



news release

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West Sussex sets out a 'clear vision for SEND' in new strategy

West Sussex County Council and NHS Sussex have developed a new plan to improve experiences and outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

A shared commitment to providing earlier, more consistent and connected support services is set out in the new [West Sussex Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\) Strategy 2026 to 2030](#).

West Sussex County Councillor Jacquie Russell, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Learning, said: "We want every child and young person with SEND in West Sussex to feel included, supported and able to thrive."

The new SEND strategy has been developed with families, young people, schools, health services and the West Sussex Parent Carer Forum. It focuses on the things families have said matter most to them:

Getting help earlier - families often face long waits or uncertainty when trying to access support. The strategy commits to improving early help, so children and young people can receive the right support at the right time, without always needing a formal plan.

Clearer, more joined-up support - education, health and social care services will work more closely together. This means families won't have to repeat their story and will find it easier to understand what support is available.

Support closer to home - more children and young people will be able to attend local schools or provision that can meet their needs, reducing long journeys and keeping children connected to their community.

Better communication - the strategy places a strong emphasis on listening to families and improving communication, including clearer updates and easier access to information and advice.

Preparing young people for their future - young people with SEND will get earlier support to move into adulthood - whether that means further education, work opportunities, independent living or local activities that help them feel included.

Improving emotional wellbeing – a commitment to better support for mental health, reducing waiting times and increasing help available in schools and communities.

These priorities reflect the voices of children, young people and parents who contributed through workshops, surveys, events and via the West Sussex Parent Carer Forum.

Councillor Russell said: “This new strategy is built on what families have told us needs to improve, and it sets out clear commitments to making services easier to access, better joined up, and more responsive. Above all, it is about helping children and young people achieve their full potential, no matter their starting point. While there is more to do, this marks an important step in our ongoing work to improve the experiences of children, young people and their families.”

Dr Amy Dissanayake, NHS Sussex Executive Lead for SEND, and local GP said: “For children and young people with SEND, getting the right support early can make a life-changing difference. This strategy sets out how local NHS services will work more closely with education, social care and, crucially, families, to improve access to support and respond to needs earlier and more consistently.

“We know there is still much work to be done to meet the ambitions of this strategy, but its priorities reflect what families have told us they really need. That is why we are committed to delivering on this work - strengthening joined-up support across education settings and communities, improving emotional wellbeing, and helping children and young people achieve better outcomes as they grow.

“Thank you to everyone who shared their experiences, feedback, and comments to inform this strategy – an important step in improving local support.”

Rowan Westwood, CEO of the West Sussex Parent Carer Forum said: “We are pleased to endorse the West Sussex SEND Strategy 2026–2030. Parent carers, children and young people have played a meaningful role in shaping this strategy, and we welcome the strengthened commitments to co-production, early intervention, inclusive practice, communication and accountability.

“While we know there is significant work ahead to deliver real and lasting improvements, this strategy provides a clearer, more honest and more ambitious framework for change.”

The new strategy is available to read in full on the [West Sussex SEND Local Offer website](#).

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