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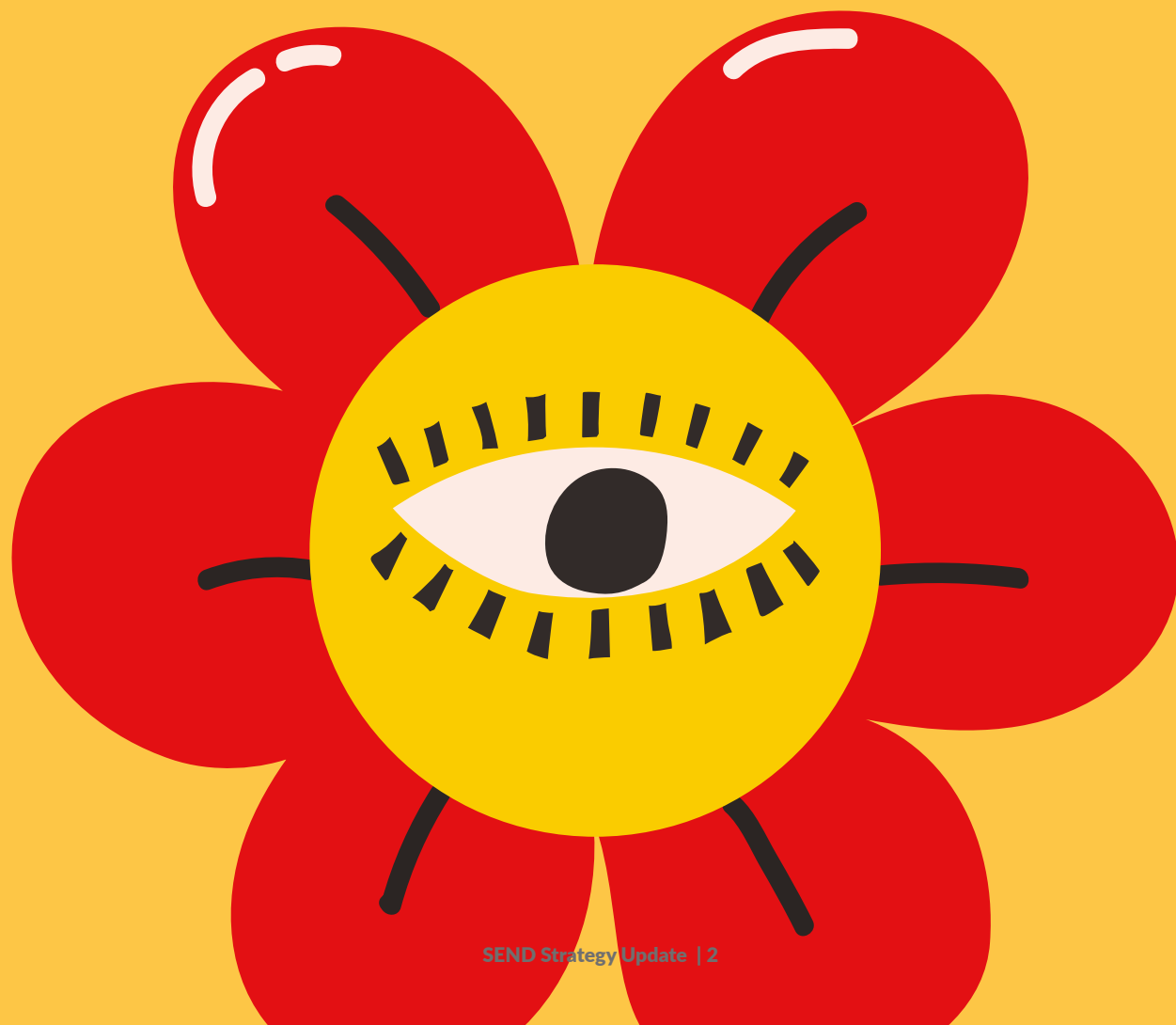


Dear Children and Families,

It has been a year now since we launched our Herefordshire SEND Strategy. We wanted you to know how the things that we set out to change or improve are making headway.

Our first goal, Outcome 1 is to make sure that:

‘Your needs are identified and assessed in a timely and effective way.’



In our first year:

- You may have experienced improved waiting times for health and portage services by increasing the size of our teams. This means that you and your family receive home-based support at the earliest opportunity and much quicker than last year.
- You may now be accessing our new monthly portage groups for early years children with sensory needs, Downs Syndrome or Autism.
- Sometimes when you are waiting for appointments with professionals it can be difficult to know what to do. Our portage team now run ‘while you wait’ sessions, so that you receive help at the earliest stage.
- We know that if you need therapeutic support you have too long to wait. Things are beginning to improve slowly but we want to do better and so your wait times are beginning to come down. While you are waiting we have made sure that help is easier to use. You may have noticed that we are finding new ways of working such as workshops for parents and school staff so that they can also provide you with better support.
- We are running more clinics with our paediatricians, now including some at the weekend; this is so we can speed things up for you.
- We are seeing many more requests for Education, Health and Care plans, some from your parents and some from our schools and settings. We continue to make sure that most of you have your EHC plan issued on time but with more staff we think we will soon be doing even better. We also know that your voice is coming through strongly, more so than in previous years. For example you told us that looking after your teeth was hard to do, so there are tooth brushing sessions in schools, you told us you wanted more short breaks activities so we have sorted more of them, Specialist college students told us that the bus times to get you to college were not working so we have set up an extra bus time.
- We are working to improve the Autism diagnostic assessment processes and have funded some additional capacity. A new pathway is in development which will mean more support is provided during and after the diagnosis assessment process.
- More help is now available to you. Autism Central Midlands Hub is providing 1:1 peer support and workshops for parents and carers of Autistic children and young people.
- We have trained more staff including those in the early years so that they are well trained to identify and assess your needs. For example, early years settings now have communication champions which means more effective and earlier support.



For Outcome 2 we wanted to make sure that:

‘You and your family’s voices are heard and this makes a difference’

In our first year we have:

- We have increased the number of opportunities to gather your views, and those of your family in a wide range of ways on matters that are important to you. For example, Our Parent Carer Voice now organises different ways for your parents to meet people who run different services through events including coffee mornings.
- We have made good progress with making sure that your views are listened to as much as the views of ‘experts’. Your voice is now explicitly sought in our standard form for education, health and care plans. Your thoughts and ideas are contributing strongly now and this is really helping us know what is working and what needs more attention to make sure you do well.
- We have trained our professionals, including those that work in early help and early years, to capture your voice more clearly in our processes.
- We wanted to grow our partnership work. We now have a network of your groups; twenty in all! A name for the network was voted on and “Herefordshire Helpers” was the winner! We are working on subjects such as transport and buddying issues because of your advice.
- The SEN team have strengthened communications by reorganising into north and south teams with officers having oversight of a locality to ensure that we know you well and that you only need to tell your story once.
- Our Mental Health pathway is being redesigned following feedback from you.
- Specialist College students organised a workshop with the SEND Strategic Board which has led to an action list for Board members including plans to raise awareness about accessible parking spaces and review the Buddy Programme and closer partnership working between our specialist and mainstream colleges in Hereford. The students we met with had lots of great ideas!
- Early Help use ‘Widget’ - some of you will know what this is - it has proved to be very successful in aiding communication and understanding.

For Outcome 3 we wanted to make sure that:

‘You receive the right help at the right time’



In our first year we have:

- Our Parent Carer Voice have launched a booklet to help you know what to expect when you start primary school. We hope you find it useful!
- We are working together to plan for 40 of our primary schools to take part in a project which will support early help for neuro-diversity and complement the work on relational practice which is being implemented in a number of our schools already because we know that listening to you if you are worried and having a trusted adult to talk to really does matter.
- 100% of our Early Years SENCOs are attending updates/training and network meetings and report for example greater confidence with the Early Years Graduated Approach. We can see this reflected in improved play plans with clearer, smarter targets which drill down well into your individual needs.
- Children with Disabilities have reorganised referral routes into the system following an internal review so that there is a single point of entry and no child gets lost in a what was a more complex referral system.
- A set of materials to support the mental health and emotional wellbeing component of PHSE in schools has been developed into a toolkit and is now available for all primary schools in Herefordshire to use.
- We know from feedback on the parent carer survey and our usage statistics that more people know about the local offer website and are finding it helpful. We hope you look at it too!
- We have provided 42 new specialist education placements locally. We are learning from the successes in our new bases and looking for ways to offer more local specialist places in the future. Some of you may also know that one of our special schools has been approved for a rebuild.
- We are working with you to develop our Local Offer website to scope a young person's zone.
- In our Quality of Life Survey we found out that your resilience and coping strategies are something we need to help you with. Our mental health pathway is being redesigned – we want to help provide the support that is needed.

For Outcome 4 we wanted to make sure that:

‘You are well prepared for your next steps in life and achieve well’



In our first year we have:

- To support you making the next step into education, employment or training we have the go ahead to establish a Herefordshire Youth Employment Hub (YEH). The YEH will be accessible to all of you. When the YEH opens shortly there will be a range of professionals who can help and guide you, including two Careers and Employment Advisers to work directly with you. You will be able to access careers advice, referrals into employment, education, training opportunities, resources, job application and interview guidance especially tailored for you.
- Our Social Inclusion Support service is responding within two weeks to all referrals. The quick response and new way of working means that you are receiving timely help and support when you need it
- All schools are now using our revised annual EHC plan paperwork. There is now a much stronger emphasis on how everyone supports you to prepare well for adulthood.
- Wye Valley Trust have recruited two youth workers to support those of you who are supported by the Diabetes and Epilepsy teams. More trained professional help is available in a range of different services than ever before to support you when you move across to adult teams.
- The CAMHS youth team has expanded. Youth workers help some of you to develop and improve your practical life skills. There are also more sessions available to support you including some that help you with communication and relationships. You have told us that: ‘The youth worker explained everything to me in detail to make sure I understood. It was helpful as it gave me hope for my future that I previously thought I lost.’
- More and more of you are taking up our offer to participate in travel training. This means you are able to become more confident in the community and make use of public transport.
- Those of you that are supported by our Virtual School are known to us well. The Virtual School staff always attend your annual review to make sure that your personal education plan works seamlessly alongside your education, health and care plan.
- Some of you make use of adult and community service. Inspectors told us that: ‘You are challenged to achieve your very best by supportive and well qualified tutors.’
- We have eliminated the need to wait for a specialist short break – 352 of you are now receiving targeted short breaks.
- Some of you make use of our holiday activity programme during the school holidays. Your social life is important to us as you have told us you want more opportunities. We have made a new video and as part of that we show how much you enjoy holiday activities.

For Outcome 5 we wanted to make sure that:

‘For you to feel valued, visible and included’



In our first year we have:

- We are listening to you – we now have better connected services that are responding to the wealth of ideas that you have shared with us, including through our Quality of Life survey for children and young people- we had 4,900 returns and we were so pleased that 270 of you told us you need help for special educational needs. This meant we could see in what way your experiences were the same or different to other children and young people who did not need that help. We also had surveys back from many of you attending our special schools – one of the things we have done since we read these surveys is to include special schools in our tooth brushing in schools programme.
- We have redesigned our co-production charter to make it easier to understand this important way of working together with you.
- Have you seen our short video that can be found on our local offer? Here young people tell our staff what is important to them – we are listening at every opportunity. You can see the video here: [All about special educational needs and disabilities \(SEND\) – Herefordshire Council](#)
- We have supported our schools – they like us, want your experiences to be of the highest quality. Groups of schools have been working together to make sure that they learn from one another to provide the very best learning experiences for you.
- Our Parent Carer annual survey had a lot of responses. We are using the feedback to strengthen services that you have told us need to improve. You also told us that some services, including the Children with Disabilities team, meet your needs well.
- We are proud of your school attendance rates. Well done!
- We have increased the number of short break opportunities – we have made sure that there is now no waiting list so you can access breaks easily.