurate and not misleading; that the documents we have examined are true, complete and accurate copies of the originals and that the signatures on those documents are genuine; that appropriate personnel at the Customer will have read the documents in case any such document reveals matters of significance which could only be identified by people with knowledge of the Customer's specific circumstances; and that no term of any agreement comprised in the documents received by us has been amended orally by the parties or by conduct or by course of dealing without our being aware of such amendment. In addition, there may be agreements which are wholly oral of which we are unaware.

This report reflects the state of the Customer as at the date provided at the front of it. However, further information may be received, disclosures may be made or information identified which may change the position of this report after the date of it. We do not accept any responsibility or obligation to update this report, correct any inaccuracies or provide any further information which may become known to it after the date of this report.

This report is addressed to the Customer and is for their sole information and use in connection with the matter. We accept no responsibility for any reliance placed on this report for any purpose other than the matter or by any person other than the Customer. We shall not in any circumstances be liable to the Customer for any loss of profit or any other consequential or indirect loss (howsoever arising).

The contents of this report are strictly private and confidential and this report is being made available to the Customer solely on that basis. This report must not be made available; or copied, quoted or referred to (in whole or in part) without the prior written consent of us, provided that the Customer may disclose this report to those of its respective employees, directors and advisers who are directly involved in the matter. Neither this report, nor and right under it, as assignable.