



# **Halton Partnership Priority Action Plan - Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)**

**05 March 2024**

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### 1. Introduction

As a Halton SEND Partnership we strive to work collaboratively and in a co-productive way to make a real difference to the lives of children and young people that live in Halton.

Between 20<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> November 2023, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) undertook a joint area send inspection of the Halton partnership.

The purpose of the inspection was to evaluate how well members of a local area partnership work together to improve the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND. In addition, the inspection leads to judgements about the impact of the local area partnership's arrangements for children and young people with SEND and provide information to help local area partnerships improve their arrangements for children and young people, and to support improvement of the SEND system as a whole. The report outcome published on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2024 identified widespread and/or systemic failings leading to significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which the local area partnership must address urgently (<https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50238390> ).

The inspection highlighted and gave recognition in a number of areas where the partnership were effective and that children and young people benefitted from:

1. An effective parent carer forum (PCF) which is a respected and valued strategic partner.
2. Effective use of the views of children and young people to shape services.
3. An effective school nursing service which is highly valued by many stakeholders
4. Effective preparation for adulthood in that disabled children and young people, including care leavers benefit from the support of the Transition Team.
5. Children and young people with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) have a well-supported transition to the adult ADHD service.
6. Effective targeted support for older children and young people with SEND (14-19yrs)
7. Practitioners in Halton are person-centred and promote a flexible approach to working with children, young people, and their families.
8. Practitioners use innovative and creative ways to capture the voices of children and young people accurately.
9. Effective Clubs and activities to support children and young people with SEND to develop their interests and, in some cases, gain further qualifications, in which they feel welcomed and supported to access a range of community-based activities.
10. Effective recruitment and training of personal assistants within Early Help further supports children and young people's integration into society.
11. Children and young people placed in local authority-commissioned Alternative provision receive suitable oversight, which helps to ensure that they are safe and have their needs met effectively in these placements.

However, there were areas that were deemed to require priority action planning:

1. Leaders at Halton local authority and the NHS Cheshire and Merseyside ICB should cooperate at pace to improve the shared strategic oversight, governance, support and challenge to drive improvements to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND in Halton.
2. Leaders in the local authority, ICB and education, health and social care providers should improve the efficiency and quality of their information gathering and sharing processes to ensure that children's and young people's needs are understood accurately and met more swiftly and effectively through coordinated approaches.
3. Leaders across education, health and social care should improve the joint commissioning of services to ensure that children, young people and their families receive sufficient support to have their needs met effectively.
4. Leaders across education, health and social care should urgently improve the early identification of needs and access to specialist health pathways including the neurodevelopmental assessment pathway and speech and language therapy and the support available while children and young people wait.
5. Leaders across education, health and social care should improve the timeliness of new EHC plans and updates to EHC plans following the annual review process, so that, if appropriate, children and young people receive an effective EHC plan within statutory time scales.

This action plan will take forward the learning from the Ofsted/CQC inspection process and the areas for improvement identified through the inspection. As a partnership we need to focus in the short to medium term on working to address the priority actions and development areas identified in the inspection report, all of which are aligned to our Halton SEND Strategy 2021 – 2025 Priority Areas. Halton's SEND Partnership consists broad range of partners, stakeholders and contributors. To deliver positive change, it is essential that areas for improvement, improvement activity and accountability is developed and shared across this complex partnership.

Partners in Halton recognise that there needs to be fundamental change and improvement in how we work together and provide support and services to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities and their families.

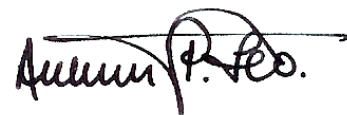
In response to this inspection, the local area partnership has together developed this priority action plan, working in collaboration with wider stakeholders, through a number of workshops that included parent, carer and school representation.

We have established a SEND Improvement Board, which will have an Independent Chair. The Improvement Board will have oversight of a Partnership Delivery Group. A key task of the Delivery Group will be to create a robust dashboard that will enable us to measure our current performance and the tangible impact that we will have upon the lives of children and young people with SEND, and their parents/carers. We are committed as a local area partnership to improving the lives of children and young people with SEND and ensuring they can access the services they need at the right time in the right place. Our ambition is for Halton to be a great place to live for children and young people with SEND and to work together with children, young people and their families to improve their lived experience.



Zoe Fearon

Director of Children's Services



Anthony Leo

Director of Place - Halton

## 2. Strategic Vision

**Halton is committed to ensuring inclusive education, health and social activities of children and young people aged 0-25 years.**

We expect that **all** services will work to enable all children and young people to develop, learn, participate and achieve their best possible outcomes.

Children's human rights are written down in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to protect children and young people's rights around participation in society/their local community; protection from discrimination and exploitation; and provision covering their welfare e.g. education, healthcare etc. The UNCRC also says that **all adults** must do what is best for children and young people – this means that **we all** have a role to play to ensure that these rights are honoured.

The UNCRC says that **all** children and young people have rights and should be supported to:

- live, develop, be well informed, included and can make their own choices;
- be enabled to flourish and thrive for who they are as people as they grow up;
- be heard, have their views respected and participate in society as anybody else;
- have equal access, opportunities, be safe and not be discriminated against.

In Halton, the rights within the UNCRC will be at the heart of our practice.

Our vision – as set out in the SEND Code of Practice – for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities is the same as for all children and young people – that they achieve well in their early years, at school and in college, and lead happy and fulfilled lives. Halton SEND Strategic Partnership believes that **every** child and young person has a right to thrive, flourish and lead an ordinary life. This should be without being labelled or restricted, no matter what their disability or ability.

We want **every** child and young person to:

- feel safe; valued; included and connected;
- be given opportunities to be active and for physical and mental health;

- be empowered to make choices that shape their lives with appropriate supportive relationships.

To do this, we will need to:

- have improved our **culture, ethos and practice** with better processes and communication for working better together;
- ensure that children, young people and families have access to the **right support, at the right time and at the right level** to meet their needs;
- pave the way for children and young people as they grow up to **thrive and flourish** in their future life;
- offer **inclusive** education or learning opportunities in an appropriate setting serving their needs.

### 3. Governance

Since the Ofsted/CQC Inspection Revisit we have refined Halton's governance and accountability structures and processes. A tiered partnership structure will be established to enable joint ownership, oversight, leadership and partnership accountability for the SEND Priority Action Plan, as well as the SEND strategic plan.

Overall partnership assurance and scrutiny of the SEND Priority Action Plan will be achieved through an independently chaired Halton SEND Strategic Improvement Board. The board's responsibility is to oversee the implementation of the priority action plan and monitor progress and provide support and challenge to all partners in the Local Area, holding those partners accountable for their contributions, in order to make progress at a pace to improve in the following areas of weakness identified in the Ofsted / CQC inspection.

The Strategic Improvement Board brings together the partners who are accountable for the provision of SEND Services in Halton. The Board will be collectively responsible for providing detailed oversight of progress and impact on the plan and co-ordinate the mapping, tracking, and planning of partnership actions. The responsibility of the group is to scrutinise and challenge progress of the SEND Delivery Group; identify barriers and manage escalations across the Local Area Partnership; promote integration and partnership across key areas of Education, Health and Social Care and ensuring that the KPI's set out in the Priority Action Plan are achieved, and that children, young people, and their parents or carers are satisfied with their services as a result of improvements.

The Halton SEND Delivery Group will lead and co-ordinate the continuous improvement of Halton SEND partnership, ensuring that improvements and reforms are effective and have a positive impact on outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The Group will include

representatives from all SEND partners and relevant agencies that have key SEND responsibilities, providing oversight, check and challenge on delivery plans for SEND, ensuring that there is full scrutiny of work being delivered.

The SEND Delivery Group is supported by 5 sub-groups, aligning to the 5 identified priority action areas:

- Strategic Oversight and Governance
- Cohesive communication / joined up systems
- Joint Commissioning
- Early identification of need and access
- Education Health and Care Plans

In addition to the 5 Priority Areas we will be developing a strategic performance and business intelligence dashboard, which will enable partners to hold each other to account for delivery, highlight areas of focus and demonstrate key achievements to children, young people and their families in Halton.

Halton SEND Partnership membership reflects the voice of parents, carers, children and young people alongside the key partners responsible for commissioning/delivering SEND services, education, health and care provision across the local area. We work together to understand the needs of local children, young people and their families, so that we can commission and provide services that are inclusive and supportive, whilst keeping children and young people at the heart of everything we do.

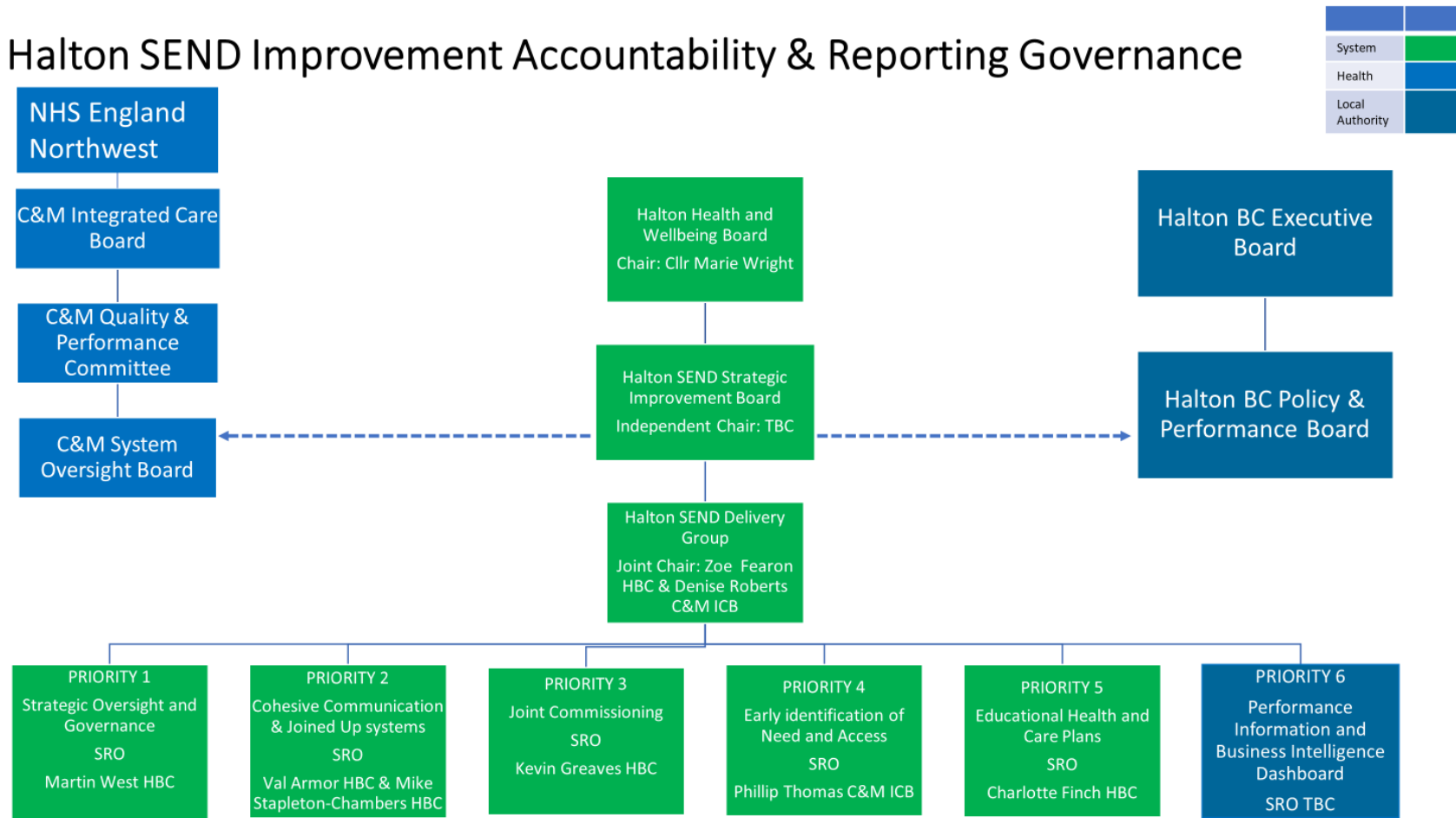
Halton SEND Parent Carer's Forum is a voice for Families who access services in Halton. The forum is run by and for families of children and young people aged 0-25 who have SEND. They work independently but in partnership with Local Authorities, service commissioners and providers, sharing knowledge and experience of families to help plan and develop the quality, range and accessibility of provision, creating better outcomes for families through participation and co-production. The Halton Co-production charter was launched at the Parent and Carer Forum in November 2022 following a number of coproduced workshops: <https://localoffer.haltonchildrenstrust.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Halton-Empowerment-Co-production-Charter-Launch-Ready-17.11.22.pdf>

The SEND governance arrangements for the Halton local area system are summarised below through the diagram.

**Diagram 1 Governance Arrangements**



# Halton SEND Improvement Accountability & Reporting Governance



## 4. Halton's Partnership Priority Action Plan

**Priority 1 - Strategic Oversight and Governance**

Leaders at Halton local authority and the NHS Cheshire and Merseyside ICB should cooperate at pace to improve the shared strategic oversight, governance, support and challenge to drive improvements to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND in Halton.

**Responsible Body**

Halton Borough Council and NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board (ICB)

**Priority 2 - Cohesive communication / joined up systems**

Leaders in the local authority, ICB and education, health and social care providers should improve the efficiency and quality of their information gathering and sharing processes to ensure that children's and young people's needs are understood accurately and met more swiftly and effectively through coordinated approaches.

**Responsible Body**

Halton Borough Council and NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board (ICB)

**Priority 3 – Joint Commissioning**

Leaders across education, health and social care should improve the joint commissioning of services to ensure that children, young people and their families receive sufficient support to have their needs met effectively.

**Responsible Body**

Halton Borough Council and NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board (ICB)

**Priority 4 – Early identification of need and access**

Leaders across education, health and social care should urgently improve the early identification of needs and access to specialist health pathways, including the neurodevelopmental assessment pathway and speech and language therapy and the support available, while children and young people wait.

**Responsible Body**

Halton Borough Council and NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board (ICB)

**Priority 5 – Education Health and Care Plans**

Leaders across education, health and social care should improve the timeliness of new EHC plans and updates to EHC plans following the annual review process, so that, if appropriate, children and young people receive an effective EHC plan within statutory timescales.

**Responsible Body**

Halton Borough Council and NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board (ICB)