

Responses from the Consultation on the Draft Wolverhampton's Strategy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities 2020

Consultation Process

Consultation commenced on 14 July 2020 and ran until 21 September 2020.

At the beginning of the consultation period, consultation documentation was shared with stakeholders including:

- Children and young people with SEND via schools,
- Parents and carers of children and young people with SEND via schools
- Local schools' headteachers, SENCOs and chairs of governors,
- Wolverhampton Ward Councillors,
- Members of Wolverhampton's Children and Families Together Board,
- Members of Wolverhampton's SEND and Commissioning Partnership Board,
- Members of Wolverhampton's Health Steering Group,
- Educational trade union representatives,
- Local diocesan authorities,
- The West Midlands Regional Schools Commissioner,
- Members of Parliament for Wolverhampton,
- Members of ConnectEd Partnership Board,
- Voice for Parents,
- Give Us a Break,
- Let Us Play,
- Include Me Too,
- The Way Youth Zone, and
- Barnardo's.

The consultation was hosted on the City of Wolverhampton Council's website and was further promoted via:

- Wolverhampton Today (the City of Wolverhampton Council's Facebook page),
- The City of Wolverhampton Councils Twitter and Instagram.

- The City of Wolverhampton Council's Intranet - City People,
- Wolverhampton's Information, Advice and Support Service's Facebook and Twitter page,
- Voice 4 Parents' Facebook page,
- The City of Wolverhampton Council's weekly Headteachers' Bulletin,
- Wolverhampton's SEND Local Offer Website.

A more accessible, easy read version of the SEND Strategy and consultation survey was available to support widespread engagement and published on the Local Offer. Children and young people were encouraged to participate through the completion of an interactive online survey, schools were asked to support this activity through Headteachers Bulletin and direct emails to all Wolverhampton SENCO and special school headteachers.

Three focus groups were hosted online, facilitated by Voice 4 Parents, for parents, carers and families on 14 September 2020.

Feedback was also sought from the Council's Leadership Forum, Corporate Parenting Board, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs) and The Health Steering Group during the consultation period.

Outcomes of Consultation

The City of Wolverhampton Council received 96 responses, to the consultation on the draft SEND Strategy, from a range of stakeholders including, Children and young people, parents/carers, members of school staff, voluntary sector council organisations, Wolverhampton Councillors and SEND professionals.

A breakdown of participants is available in the table below:

	Children and Young People	Parents and Families	CWC employee	NHS Employee	School employee	W-ton Councillor or MP	Other	Total
Total	7	29	41	4	11	1	3	96
Percentage	7%	30%	43%	4%	12%	1%	3%	

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the vision for children and young people with SEND?

Wolverhampton is an inclusive city where we work together to support children, young people, and their families with SEND to lead a good quality 'ordinary life' and achieve their full potential.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Total	40	24	11	7	2	84
Percentage	48%	29%	13%	8%	2%	

Over 75% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with vision for Children and young people with SEND.

'I think the statement as an aim is good and is what we should be achieving.'
[Parent]

'I really worry about the future, so the vision is promising. The future is frightening.' [Parent]

'I strongly agree with the vision, it is important that we value every child (adult) and support their needs as an inclusive city.' [Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator]

Feedback suggestions to strengthen, clarify and amend the SEND Strategy

During focus groups with parents there were concerns that the phrase 'ordinary life' could be misinterpreted without context and this made the vision lack aspiration. The ordinary life definition, by Wolverhampton Challenge Board, was shared with parents and they agreed with the principles of an ordinary life and parents agreed that the definition was positive. It was proposed that a link was provided to the ordinary life definition.

'The statement needs to be more powerful, it should be empowering.' [Parent]

'I am not sure what is meant by "ordinary life". Ordinary life according to who?'
[Parent]

'The vision is not aspirational enough - 'ordinary life' although the Challenge Board definition is good parents will look at this differently without context.'

[Parent]

'Ordinary life is positive about life and the future when you understand the definition.' [Parent]

'Ordinary life' probably needs some definition but I am sure that we intend that all children should have every opportunity to be the best they can be notwithstanding a disability. [Wolverhampton Councillor]

Recommendations:

Following feedback from the consultation it is proposed the vision should read:

Wolverhampton is an inclusive city where we work with children, young people, and their families with SEND so that they have a good quality 'ordinary life' and achieve their full potential.

It is also proposed that 'Ordinary life' is hyperlinked within the strategy and that this is linked to 'ordinary life' definition.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the priorities for children and young people with SEND?

1. Children, young people and their families feel empowered and well supported
2. Wolverhampton is an inclusive city
3. Young people feel well prepared for adulthood

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
No. of responses	23	41	8	7	0	79
Percentage	29%	52%	10%	9%	0%	

Over 80% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the priorities for children and young people with SEND set out within the strategy.

'Seems very well meaning but need to ensure that this is what children young people and their families receive' [Parent]

'I agree these need to be priorities but as of yet not fulfilling them.' [Parent]

'I think this is the right way forward so that children and young people and their families are empowered to participate fully in their lives and can support any changes they feel they need.' [NHS Employee]

Feedback suggestions to strengthen, clarify and amend the SEND Strategy.

Feedback from the parents suggested that the priority regarding preparation for adulthood should be extended to families. This was discussed and it was proposed that although parent/careers and families required support ensure their children were prepared for adulthood that this should be an objective of the priority and the priority still stood that young people are prepared for adulthood through this objective.

'Could it be changed to 'CYP and families are supported through all transitions towards adulthood.' [Parent]

Feedback suggested that the stage that preparation begins should be clarified, as this could be misunderstood. It was also proposed that this could be clarified within the objectives.

'Priority 3 needs to be clear that preparation for adulthood starts right from the start of a child's life so that the statement is clear and impactful' [Parent]

Feedback also showed that respondents felt that numbering priorities gave the impression that these were rated in importance. It was proposed that the numbering be removed from the strategy document.

'It would be better if these were not numbered as it looks like some are more important than others.' [Parent]

It was suggested from the feedback that the inclusive city priority should appear first in the strategy document to create a flow from inclusion, to empowerment, to adulthood.

'Why is inclusivity priority 2. Surely you have to start with that.' [Parent]

'May be better to have an inclusive city as priority one and explain the relationship between inclusion and SEND.' [CWC Employee]

Responses suggested that the use of the term feel in the statements was not aspirational and that we should be aiming that people are. It was proposed to amend the word feel to are.

'Not feeling. Do or do not.' [Wolverhampton Headteacher]

Recommendations:

To remove numbering of priorities.

That in the strategy document priorities to be listed in following order for flow:

1. Wolverhampton is an inclusive city
2. Children, young people and their families are empowered and well supported
3. Young people are well prepared for adulthood

Change the word feel in 1 & 3 to are.

Change Point 1 on priority 3 to ‘Children and young people with SEND and their families have opportunities and support to talk about and make plans for independent adult life, from a young age.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed objectives for priority 1 - Children, young people and their families feel empowered and well supported?

- When children and young people have additional needs, we identify these quickly and the right support is available when needed.
- Children and young people with SEND have a clear plan of support to achieve agreed outcomes, developed through genuine co-production.
- When life changes for children and young people, we will plan, support, and share information together throughout those transitions.
- When a child or young person needs support to lead a more independent life, families will have information and options for using a personal budget.
- When a child or young person with a disability and their family need a short break from each other there will be high quality, local options available.
- When a child or young person needs it, mental health support will be available that is timely, effective, and accessible to all.
- When parents, carers or siblings of a child or young person with SEND need additional support or advice this will be available.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
No. of responses	14	23	8	4	3	52
Percentage	27%	44%	15%	8%	6%	

Over 70% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the proposed objectives for priority 1 - Children, young people and their families feel empowered and well supported.

'The statement above is very good, but this does not always come across in practice.' [Parent]

'Again, a good vision but a lot would need to change in attitude and working together.' [Parent]

Feedback suggestions to strengthen, clarify and amend the SEND Strategy

There was strong feedback from parents and carers that it was important that professionals working with families understand the experiences and challenges that they face. It was felt that true co-production could not take place without this understanding. It was agreed that this should be addressed during action planning.

'People need to understand what families are going through. They should be talking with families, looking at case studies. They need to know what families and experiences and the challenges. This could maybe focus on priority areas such as short breaks. They need a sense of awareness and ability to empathise.' [Parent]

'There needs to be more work with families to truly understand co-production, professionals need to look at the struggle's families face when deciding what provision is needed.' [Parent]

Feedback suggested that the objective around personal budgets 'When a child or young person needs support to lead a more independent life, families will have information and options for using a personal budget' could be misleading as it could as it did not look at eligibility. It was proposed this should be amended to 'When a child or young person has a need for support to lead a more independent life, families will have information about personal budgets.'

Parents felt very strongly that a physical place to receive information, advice and support was needed along with key/support workers. It was agreed that this would be addressed during action planning.

'We need access to a SEND specific hub to access information, the strengthening families hubs do not have the specialism.' [Parent]

Parent and families discussed the need for emotional support services for parents and siblings. It was agreed that this would be addressed during action planning.

'Mental health support is needed for families in order for them to be able to support their child. Need to show emotional support and mental health support for families, parents' carer, siblings within the objectives. With what is expected with Covid this really needs to be addressed to ensure families can provide the care and support their children need.' [Parent]

Proposal:

- When children and young people have additional needs, we identify these quickly and put the right support in place.’
- Children and young people with SEND have a clear plan of support to achieve agreed outcomes, developed through genuine co-production.
- When life changes for children and young people, we will plan, support, and share information together throughout those transitions.
- When a child or young person has a need for support to lead a more independent life, families will have information about personal budgets.
- When a child or young person with a disability and their family need a short break from each other there will be high quality, local options available.
- When a child or young person needs it, mental health support will be available that is timely, effective, and accessible.
- When parents, carers or siblings of a child or young person with SEND need additional support or advice this will be available.

That feedback from the consultation is considered during action planning.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed objectives for priority 2 - Wolverhampton will be an inclusive city?

- Partners and businesses across the city promote understanding, celebrate diversity and remove barriers for children, young people with SEND and their families.
- Schools and educational settings are inclusive and provide a culture of belonging for all children and young people.
- Public services and spaces are accessible for all children and young people with SEND.
- Children and young people with SEND can access leisure activities locally.
- Families have a choice of local education provision, including mainstream provision, that is able to meet all their child’s needs.
- Meaningful employment opportunities are available to young people with SEND.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
No. of responses	14	28	9	2	0	53
Percentage	26%	53%	17%	4%	0%	

Almost 80% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the proposed objectives for priority 2 - Wolverhampton will be an inclusive city.

'I agree with all priorities, but it does feel like the strategy is geared towards moderate and severe SEND.' [Parent]

'The statement above is very good, but this is not always come across in practice.' [Parent]

Feedback suggestions to strengthen, clarify and amend the SEND Strategy.

During consultation a discussion took place with consultees regarding educational provision. It was raised that parents must be confident in their child's provision. It was proposed to add training to the 'Families have a choice of local education provision, including mainstream provision, that is able to meet all their child's needs' objective.

'Want a choice when it comes to educational provision but there needs to be consistency in the offer.' [Parent]

'In light of academisation and the need to be placed high on the academic league table, I do wonder dear how parental choice for mainstream education is really taken seriously.' [Wolverhampton Councillor]

Feedback raised the need for children and young people with SEND having different needs which may mean they need inclusive mainstream provision, specialist provision and activities that they are able to attend with their families. It was proposed that the 'Children and young people with SEND can access leisure activities locally' be changed to 'Children and young people with SEND have a choice of accessible leisure activities locally'.

'Activities should be accessible to all.' [Parent]

'Please remember that some SEN or disabled children have disabled parents too, this can increase the barriers to accessing activities etc' [Parent]

'The offer is unfair in comparison to mainstream, this needs to be rebalanced. Activities are always tokenistic. Need to break down barriers.' [Parent]

'We need whole family activities.' [Parent]

'With a focus on an inclusive city, there should be a range of leisure activities for CYP with SEND - as with schools, some will be mainstream, others more specialist. Families consistently say that they want to access activities that can accommodate siblings too.' [WAISS]

Feedback asked the reason for meaningful employment within this objective as well as preparing for adulthood. It was explained that as part of an inclusive city that CWC would offer employment opportunities for young people with SEND and encourage partners and businesses to do the same. It was proposed this objective

was amended to 'Partners and businesses across the city provide meaningful employment opportunities that are available to young people with SEND.'

Proposal:

- Partners and businesses across the city promote understanding, celebrate diversity and remove barriers for children, young people with SEND and their families.
- Schools and educational settings are inclusive and provide a culture of belonging for all children and young people.
- Public services and spaces are accessible for all children and young people with SEND.
- Children and young people with SEND have a choice of accessible leisure activities locally.
- Families have a choice of local education and training provision, including mainstream provision, that is able to meet all of the child or young person's needs.
- Partners and businesses across the city provide meaningful employment opportunities that are available to young people with SEND.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed objectives for priority 3 - young people feel well prepared for adulthood?

- Children and young people with SEND have opportunities and support to talk about and make plans for independent adult life.
- When young people with SEND leave school/ college they can access meaningful employment or training.
- Children and young people have opportunities to spend time with friend outside of school and college, and to be involved in their community.
- Young people with SEND have support and housing options available to enable them to live independently when ready.
- Children and young people with SEND have information and support to maintain a healthy life and can access health support when needed.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Total	13	21	11	7	1	53
Percentage	24%	40%	21%	13%	2%	

64% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the objectives for priority 3 - young people feel well prepared for adulthood.

'All objectives are relevant.' [Parent]

Feedback suggestions to strengthen, clarify and amend the SEND Strategy.

As previously noted, feedback from the parents suggested that the priority regarding preparation for adulthood should be extended to families. This was discussed and it was agreed that although parent/careers and families required support ensure their children were prepared for adulthood and that this should be an objective of the priority but the priority would still stand that young people are prepared for adulthood.

'The priority should be young people AND FAMILIES feel well prepared for all transitions in life from birth to adulthood.' [Parent]

'Families need support to prepare young people for adulthood too. This support can be very difficult to know if my child has been supported or not. It will good if parents can receive the support plan for this area. Children should be able to try anything they are interested and not limited for their potential due to risk. Life is risk and it can be managed.' [Parents]

Consultation responses raised questions about what is meant by 'meaningful employment' and the lack of alternatives for young people for whom employment is unsuitable. To address these points and it was proposed an additional objective 'Young people with SEND and their families have access to information and advice about what support is required as they move into adult life.' is added

'There needs to be meaningful employment opportunities -this should include vocational training, apprenticeships. There should be more investment in areas of interest to the young person and ensuring that their aspirations and expertise are being considered.' [Parent]

'There has to be an acceptance that for some employment will not be an option and there should be something be support with welfare benefits, this seems to have been omitted.' [Parent]

'Living a fulfilled life may not include employment/training. Benefits should be considered at a higher level in delivery of the strategy not just an academic path. DWP Should be partners, they need to be involved and partner with us.' [Parent]

Proposal:

- Children and young people with SEND and their families have opportunities and support to talk about and make plans for independent adult life, from a young age.
- When young people with SEND leave school/ college they can access meaningful employment or training.
- Young people with SEND and their families have access to information and advice about what support is required as they move into adult life.
- Children and young people have opportunities to spend time with friend outside of school and college, and to be involved in their community.
- Young people with SEND have support and housing options available to enable them to live independently when ready.
- Children and young people with SEND have information and support to maintain a healthy life and can access health support when needed.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposals for publication of the SEND Strategy action plans and performance indicators?

We will publish action plans and performance indicators against which we can measure our success. These will be updated each half-term and be published on the Wolverhampton Local Offer. This will enable us to hold each other to account for our joint work and also on progress made in our SEND Strategy.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Total	13	26	2	2	1	44
Percentage	29%	59%	5%	5%	2%	

Almost 90% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the proposals for publication of the SEND Strategy action plans and performance indicators.

'This gives people opportunities to have knowledge of the development of the services.' [Parent]

'I like the idea of accountability and visibility.' [Parent]

'This absolutely needs to be done so families can get a better understanding of what actually is going to change for families and improve our lives.' [Parent]

'I would like to see a parental approval level each month. I would like monthly stats published on whether the council are fulfilling their statutory duties with regard to legal timeframes. I think this should be monitored by someone impartial like IASS.' [Parent]

'I think this will help the process and keep us all updated.' [School Employee]

'Publishing the action plans and showing progress against them will make the strategy more owned by the city and all in it.' [NHS Employee]

During consultation some concerns were raised regarding the fitness of purpose of the SEND Local Offer. This was agreed this will be addressed during action planning.

'Local Offer is currently a disgrace. It has out of date information, telephone numbers and not a patch on others local authorities. It needs to be scrapped altogether and replaced with something fit for purpose. It's so hard to navigate I give up with it and it reads like a directory. Therefore, it is the wrong place to display action plans and performance indicators. The role of the Local offer is not for the local authority to use as a notice board for their performance. Most families with SEND do not even know what it is, how to access it and when they do, they see no real gain from using such a diabolical site with nothing to help anyone. Please look at other local authorities who have local offers that actually serve the send community and make a difference to their lives.'

[Parent]

Recommendations:

Following comment on the Local Offer development to this platform will be explored during action planning.

What do you like about the draft SEND Strategy?

'The fact parents are asked.' [Parent]

'I feel this covers everything required and if put in place and worked well and correctly, will give SEND children the support and progression they require as they grow.' [Parent]

'The intention is right and if it can all happen in reality it will be great.' [Parent]

'I think it is an amazing idea overall and if it is thought through and carried out correct and effectively for all their will be a range of benefits for the young people of Wolverhampton who desperately require this support.' [Parent]

'It puts children, young people, and their families first.' [Parent]

'The fact that the spotlight has finally been shone on SEND and the inadequate services, support, and poor outcomes of children and YP with SEND.' [Parent]

'I like how its person centred and sounds supportive for their huge life changes- end of school, work, a house, independence but with a support network. Its multi platformed. Our society should be inclusive for all regardless and this helps do that.' [Parent]

'I like the key priorities and the objectives that underpin them. They are very clear and apt.' [SENCO]

'It is comprehensive without being over bearing. I like how it reads and what its vision is for young people with SEND in the city is clear.' [NHS Employee]

What impact do you think the Strategy will have on you, your child/ren, family, school or wider community?

'If implemented properly it will be very helpful for families and individuals.' [Parent]

'The plan would give encouragement to his future, knowing there's a plan to help him as he gets older if he still can't cope with changes, smells, noise, different people and environments, etc.' [Parent]

'I hope it will make this less of an uphill struggle and more supporting rather than feeling like I have to strongly advocate for my child all the time it will UK's be nice to feel that everything is fighting for the best for each child rather that fighting to put you off and delay things to save time and money.' [Parent]

'Know child is being given the same opportunities as peers.' [Parent]

'I believe it will support my children.' [Parent]

'It would improve our life and outcomes, make family life much happier, give my daughter more opportunities, make more time for the fun things in life instead of always battling.' [Parent]

'It would increase awareness and understanding in wider community of SEND.' [Parent]

'I think it will have a positive impact on families trust in the system and their mental health. The process is stressful, and by making information sharing easier and reducing the amount of times the family have to retell the story it's better.' [Employee of Wolverhampton school]

'Hopefully, it will positively impact the work we already do for our families.' [Employee of Wolverhampton school]

'I think the strategy will make our commissioning intentions clear going forward and enable us to understand the expectations.' [NHS Employee]

'Social inclusion benefits every aspect of community. We have moved thankfully a long way away a place where a person with a disability would be isolated but there is still a good deal of misunderstanding within the general public. Helping integration to happen in a healthy way should not just be left to children with specific needs and their families or carers. The third sector is very good at promoting information and messages - when commissioning services we should consider what role in public messaging the voluntary services can play. We should also expect to pay for this contribution.' [Wolverhampton Councillor]

Result of consultation

In general, the feedback was largely supportive of the vision, priorities and SEND Strategy as a whole. There were some recommendation made to strengthen, clarify and amend the SEND Strategy.

On 24 September 2020 Children and Families Together Board approved the publication on the Wolverhampton Strategy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities 2020-23 with amendments based on the recommendations from consultation.