

Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD)

**A strategy for transformation
2009-2025**


Sunderland
City Council

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Foreword

I would like to welcome you to the Sunderland Strategy for Children and Young People with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (LDD) which has been put together by a group made up of parents/carers and practitioners from a range of agencies. We are committed to this strategy starting the debate as to how we can work together to meet the needs of around 12,000 Sunderland children, young people and their families. We appreciate the strategy is only a starting point, as each and every one of those 12,000 children and young people is an individual; they are someone's son or daughter, grandchild, pupil, patient or friend. Each child or young person and their families have their own aspirations, their own dreams, and their own worries. Some also have experiences which show that our delivery to families can be, in some cases, service rather than needs led.

Councillor Pat Smith

Portfolio Holder for Children and Learning City
Chair of Sunderland Children's Trust

However, we should also appreciate and, indeed celebrate, the excellence of parts of our LDD services. The challenge is to work together to bring all our services up to this level and to ensure that our provision is joined up in a way that delivers improving outcomes for our children and young people. Through this strategy and its associated delivery plan, we aim to ensure that outcomes for children and young people with a learning difficulty and/or disability in Sunderland continue to improve.



Purpose of the Strategy

This strategy will improve outcomes for children and young people who have a learning difficulty and/or disability (LDD) by setting out the strategic imperatives and identifying governance arrangements in order to transform services. The strategy applies to all children and young people aged 0-25 who live in Sunderland and have a learning difficulty and/or disability. By extending the strategy to include young adults up to age 25, the strategy will more adequately cover transition to adulthood and draw in those agencies that are responsible for the provision of services to young adults.

The LDD Strategy will sit amongst our existing plans and strategies. The needs of children and young people with LDD needs to be a strong theme running through the Children and Young People's Plan, and be incorporated into all Sunderland Children's Trust strategies and plans.

What is a learning difficulty or disability?

There are many different definitions that are related to LDD, including definitions of Special Educational Needs (SEN), learning disability, learning difficulty, etc. Many of these definitions have a statutory base, but unfortunately have no consistency with each other. Rather than attempt to summarise or adjudicate across these definitions, this strategy seeks to be inclusive of all these definitions along the lines of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) definition of learning difficulty and/or disability (LDD) as:

"Those children and young people who have either a learning difficulty in relation to acquiring new skills or who learn at a different rate to their peers. The term is used to cross the professional boundaries between education, health and social services, and to incorporate a common language. The Disability Discrimination Act defines that: 'a person has a disability if he or she has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.' Physical or mental impairments can include sensory impairments and learning difficulties. The definition also covers medical

conditions when they have long-term and substantial effects on the everyday lives of children and young people. Those designated with special educational needs (SEN) under current legislation (education) all have learning difficulties and/or disabilities that make it harder for them to learn than most children and young people of the same age."

The social model of disability

Some disabled people feel that definitions of disability focus too much on a medical model, where social exclusion is seen as an inevitable result of their impairments or medical conditions. The social model of disability asserts that the poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion experienced by many disabled people is not inevitable, but rather stems from attitudinal and environmental barriers. Therefore it is social barriers which cause disability not impairments or medical conditions.

This strategy aims to identify and, where possible, remove the barriers that exclude or limit the involvement of children and young people with LDD in society. These barriers include:

- prejudice and stereotypes
- the way things are organised and run
- the way things are designed, such as restricted access to information, buildings and transport.



Development of the Strategy

This strategy was written in partnership with LDD professionals, parents/carers and children and young people. The involvement of parents/carers and children and young people with LDD in the development of this strategy was of particular importance as this strategy must reflect the issues that are most important to them. We will ensure that parents/carers and children and young people are also involved in the implementation of the strategy.

How we involved parents/carers, children and young people and professionals:

The initial planning for this strategy was undertaken through a workshop which involved a number of parents/carers and professionals from across all partner agencies in Sunderland. From this workshop a small group produced a draft strategy for consultation.

This draft strategy was then open for consultation for an initial period of two months which was extended for an additional two months to allow further responses to be received. Responses were received from numerous statutory and voluntary agencies and also from parent carer groups and groups of children and young people.

Following the consultation the strategy was extensively revised to remove some unnecessary detail and to make the objectives and implementation of the strategy clearer. This revised strategy was circulated for further consultation before being formally ratified by the Sunderland Children's Trust.

What we will do next

The delivery of this strategy will be taken forward by a 3 year rolling delivery plan which will set out the priority outcomes for that period and the actions needed against each priority. Implementation will be monitored by the Children's Trust through the partnership arrangements identified in the strategy.





Our Vision

The vision of the Sunderland Children's Trust is:

“Working together to improve life chances and aspirations for each child and young person in Sunderland”

The vision represents our shared ambition to improve the lives of all children and young people in Sunderland, to overcome barriers to learning and participation and to prepare them well for adulthood.

Our Principles

Our vision is underpinned by a number of shared principles:

- High expectations for all children and young people with LDD to raise achievement and narrow the gap in attainment. Improving outcomes for children and young people with LDD is everyone's business in Sunderland and not just the responsibility of those who work in targeted or specialist services
- Promoting entitlement to local provision and improving outcomes for children and young people with LDD depends upon identifying and removing barriers that prevent them from engaging with the curriculum; in the life of the learning community; and participating in everyday life
- Regardless of when, how and by whom a child's LDD is identified, they and their families have the same core offer of choice, information and support, and there will be clear pathways to receive this support
- Families should receive the support they need at the earliest possible opportunity, so as to promote the healthy development of the child and young person and prevent family crisis from developing
- Access to services will be fair, equitable and transparent
- Children's services in Sunderland will be inclusive for children and young people with LDD, but the views of children and their families on accessing specialist services will also be taken into account
- The way services are delivered will optimize choice for families to decide how they would like their needs to be met
- Parents/carers are the experts on their children's needs and are essential partners in decision making processes including assessments and service design, delivery and evaluation
- All children and young people with LDD can communicate and have a right to be involved in decision making that affects their lives, including assessments and service design, delivery and evaluation
- Families will easily be able to access information to inform their choice about how their needs will be met. Practitioners will be able to signpost families to information that is accurate, up to date and relevant, and available in a range of formats.

Outcomes for children and young people with LDD

This strategy will deliver in all five Every Child Matters outcome areas

Being healthy:

enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle

Staying safe:

being protected from harm and neglect

Enjoying and achieving:

getting the most out of life and developing the skills for adulthood

Making a positive contribution:

being involved with the community and society and not engaging in anti-social or offending behaviour

Economic well-being:

not being prevented by economic disadvantage from achieving their full potential in life.

The outcomes that we are seeking for children and young people with LDD are as follows:

All children and young people with a learning difficulty or disability should have the opportunity to grow up in a safe environment in which they can:

- be happy and confident
- have high hopes and dreams, which they are supported to achieve
- have access to a range of learning opportunities that will maximise attainment levels, skills for life and practical skills development
- have the same opportunities as their peers to be all that they can be
- have equal access to leisure facilities and recreational activities
- be well prepared for adult life.

This will be achieved by children, young people, their families and professionals working in partnership, so that the design and delivery of services keeps children and young people safe and is needs led and inclusive.



National context

This strategy for children and young people with LDD in Sunderland is founded upon a wide range of Government policy and guidance which is brought together in the **Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) Children's Plan** which sets out the Government's strategy for children's services. Making services accessible for disabled children and young people is a priority theme running throughout the Children's Plan.

There are other overarching Government initiatives including **Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People** which sets out the Government's long-term vision that by 2025, disabled people in Britain should have full opportunities and choices to improve their quality of life and will be respected and included as equal members of society. The report recommends improving support for families with young disabled children by ensuring that they benefit from the childcare and early education provided to all children; their extra needs are met and services are centred on disabled children and their families, not on processes and funding streams.

The **National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (NSF)** establishes clear standards for promoting the health and well-being of children and young people and for providing high quality services that meet their needs. Standard 8 addresses the requirements of children and young people who are disabled and/or who have complex health needs, and their families. It is cross-referenced with Standard 6, which addresses the needs of children and young people who are ill. The NSF includes exemplars on Autism, Complex Disability, Asthma and Acquired brain Injury.

Healthy lives, brighter futures: The strategy for children and young people's health (2009) sets out the Government's strategy to improve health outcomes for all children and young people. This includes a chapter on children with acute and additional health needs.

Better Care: Better Lives (2008) sets out the vision that every child and young person with a life-limiting or life-threatening condition will have equitable access to high-quality, family-centred, sustainable care and support, with service provided in a setting of choice, according to the child and family's wishes.

Removing Barriers to Achievement: the Government's Strategy for SEN sets out a programme of sustained action and review over a number of years, to support early years settings, schools and local authorities in improving provision for children with SEN. This identifies four key areas: early intervention so that children receive the help that they need as soon as possible; embedding inclusive practice in every school and early years setting; raising expectations and achievement of children with SEN; and improving partnership so that parents can be confident that their child receives the education they need.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA), as amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 protects disabled children and young people from discrimination in schools and children's services.

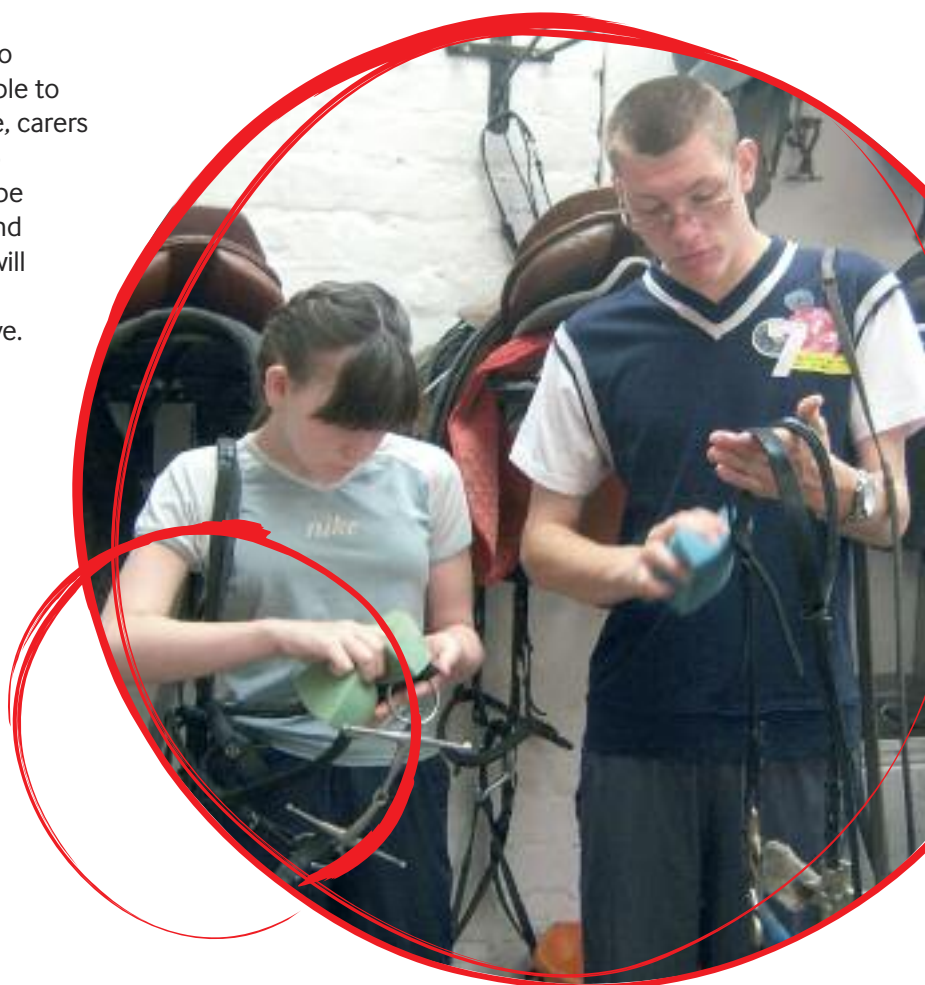
Aiming High for Disabled Children (2007) aims to improve service provision across the board for disabled children and young people and their families, enhancing opportunity and equality for them. It seeks to put families in control of the care packages that they receive and ensuring their involvement in designing and developing services. These care packages should be in place before a family is in crisis and should be well coordinated across all agencies. This support is particularly focussed on the provision of short breaks to provide parents with a break from caring and disabled children and young people the opportunity to engage in a variety of positive activities; and on the provision of childcare to enable parents of disabled children and young people to continue or resume work. The programme also includes a review of the equipment and wheelchairs that are provided to children and the development of a workforce with the skills necessary to work with disabled children in universal and specialist settings.

Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children: a Ten Year Strategy for Childcare sets out the Government's long-term vision to ensure that every child gets the best start in life and to give parents more choice about how to balance work and family life. It addresses the particular needs of different groups including families with disabled children.

Carers at the Heart of 21st Century Families and Communities sets out a strategy that by 2018, carers will be universally recognised and valued as being fundamental to strong families and stable communities. The strategy states that carers will be respected as expert care partners and will have access to the integrated and personalised services they need to support them in their caring role, carers will be able to have a life of their own alongside their caring role, carers will be supported so that they are not forced into financial hardship by their caring role, carers will be supported to stay mentally and physically well, and treated with dignity; children and young people will be protected from inappropriate caring and have the support they need to learn, develop and thrive.

Learning for Living and Work aims to ensure that young people and adults in England will have the knowledge and skills to match the best in the world and be part of a competitive workforce. The strategy focuses on creating equality of opportunity with peers who do not have learning difficulties and/or disabilities in all aspects of post-16 learning whether in schools, apprenticeships, 'independent living skills' programmes or through Train to Gain.

The documents opposite can be found through the Sunderland Disabled Children website at:
www.sundc.org.uk/national-publications.html



Local context

Overview of the city in 2009

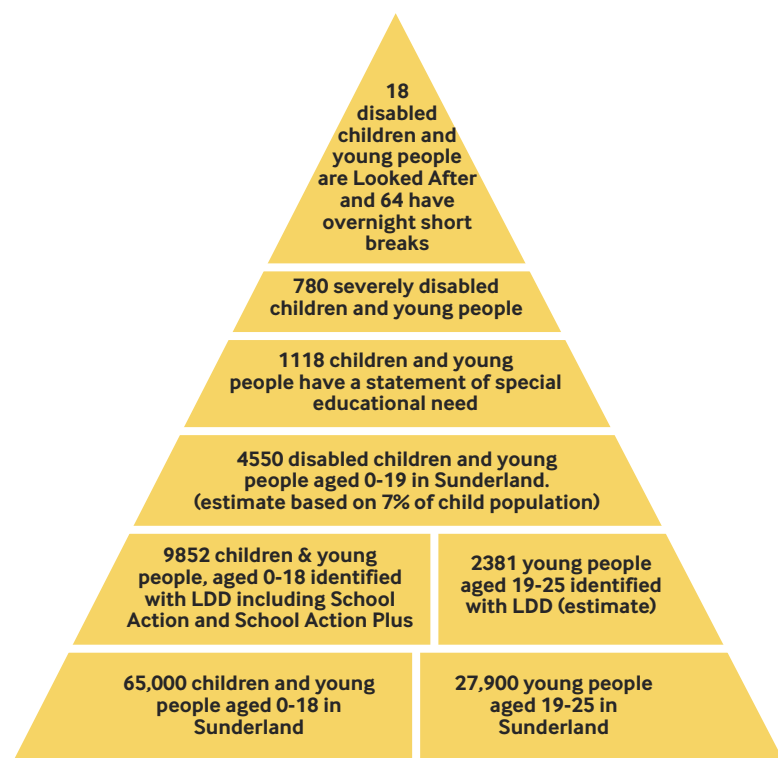
Sunderland is the largest city in England's North East region, with a population of 280,600, of whom 65,000 are children and young people. After significantly falling during the 1990s, the birth rate has levelled off and in recent years there has been a slight upturn. The minority ethnic population is small but growing, with the largest sub-group being Bangladeshi. The number of asylum seeking families is rising.

The city and its inhabitants face a number of challenges. A comparison of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) between 2004 and 2007 shows that the number of people in Sunderland who are living in one of the 10% most deprived areas nationally has decreased by 14,600. However, despite these improvements, 55,000 people (22% of the local population) are still living in one of the country's most deprived areas.

Who are the children and young people with LDD in Sunderland?

The diagram opposite is a snapshot of Sunderland in 2009. Some of these figures are estimates and are included here to give an indication of the high proportion of children and young people in Sunderland who have LDD and are the subject of this strategy.

One of the challenges that faces us in Sunderland is ensuring that data about the numbers and needs of children and young people with LDD is accurate and useable.



What Children tell us

The Tell us Survey asks children and young people across England for their views about their local area. In 2008, in response to the question "do you have a learning difficulty" 6% of children and young people locally responded yes, whilst 7% did not know. The same question was asked in relation to learning disability, where 3% responded yes, and 3% did not know.

City Equals are a group of young people with LDD who discuss issues relevant to them, and are an advocating forum speaking up for other young people who access youth provision in the city. The issues they have identified as important to address are:

- promoting participation
- promoting equal rights
- transport
- accessibility
- the pressures young people face today.

What parents tell us

The annual Parent Carer Forum is an opportunity for parent carers of disabled children, and children with SEN or complex health needs to have a say in the strategic planning of services for the coming year. The event is run jointly with Sunderland, Washington and Coalfields Parent and Carer Council and the issues raised during the event are used to help shape service development. Key issues that have been raised in recent years include

- Incorporating the parent carer perspective into the development of a local Carer's Strategy
- Barriers preventing parent carers from accessing work or training
- The complexity of managing finances including direct payments, benefits and child to adult financial affairs
- Services being not just child centred but family centred, and including 'supporting carers' as a key outcome
- Accurate, timely information is critical to empower parent carers
- The transition to adulthood planning process needs to be more transparent, consistent and effective.

The **Sunderland, Washington and Coalfields Parent and Carer Council** are parents and carers working together to create change, so their children can learn, make friends, have a voice and be part of everyday community and school life. They support families with children and young people with LDD. The issues they have identified as important to address are:

- Key worker support from diagnosis and continuing to transition to adult services
- Easier/regular access to consultants
- Support such as counselling and advice for parents whose child has challenging behaviour
- Variety of opportunities/arrangements for short breaks for carers/families
- Signposting to information and support in applying for a full range of welfare benefits
- Shorter waiting times for Occupational Therapy equipment

What practitioners tell us

In an early meeting to scope out the development of this strategy, a group of practitioners who manage services for children and young people with LDD identified the key issues for improving outcomes as:

- Shift from a service lead to a needs lead approach
- Develop clear governance arrangements for driving forward change in LDD services, to ensure accountability
- A multi-agency, city-wide approach to transport
- Improving transition to adulthood
- Making links with Common Assessment Framework and locality based working arrangements to make universal services more inclusive, including Extended School activities and childcare
- Working better with partners to use resources more efficiently
- Developing Joint Commissioning arrangements
- Developing local performance indicators that will help measure improving outcomes
- Improving data quality to ensure a needs-led commissioning approach is based upon sound data
- Improving information sharing protocols to prevent a family having to repeatedly tell their story
- Intervening earlier to prevent problems escalating.

Reports from the Forums 2005-2008 can be downloaded from www.sundc.org.uk

Core needs of families and young people with LDD

Having listened to what children and young people, parent carers and practitioners tell us, six key themes have been identified:

- **Information**
- **Funding**
- **Transition to Adulthood**
- **Access to services**
- **Workforce Development and Integrated Working**
- **Education and Learning**

Parents, carers, children and young people should be able to access the services and support that they need. Many of these services will be universal and based in local communities, such as schools and GP surgeries. Some services will be of a more targeted or specialist nature; some of these will also be delivered in a locality, whereas others may be centrally provided. It is a priority to meet these six core needs through the implementation of this strategy.

The issues identified in these area are as follows:

Information

- Professionals need information about what is available and where it is
- Families need information in a range of formats that is up to date, accurate, comprehensive and timely
- Information needs to guide families through what they may need to think about at different stages in their child's life, including transition from primary to secondary school and into adulthood
- Parents who have children in mainstream school and other services need to have information specifically targeted at them.
- Parents need information about the statementing process, school action and school action plus
- Information needs to be in a format which is accessible to young people with LDD
- Professionals working to support children, young people and families need to share relevant information to ensure that needs are identified and met.

Funding

- More straightforward pathways need to be identified to access funding streams for specialist provision
- Pathways to access funding at transition to adulthood must be identified, particularly post 19 and over 25
- Funding streams need to be brought together, or aligned, through more integrated working with pooled budgets where appropriate so that the child or young person's needs drives the care plan not restrictions imposed by the funding provider.

Transition to adulthood

- Young people with LDD need many more options with clear progression pathways as they leave education, especially if they attend special school
- There needs to be increased opportunities for recreational activities, employment, supported employment, vocational education and training
- Service development and delivery needs to support young people to develop and maintain social networks as they move into adulthood
- Pathways need to be developed so that there is continuity of support and provision across Children's Services and Adult Services including pathways into support for those not receiving support from Children's Services.
- The specific housing needs of young people with LDD as they leave home needs to be addressed
- There needs to be continuity of healthcare, particularly around specialist therapy services and medical oversight as there is no equivalent to a paediatrician for adults
- Different services and agencies transfer at different ages. This can be particularly confusing for people with specialist needs.

Access to services

- Parents and young people need time, information and positive experiences in order to build up confidence that inclusion in mainstream services can work
- Assessments need to be joined up with appropriate information shared across agencies. Good communication is essential.
- Mainstream services need easy access to information and funding in order to meet the needs of children and young people with LDD

- Families including a child or young person with LDD need suitable housing with access to equipment and adaptations as necessary
- Children with LDD and their families want the same choices as any other family
- Children and young people with LDD need to feel safe and to be safe in their family, their school and their community
- The needs of children with specific conditions including ASD and sensory impairments needs to be considered in all facilities in order to make them accessible
- Support and facilities need to be available so that children with LDD can participate in ordinary family outings
- Services need to be available to help working parents
- There needs to be consistency of provision based on need, not on what you know or who you know
- Parenting support needs to be part of a core offer and not seen as a judgement on parenting ability
- Bullying needs to be addressed and never tolerated
- There needs to be consistency of provision across localities so that children do not have to travel unnecessarily to receive appropriate services and transport needs to be available when attending centralised provision
- Mainstream services need to be accessible to children and young people with LDD including dentistry, surgery, outpatient and inpatient care
- Children and young people with LDD need easy and prompt access to therapies. Attending therapy can be difficult and disruptive for children and young people in mainstream schools if not carefully managed
- Equipment needs to be available without undue delay and needs to be available consistently across all settings
- Children and young people with LDD who have mental health needs require clear pathways into appropriate assessment and treatment
- Wherever possible a prompt diagnosis should be given as delay can cause stress for the family and delay in receiving appropriate support from other agencies.

Workforce development

- Staff working in mainstream services need disability awareness training and skills development training in order to meet the needs of children and young people with LDD
- Parents need to be included where appropriate in the delivery of training to professionals
- Parents need to be able to participate in appropriate training on an equal basis with professionals
- Staff in mainstream settings need to develop the ability to identify when a more specialist assessment is required
- There needs to be basic generic courses and specialist training
- Staff working in mainstream schools need to be skilled in working with children and young people with LDD.

Education and learning

- Children and young people with LDD need accessible transport so that they can access activities. This includes flexibility around home school transport and extended services; the provision of more independence training. Transport should be an essential consideration when new services are commissioned
- Accessibility means more than just physical access
- Challenging behaviour can be an aspect of the child or young person's disability; support needs to be geared not just to managing behaviour but to enable the child to learn and achieve
- Settings need to ensure that the learning of a child with ASD is not disabled by sensory overloads and over stimulation
- The role of Statements of SEN needs further clarification so that children and schools can access support when required
- The physical environment in schools needs to be modified so as to be appropriate for children with LDD
- The use of exclusions from school (both formal and informal) needs to be closely monitored and only used in exceptional circumstances.

Resources

The following is a brief overview of some of the main services working to meet the needs of children and young people with LDD. This will provide a baseline that will inform the commissioning plan for LDD Strategic Partnership.

Current provision

Sunderland City Council Children's Services are responsible for the well-being of all 65,000 children and young people in Sunderland. Those 12,000 children and young people with LDD are supported by:

- **Services for Disabled Children** - assessing and meeting the needs of children and young people from birth to 18 years, who have a permanent and substantial disability. This includes ensuring they are safeguarded; supporting them to engage in appropriate activities that enable their families to have a break from caring; working with those whose behaviour presents a severe challenge to families and services, and providing overnight short breaks.
- **Case Management** - assessing and meeting the needs of children and young people from birth to 18 years who are at risk or in need of protection, including children and young people with LDD who are not severely disabled.
- **The Partnership and Planning (SEN & Behaviour) Service** – identifying, assessing and supporting children and young people with LDD through local authority services such as the SEN and Accessibility Team, the Educational Psychology Service, Parent Partnership, Specialist Support Teams, Key Stage 2 Behaviour Intervention team, Key Stage 3/4 Behaviour Support team, Inclusion (Behaviour) team, Pupil Referral Unit, Home & Hospital Tuition and Young Mums provision. In addition this service ensures, through a continuous cycle of review of provisions, that there are sufficient school places for children and young people with LDD both in special schools and mainstream resourced provisions.
- **Youth Development Group (YDG) and City Equals** – providing citywide Youth Provision for 13-25 year olds who have LDD through the Inclusion Project. Young people are offered a wide range of activities in the evenings, weekends and holidays and are actively encouraged to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. City Equals are a group of young people with LDD who discuss issues relevant to them,

and are an advocating forum speaking up for other young people who access youth provision in the city.

- **Connexions** – providing information, advice and guidance to young people with LDD from 13-25. there is a dedicated team of specialist LDD Personal Advisers who work in special schools/units and with pupils with LDD in mainstream schools. This includes working with pupils in Year 9 and attending their Annual review and helping them to put together their Transition Plan. In Year 11, a Section 140 assessment is completed. Staff work very closely with parents/carers, and complete application forms for funding for specialist college provision where appropriate. Individual support is given to young people and their parents/carers on an ongoing basis. Follow up of all LDD young people continues until they are 25.
- **Youth Offending Service (YOS)** – assesses and works with young people aged between 10 and 18, who have offended and are subject to a Statutory Order, or young people aged between 5 and 18 who are at risk of offending or anti-social behaviour. Each young person is assessed and receives an individually tailored programme to address risk factors that place them at risk of offending, as well as support for any identified needs. This would include an assessment of educational needs informed by information such as whether the young person has a Statement of Special Educational Needs. YOS also works with the parents of young people by offering support or a parenting programme if appropriate.
- **Children's Centres** – ensure that disabled children have access to the full range of activities, play and childcare provision. In addition, specific provision is available throughout the city for those with more complex needs, including sensory play sessions and hydrotherapy. Children's Centre staff have good links with other referral and support teams and are knowledgeable about routes to financial and other support for parents and carers.

Sunderland City Council Health, Housing and Adult Services – have recently established a Transitions Services, named 'Futures', for young people aged 14 to 25 years of age. This service identifies young people with LDD at 14 years of age who may require an Adult Social Care Service once they reach the age of 18. Additionally, Health, Housing and Adult Services operate within a Care Management and Assessment Process whereby the

needs of young people with LDD are assessed and individual packages of care are arranged to meet those assessed needs. This takes the form of a 'person centred' approach to ensure that care services are appropriate to meet those individual needs and promote positive outcomes.

The Learning and Skills Council – has a remit to fund post 16 education and learning that is accessible to all. This is through contracting arrangements with a number of partners to deliver this on our behalf, including schools, further education colleges, Entry to Employment (E2E) providers, work based learning providers, independent specialist colleges and through our ESF procurement process.

City of Sunderland College (CoSC) – mission and core values are “to shape and develop lives, communities and the economy through learning”. The college is committed to promoting and supporting learning for each individual and welcomes learners regardless of disability, race, gender, religion or sexual orientation, and aims to be responsive and flexible in meeting young people’s needs. CoSC particularly welcomes learners with a disability (physical or learning) and/or learning difficulty and aims to provide appropriate resources, facilities and services to enable young people with LDD, including those with mental health difficulty and autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) to be successful in their chosen programmes of study. Working with partner agencies such as Connexions, the college is also committed to being flexible in organising provision for those individuals with LDD who are not in employment, education or training.

City Hospitals Sunderland – provides a general paediatric and child health service for all children and young people within Sunderland. This may include a stay on the hospital wards or treatment within the community. All children are catered for and special arrangements are made with the Paediatric Matron or appropriate Consultant if this is necessary. Several children with disabilities have their health needs met by both community nursing and Consultant services which are delivered from a variety of settings, but which aim to be patient driven as close to home as is practical. City Hospitals Sunderland also provides a work experience programme which has been completed by several children with severe disability on day release from school.

Sunderland Teaching Primary Care Trust - provides Health Visiting, School Nursing and Early Years CAMHS services to children, young people and their families. These services offer health and child development assessment and health promotion interventions to individuals, groups and communities at the child’s home or in a variety of settings. There is a range of team members many of whom take the lead on care coordination for young disabled children using Early Support or the CAF process, working in partnership with families, Children’s Centres, schools, other professionals and voluntary groups.

GPs provide universal health services to all children including those with learning disabilities.

Commissioning Process

Commissioning is an ongoing, cyclical process that enables good quality, value-for-money services to be developed and procured in order to improve outcomes for children and young people.

It is about deciding what service is needed, which organisation should deliver the service, and how it should be delivered, with the aim of delivering a value-for-money service which meets agreed needs and outcomes.

The DCSF developed a commissioning process in 2006, and Sunderland Children’s Trust agreed to adopt it.



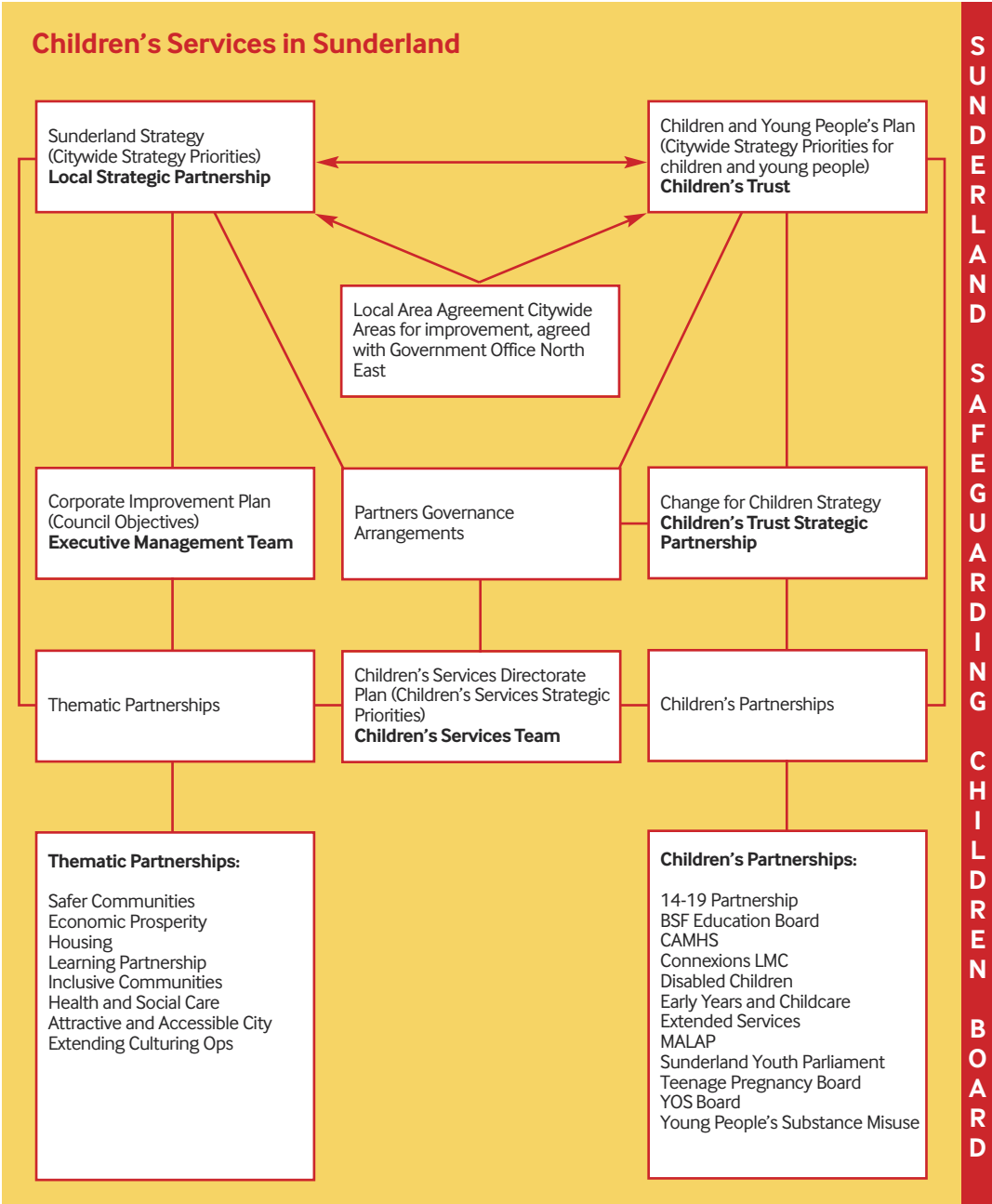
Assessing need of children and young people in the City;
Planning and designing services to meet those needs;
Delivering services;
Reviewing services to determine how well they meet outcomes.

Governance

In order to improve outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities clear governance, planning, commissioning and accountability arrangements will be put in place and clearly linked to the Sunderland Children's Trust.

The Sunderland Children's Trust is the statutory body that is responsible for strategic planning of services for all children in Sunderland. It aims to draw together all statutory and community and voluntary partners into a unified structure as shown in the following diagram:

Sunderland Children's Trust Partnerships and Governance Arrangements



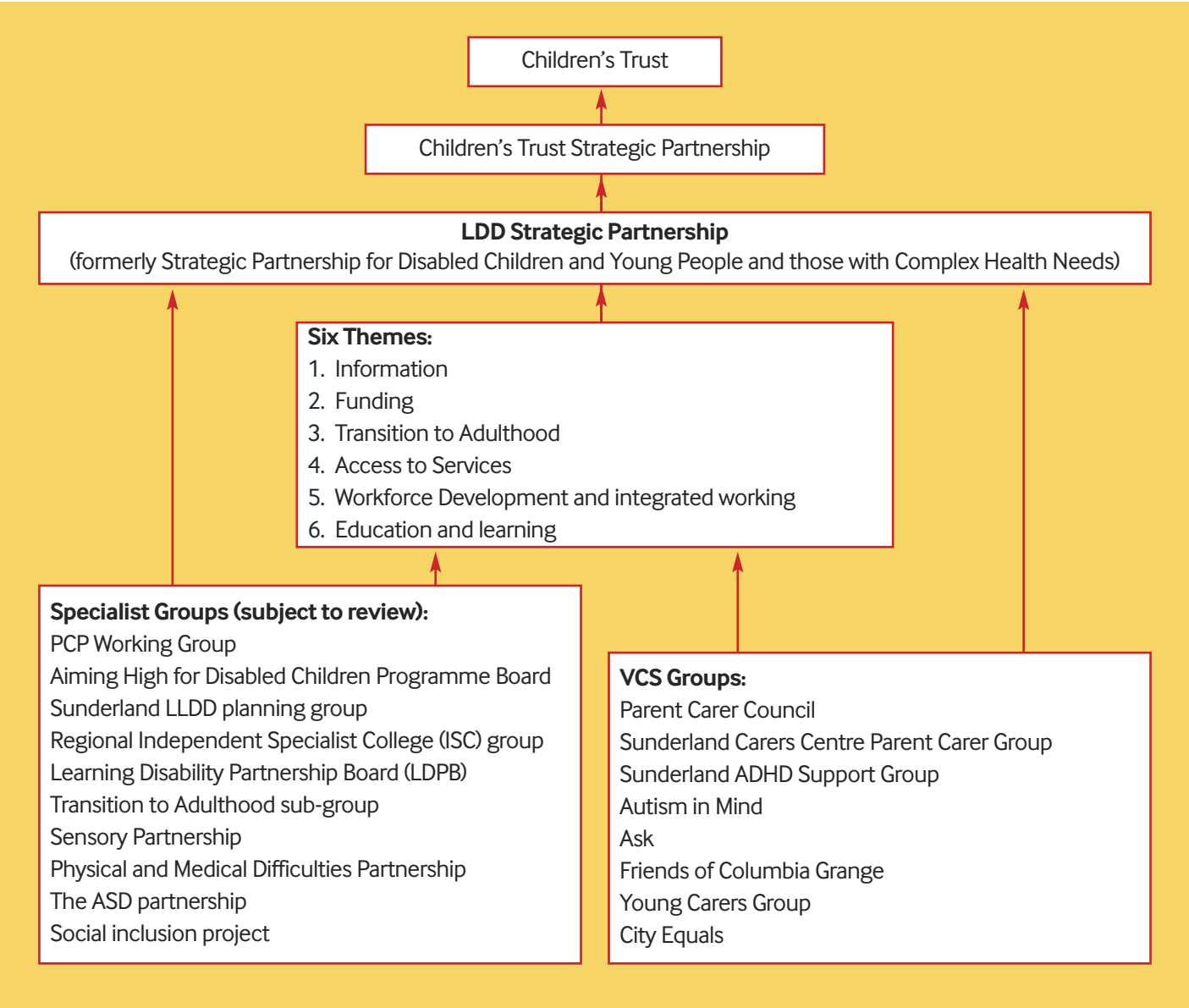


Existing partnerships

In 2008, an audit of existing partnerships, working groups and sub-groups identified 25 separate groups involved in specific aspects of service provision for children and young people with LDD. Some of these groups were time limited, but many are ongoing and need to be brought into a unified governance structure to ensure that the work of each of these groups is shared and not duplicated.

Future governance arrangements

The governance arrangements for leading the implementation of this strategy will be as follows:



The following principles will underpin the governance arrangements:

- Coherent governance arrangements that report to the Children's Trust
- Agreed reporting arrangements and accountability for all groups and sub-groups
- The elimination of duplication and facilitation of effective communication
- An effective balance between cross-cutting themes (e.g. transport or workforce development) and specialist groups (e.g. ASD Partnership or Transition to Adulthood working group)

It is recommended that the governance arrangements are addressed in the following ways:

- Review the remit and membership of the Strategic Partnership for Disabled Children and Young People, and those with Complex Health Needs and rename it the LDD Strategic Partnership
- Ensure that the new LDD Strategic Partnership is an aligned partnership with the Sunderland Children's Trust, which will report on a quarterly basis to the Children's Trust Strategic Partnership, and annually to the Children's Trust
- Determine how the six key themes will be represented in the governance structure and determine whether they are sub-groups or time limited groups
- Agree how the commitment and energy of the voluntary and community sector and their interest in specialist needs groups can be best represented in this proposed governance structure.

Performance and Evaluation Framework

Current national performance indicators for LDD relate to pupils with special educational needs only. SEN indicators relate to narrowing the gap between SEN/non SEN pupils at both Key Stage 2 (Level 4+ English and maths), and Key Stage 4 (5 A*-C including English and maths). There is an additional indicator to monitor the percentage of SEN statements prepared within 26 weeks.

The Aiming High for Disabled Children programme in Sunderland has set targets for severely disabled children receiving short breaks. These targets have been agreed by Together for Disabled Children and the DCSF and are monitored quarterly.

In April 2008 a new system was introduced to measure and compare the performance of each local authority in England. Every local authority will be measured against 198 National Indicators to see how well they are serving their local community. One of these National Indicators, known as NI54, will specifically measure services for disabled children across health, social care and education. This is the first time there has been a specific indicator for disabled children's services, and the indicator will be measured by parents' experiences. This will be implemented nationally in autumn 2009 with the findings made available in spring 2010.

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