Nottingham and Nottinghamshire SEND Joint Commissioning Strategy

2024-2027

Nottinghamshire County Council

Nottingham City Council

NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire

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1. Introduction and background

Nottinghamshire County Council, Nottingham City Council and Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) are dedicated to improving and transforming education, health, and care services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), to ensure all children get the best possible start to life.

This strategy sets out the joint commissioning arrangements between our organisations. Acknowledging the influence of previous years, this strategy reflects adaptations necessitated by the development of the Integrated Care System, the Covid 19 pandemic, the establishment of new Directors of Children Services regional commissioning arrangements, and the new local area SEND Inspection framework published in December 2022, and has been informed by several national and local documents including:

- **The Children and Families Act (2014):** Which introduced SEND reforms, mandating agencies to collaborate across education, health, and care domains for joint outcomes.
- **The NHS Long Term Plan (2019):** Which emphasises the importance of integrating health and social care services to provide holistic support for individuals with SEND.
- **Nottinghamshire's SEND Strategy 2024 - 2027:** Which builds upon Nottinghamshire's long-standing commitment to inclusion which enables children and young people with SEND receive appropriate support and are able to access education that meets their needs
- **Nottinghamshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (Special Education Needs and Disability 0 – 25 years**: supports a local understanding of the needs of children and young people with SEND in Nottinghamshire
- **Nottingham City Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 0 – 25 years, May 2024:** supports a local understanding of the needs of children and young people with SEND in Nottingham
- **Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Joint Local Transformation Plan for Children and Young People's Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health 2016-2024 (healthandcarenotts.co.uk) :** Which sets out a collaborative commitment to commission mental health services for children and young people that are holistic and inclusive.
- **Nottingham City SEND sufficiency strategy 2023 to 2028 :** sets out plans to increase high quality inclusive provision, improve existing provision and support all schools and settings to be inclusive.

- **Nottinghamshire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for 2022 - 2026:** Which emphasises the need for early identification intervention and ensuring that health, education and social services work collaboratively.
- **Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Nottingham 2022 - 2025:** Which emphasises the need for early identification and intervention ensuring that health, education and social services work collaboratively.
- **Health and Care Act 2022** which introduces clear responsibilities and accountability for delivering joined-up services to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.

The Local Authorities and ICB have adeptly responded to the challenges of recent years, and to the national and local requirements within the documents set out above, fostering positive changes such as enhanced inter-organisational communication and engagement with service users. These adaptations are crucial for implementing the Strategy, especially as both the City and County Councils and the ICB face financial challenges. It is vital to work collaboratively to avoid duplication, ensure value for money, and improve outcomes for children and young people.

The overarching vision of the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire SEND Partnership Assurance and Improvement Groups is to prioritise the safety, health, and happiness of children and young people with SEND, aiming for a high quality of life and opportunities for personal growth, independence, and societal contribution. ***We want to champion and improve the experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND, and to ensure that they are listened to and heard; they are the healthiest they can be, are safe and feel safe, accepted, valued, able to enjoy, have fun, and are prepared for their futures.***

Central to everything we do is the voice of children and young people, and our motivation is the positive impact this strategy will have upon their experiences. Children and young people have helped to develop these child-centred first-person statements about what they need from our services:

- I need to be listened to and heard

- I need to be the healthiest I can be

- I need to be safe and feel safe

- I need to be accepted and valued by people I trust

- I need to be prepared for my future

- I need to enjoy life and have fun

2. What is joint commissioning?

Commissioning is the process of understanding the needs of a population or group and using available resources to meet those needs through procurement and contracting processes. Joint commissioning is where the process is done in partnership to increase efficiency and enable joined up services. This commissioning is done on a strategic level, looking at the needs of the population with partners and determining the most effective way to deliver services to meet those needs. Although the process can include pooling budgets, joint funding is not an essential component of effective joint commissioning.

Children and young people with SEND need services across health, social care, and educational services, therefore it is important commissioners work together to plan provision. Effective joint commissioning ensures that children and their family's needs are understood and that the services to meet them are known about, accessible at the time they are needed, with smooth transitions. Effective joint commissioning should see a reduction in duplication, maximising the impact of the combined commissioning budget.

In Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, a person-centred approach ensures the voice of children, young people and their families is listened to and has an impact on the commissioning process. Commissioners will also engage with the market to ensure it understands and can develop to meet the needs of the population they seek to serve. Existing and potential providers are key strategic partners in a successful joint commissioning process.

The stages of the joint commissioning cycle

Joint understanding: The needs of children and young people with SEND and their families are identified, assessed, and shared with service planners and providers to ensure a shared understanding of need to inform commissioning plans. Wherever possible plans should be co-produced rather than consulted on (See section 4 for details of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire approach to co-production).

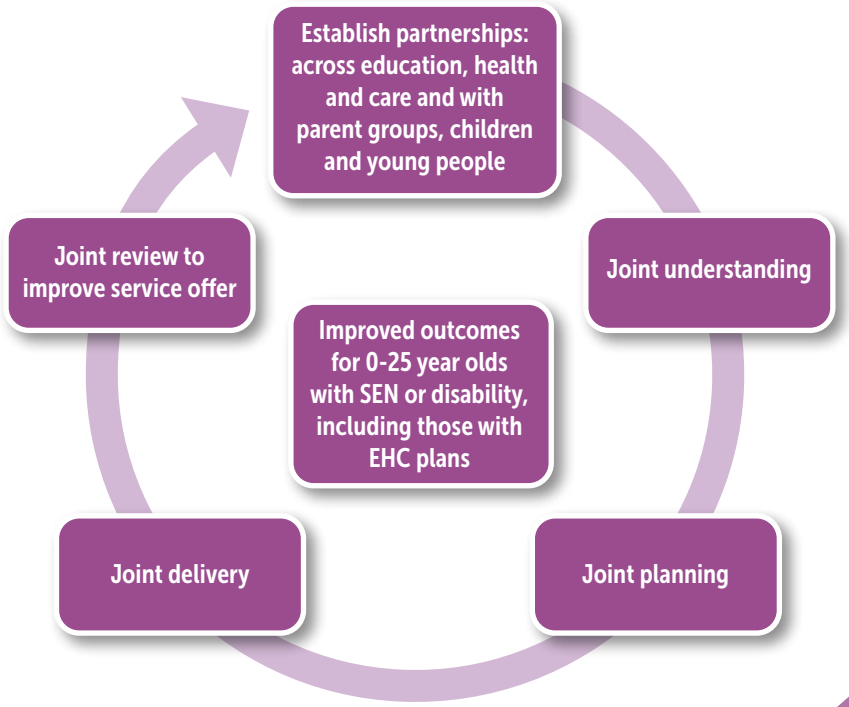
Joint planning: This process uses the intelligence from assessment of need to inform and develop a commissioning strategy to address gaps in service provision. The strategy should ensure key outcomes are identified, informed via a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and detail how they will be measured. (See section 3 for details of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire approach to understanding need).

Joint delivery: Services are procured, mobilised and contracts are put in place to deliver the service/s.

Joint review: Services are continually reviewed to see if they have met the outcomes of the specification. This includes feedback from service users and their families, as well as engagement with providers, to help improve current service delivery and feed into future needs assessment.

Figure 1 below provides a summary of the stages of the joint commissioning process.

Figure 1: *Joint Commissioning Cycle (DfE SEN Code of Practice, January 2015)*



The stages of the joint commissioning cycle

- Our commissioning will be person centred rather than service centred, including commissioning for outcomes.
- We will have collaboratively designed pathways so that our services are joined-up, designed around needs and children and young people can move easily between them.
- Our services available for children, young people and their families will be easy to understand, access and navigate.
- We will have reduced duplication in the system, maximising effectiveness and efficiency of services and ensuring value for money.
- We will have reduced demand for specialist services through greater prevention and self-management and reducing deterioration.
- Children and families receive timely access to services when they need them.

3. Understanding need

The aim is to develop a comprehensive understanding of the needs of children and young people across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, providing insight into future education, health, and wellbeing needs to facilitate long-term change. This understanding will serve as the cornerstone of effective commissioning, ensuring that services are responsive, inclusive, and effective in meeting the diverse educational, health, and social needs of the local population.

The approach to comprehensively understanding requirements for commissioning incorporates insights from the following:

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA): Data based on local population needs and use of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire JSNAs will be used to identify current and future health, education, and social care needs, informing decision-making and prioritising areas requiring intervention or improvement.

Voices of those with lived experience: Actively engaging children, young people and their families, through surveys, focus groups, and engagement sessions to understand their lived experiences and if their needs are being met.

SEND Data Dashboard: Harnessing health, education, and social care data dashboards to capture and monitor key data related to children and young people, enabling analysis of trends and identification of service gaps. This includes working closely with providers to capture and share both quantitative and qualitative information.

In summary, informed decision-making through a comprehensive assessment of local needs will optimise resource utilisation to enhance outcomes for children and young people efficiently, equitably, and sustainably. This will be achieved through strong foundations across Integrated Care System partnerships involving children, young people and their families in the commissioning process to enhance service improvements and collaboration to monitor improvements in education, health, and care outcomes resulting from commissioned provision. Partners across the system are committed to reviewing data on a quarterly basis to drive the continuous improvements needed and to make the strategy a 'live' document that responds to the needs of children, young people, and their families with an operational delivery plan.

4. Co-production principles for joint commissioning of services and provision for children and young people with SEND

Background

Section 19 of the Children and Families Act 2014 places duties on local SEND partnerships in relation to children and young people with SEND, in carrying out their responsibilities under the Act.

The SEND Code of Practice (originally published in 2015) provides guidance to local area partnerships, regarding the expectations of core principles that are underpinned within legislation related to SEND. Local area partners must take into consideration:

- the views, wishes and feelings of the child or young person, and their families.
- the importance of the child or young person and their families, participating as fully as possible in decisions, and being provided with the information and support necessary to enable participation in those decision.
- the need to support the child or young person, and their families, to facilitate the development of the child or young person and to help them achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes, preparing them effectively for adulthood.

Further co-production should take place as far as possible at two levels for children and young people with SEND and their families:

- **At an individual level**, children and young people with SEND, and their families, must be involved in discussions and decisions about their individual support.
- **At a strategic level**, children and young people with SEND, and their families must be involved in discussions and decisions about local provision.

Approaches to co-production

The Ladder of Participation originally developed by Sherry Arnstein sets out the different stages of engagement with children and young people with SEND and their families:

Doing with – **co-production or co-design**
Doing for – **engagement, consultation and informing**
Doing to - **education or coercion**

Although not suitable in all circumstances, co-production and co-design represent the greatest involvement of children, young people and their families. Importantly, co-production involves an equal and reciprocal partnership. It can be described as 'starting with a blank piece of paper', as opposed to presenting young people and their families with a draft service specification and asking for feedback. The latter is not co-production or co-design but rather consultation or informing. Co-production or co-design takes longer and requires more resources.

The Nottingham and Nottinghamshire local area SEND partnerships are ambitious to achieve co-production and have identified the following issues and challenges to overcome:

- Being able to identify the specific cohort of children and people (aged 0-25) with SEND.
- Current ICB commissioning arrangements for children and young people and adult services (0-25) do not clearly outline co-production requirements for health service providers to co-produce services.
- Measuring success of co-production – tangible/intangible
- Identifying the appropriate levels of engagement and co-production and developing a local area definition for co-production and other engagement activities.
- Access to a wider audience or service user groups to ensure voices are captured and heard.

Our approach to co-production in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire

- We will listen to the views of children, and young people with SEND and their families and to work with them to improve our services and provision.
- We will keep children, young people with SEND and their families, and other stakeholders informed throughout our improvement journey.
- We will engage with families, children, and young people with SEND to identify and take every opportunity to co-produce.
- We will facilitate a cultural change for staff across the local area towards the value of co-production.
- We will embed co-production principles into the organisations' long term strategic planning.

Aligned to the Nottingham City Strategic Council Plan aim, to achieve UNICEF accreditation as a Child Friendly City (CFC), and adopting a child rights-based approach, the voice of the child has been recognised whilst writing this strategy. Not only do children and young people deserve to be heard but the communication they receive should be clear, understandable, and responsive to their views. Article 12 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child is a right to express that opinion and to have that opinion considered in any matter or procedure affecting the child.

5. Key joint commissioning achievements 2020-2023

Progress has been made by the partnership in joint commissioning for children and young people with special educational needs and difficulties. Outlined below are the key successes that have been achieved in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire:

- **Improved governance for joint commissioning – the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Strategic Commissioning Group for Children and Young people has been established** - The purpose of group is to share, review and influence collective commissioning intentions; and to explore and test collaborative commissioning opportunities for population needs.

- **Successful Joint commissioning a Information, Advice and Support Service (IASS) for children/ young people with special educational needs and disabilities and their families** - IASS is a streamlined and holistic service across the Integrated Care System (ICS) providing consistent advice in a timely manner.

- **Improved our understanding across the partnership about the criteria and process for Children's Continuing Care** - The ICB now publishes a single Children and Young Peoples Continuing Care Policy across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire and this is regularly reviewed to reflect any changes in approach **(Most recently reviewed in March 2024)**. Work is ongoing to develop an ambitious new model for joint commissioning to meet the health, care and therapeutic needs of children and young people with complex mental health needs.

- **Improved integration of services for children with communication needs under the age of five** - commissioners within Public Health and early childhood services collaborated with a local provider of speech language and communication interventions to develop an integrated care pathway for children, young people and families. This revised pathway sees the integration the of early intervention service ('Home Talk') into the Community Children and Young People's Service (CCYPS), creating a single pathway for families. The service is now delivered by a single team, enabling movement along the pathway between early intervention and specialist services, providing the right care at the right time for service users.

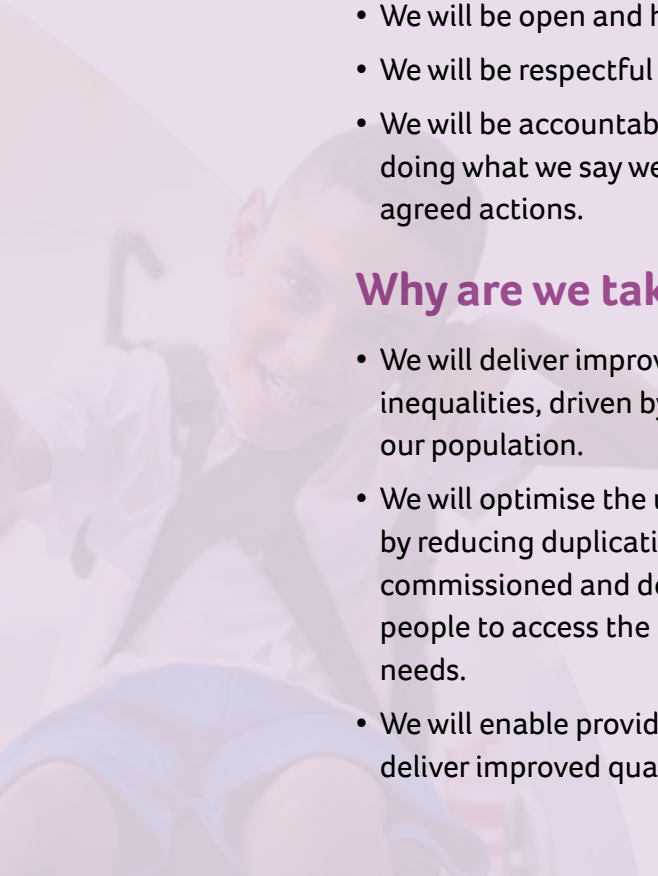
- **Enhanced services to support the social, emotional, and mental health of children and young people with SEND** – a new team within Nottinghamshire's Children's Disability Service provides children and young people with a learning disability and/or autism with the most complex needs with a designated key worker, targeted at supporting young people when they have been admitted to hospital with a mental health crisis. A joint ICB/ Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)/social care Dynamic Support Register (DSR) is operational which has oversight of young people with a learning disability and/or autism diagnosis whereby there are concerns around their emotional wellbeing. Young people at risk of being admitted into a hospital setting or local authority care are identified and offered robust multi-agency support.

- **Improved early mental health support for children and young people** - 12 mental health support teams (MHST) in schools are now jointly commissioned and fully operational across the city and county. By January 2025 we estimate that 45% of schools and 72,000 children will have access to support from a MHST.

- **Children's Communication Aids Panel** continues to be jointly funded across the City and County Councils and the ICB, supporting the provision of specialist communication aids for children and young people that meet their needs, with a seamless transition to adulthood. It creates equity and transparency around the process and provision and successful collaboration has reduced the collective financial impact.

6. Our joint commissioning principles

The Nottingham and Nottinghamshire ICS Collaborative Planning and Commissioning Framework sets out how we will work together as commissioners across the system to achieve the vision of delivering **integrated health and care** within the ICS. **This includes how we will work together on the SEND agenda**, joining up strategic leadership and the transformation of health, education, and care to improve outcomes for our population, ensuring decision making is led and integrated at the appropriate population level, with an emphasis on subsidiarity.



Our values:

- We will be open and honest with each other.
- We will be respectful in working together.
- We will be accountable to and challenge one another, doing what we say we will do and following through on agreed actions.

Why are we taking this approach?

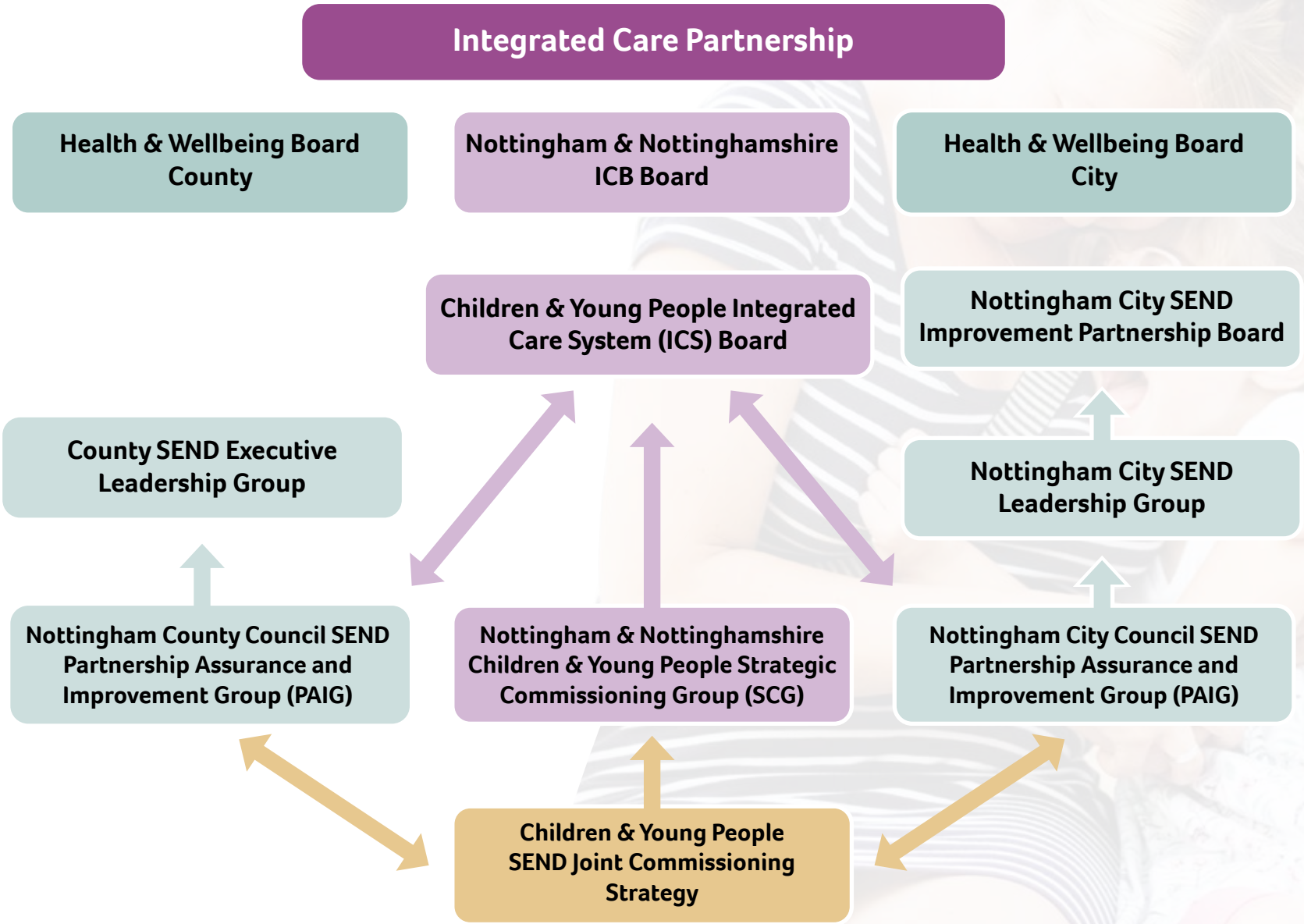
- We will deliver improved outcomes and reduce health inequalities, driven by an understanding of the needs of our population.
- We will optimise the use of our collective resource by reducing duplication, moving away from services commissioned and delivered in silos, making it easier for people to access the right support or care to meet their needs.
- We will enable providers to work collaboratively to deliver improved quality and efficiencies.

What will we do together?

- We will work with our population to ensure they are involved in decision making at all stages of planning and delivery.
- We will work as health and care partners, considering the opportunities for person centred integrated delivery for every decision we make.
- We will focus on early intervention and prevention to support people to avoid increasing levels of support / cost.
- We will use the best available evidence to support our decision making.
- We will allocate resources using processes that are simple, fair and transparent.

7. Governance

NottinghamCity SEND Sufficiency Strategy 2023-28 Sets out plans to increase high quality inclusive provision, improve existing provision and support all schools and settings to be inclusive.



Appendix 1 – SEND joint commissioning delivery priorities for 2024-2025

The commissioning priorities and associated actions described below are aligned to the priority area identified by the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Strategic Commissioning Group. This delivery plan will be monitored and reviewed by the SEND Partnership Assurance & Improvement Groups (PAIG) and the Strategic Commissioning Group, who will also be responsible for the development of subsequent annual delivery plans. Progress and impact will be monitored utilising data and intelligence highlighted within the system children and young people's dashboard, accessible by all colleagues within the partnership.

Joint commissioning priorities	Why is this a joint commissioning priority?	How will we know when this has been achieved?	What outcomes will this achieve?
Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) services	There are currently gaps in SLCN provision in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, meaning that children and young people with SEND and communication needs are unable to access support unless their need is such that they require specialist intervention. The ambition of jointly commissioning a service allows for earlier identification and earlier intervention of communication needs which will reduce deterioration and requirements for specialist services, reduce long waiting lists into specialist services and support children with SEND receiving earlier support from professionals that care for them.	Joint commissioning of a single seamless pathway Joint performance monitoring and system-wide oversight. Formal contractual arrangements in place and service specifications which align. Service design and improvement developments which are co-produced. Increased positive feedback from those accessing services and professionals. Reduction in wait times for specialist services.	A more holistic and equitable support offer for children and young people with SLCN in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. A reduction in wait times to access specialist services. An increase in service provision for those that do not meet the thresholds for specialist intervention prior to deterioration. Enhancement of skills and competencies in professionals working with children and young people with SLCN in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. **Metrics:** *Number of CYP accessing the services.* *Feedback from CYP and families.* *Percentage of CYP transitioning smoothly between different service tiers.* *Percentage of CYP waiting more than 18 weeks for SLT treatment.* *Average waiting time for SLT treatment.*

Joint commissioning priorities	Why is this a joint commissioning priority?	How will we know when this has been achieved?	What outcomes will this achieve?
Development of a sensory support service / pathway	There is currently a lack of locally commissioned sensory therapy support in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. Sensory processing needs are recognised as significant barriers to children and young people's learning as well as their daily living and their mental and emotional health along with wellbeing. Therefore, there is a need for collaborative working across organisations, to develop services and pathways that support these needs. There is currently financial spend across Nottinghamshire County Council, Nottingham City Council and the ICB to support individual children and young people with sensory processing difficulties access services privately due to lack of locally commissioned provision, particularly where this is outlined as a requirement in an Education Health Care Plan.	Joint commissioning of a single seamless pathway Sensory support provision in place for children and young people with sensory processing difficulties. Self-management resources and guidance available to support families, children and young people with sensory processing needs through the development of the local "Minds of All Kinds website". Service design and improvement developments which are co-produced.	Local services will meet the needs of the local SEND population, in an area where they currently do not. Families, children and young people with SEND will have improved outcomes. Families, children, and young people will have access to resources that will support self-management of their needs. System spends on individually commissioning sensory support will be reduced. **Metrics:** *Number of CYP accessing the services.* *Number of services included in the seamless pathway.* *Feedback from CYP and families.* *Percentage of CYP transitioning smoothly between different service tiers.*

Joint commissioning priorities	Why is this a joint commissioning priority?	How will we know when this has been achieved?	What outcomes will this achieve?
Development of an integrated sleep support pathway	Current sleep support is available across the System; however, families and professionals have shared that it is difficult to navigate. Families and professionals are not always aware of the support that is available or how to access it. There is a high existing cost to the System through potential over-prescribing of melatonin, sometimes for children and young people for whom it is not effective, or where other non-medical interventions could have been more appropriate.	Integrated service model developed and shared with families and professionals across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. Reduction in gaps in current provision and an equitable service offer across all localities in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire that meets the needs of individual children and young people. Equitable access to training and education for professionals working with children and young people with sleep difficulties. Service design and improvement developments which are co-produced.	Holistic care will be available for families, children, and young people with sleep difficulties in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. Increased professional knowledge around supporting sleep in children and young people with SEND / complex needs in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire through increased training availability. Reduction in spend across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire on individual training packages. Equity in provision across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. Reduction in wait times to access sleep support services. **Metrics:** *Number of CYP accessing the services.* *Number of services included in the seamless pathway.* *Feedback from CYP and families.* *Percentage of CYP transitioning smoothly between different service tiers.*

Joint commissioning priorities	Why is this a joint commissioning priority?	How will we know when this has been achieved?	What outcomes will this achieve?
Development of an integrated / seamless Occupational Therapy (OT) pathway.	There are currently numerous OT services in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. This is complex and difficult to understand / navigate for both families and professionals. This has led to some duplication in provision and some gaps in service offer, meaning that needs are sometimes not adequately met. Families, children and young people share that they do not understand why there are numerous professionals involved in their care, share frustrations around duplication and that professionals don't communicate their needs where sometimes they receive conflicting advice.	Resource developed and shared that outline the roles and responsibilities of the currently commissioned services. Joint OT assessments as standard and reduced number of professionals involved with a family.	Families and professionals report a greater understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the OT services in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. Reduction in the number of assessments carried out to enhance service user experience and increase communication between teams. Reduce duplication in service offer so that resource and capacity can be re-invested into reduction of gaps in service provision. Timely access to necessary OT services. Improved developmental outcomes and quality of life for CYP requiring OT. **Metrics:** *Number of CYP accessing the services.* *Feedback from CYP and families.* *Percentage of CYP transitioning smoothly between different service tiers.* *Percentage of CYP waiting more than 13 weeks for OT treatment.* *Average waiting time for OT treatment.*

Joint commissioning priorities	Why is this a joint commissioning priority?	How will we know when this has been achieved?	What outcomes will this achieve?
Integrated System Data Dashboard	The local population of children and young people with SEND in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire is not understood as there is a lack of joint data and intelligence across the System. There are a range of challenges within the SEND System that are not understood due to their currently being no combined system data or intelligence mechanism. There is currently no System oversight of SEND service provision, due to a lack of combined data and intelligence, which limits assurance. A system dashboard will act as an intelligence tool informed by whole system data to put data closer to the centre of strategy and decision making. This will allow key people to keep track of progress of critical metrics A system wide dashboard will also allow for faster, automated reporting, allowing for key decisions and targets to be made at speed to help cohorts in need.	The production of a System-wide dashboard based on metric collaboration presenting gaps, trends, opportunities, and cohorts. Ongoing development to ensure the dashboard is current and accurate.	System understanding of the local population and demographics of SEND cohort in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. Mechanism for oversight and assurance of SEND service provision. Mechanism for identification of areas priority for improvement through data and intelligence evidence. Dashboard will enable stakeholders to keep a track on school attendance, exclusions and suspensions, ultimately enabling better focus on the right cohorts to improve academic record.

Some useful links

SEND Glossary

Ladder of Participation

Child Friendly Nottingham – Nottingham City Council.

"We will be open, honest, respectful and accountable"

Nottinghamshire County Council

Nottingham City Council

NHS
Nottingham and Nottinghamshire

D6P/11-24/83024