

SEND Manifesto Feedback Summary

September 2025

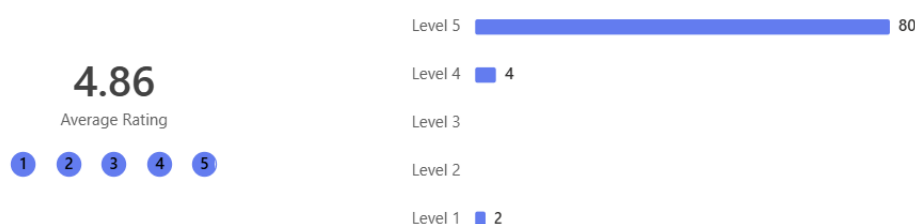
This document provides a summary of the feedback from parents, carers and professionals that has been received relating to the SEND Manifesto. Whilst care must be taken when considering a relatively small amount of feedback, as is the case here, the high degree to which respondents agree that change is urgently needed is striking. Similarly, the specific feedback provides useful areas for consideration as the Manifesto is developed into a new strategy in October 2025.

- **Responses**

We received 162 responses across the two feedback forms. Some respondents responded as both professionals and parents/carers, meaning that 74 responses were from parents/carers and 122 responses were from professionals.

- **Is SEND a significant priority?**

3. On a scale of 1-5 (1= low priority, 5= high priority) how significant a priority should SEND in Sheffield be?



Those responding to the questionnaire were asked to rate the level of priority for SEND in Sheffield. Almost all respondents chose the highest priority and the average rating (4.86 out of 5) reflects this.

It should also be noted that all responses to the initial feedback form were also from the perspective that SEND was a concern. There were no questions or comments in any feedback streams which indicated that anyone did not agree that there was a problem.

- **Do people agree with the manifesto proposals?**

2. We would like your feedback on the proposals

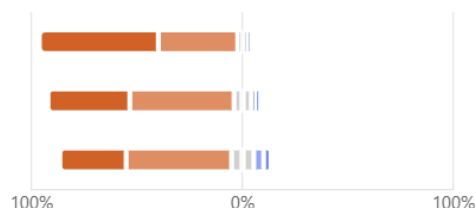
Based on the overview (green) document, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

I support the analysis (p5&6)

The priorities match what needs to change within the Sheffield SEND system (p9)

The workstreams are appropriate (p10-11)



There is broad support for the manifesto proposals amongst those responding to the questionnaire. Respondents who strongly agree or agree represent a significant majority.

The strongest agreement is with the analysis, where 94.1% are in agreement (56.5% strongly agree and 37.6% agree).

There is overall agreement that the priorities match what needs to change within the Sheffield SEND system with 88.2% in agreement (38.8% strongly agree and 49.4% agree).

Similarly, there is overall agreement that the workstreams are appropriate with 81.4% in agreement (31.4% strongly agree and 50.0% agree). A small number of respondents disagree that the workstreams are appropriate (4.7% disagree and 3.5% strongly disagree).

- **Feedback themes**

Respondents across both the initial feedback and questionnaires had the opportunity to make comments, ask questions or identify gaps in the Manifesto. These responses, which are often detailed, are extremely useful to the colleagues who are developing the Manifesto into a new Inclusion Strategy. They have been shared in full with this group to support this work.

For the purposes of this report, we have attempted to summarise the themes below and provide a sample of responses (or parts of responses) which illustrate those themes. It should be noted that many responses covered multiple themes, and more than thirty responses were explicitly supportive of the manifesto content.

“I'm excited about all this has to offer. I'm just a bit daunted at the scale of what is ahead!”

“I welcome the changes to be made within the new manifesto as, as a SENDCo, the current systems and processes are completely ineffective.”

Most frequently occurring themes (more than twenty occasions):

- Would like more urgency and detail on delivery and plans

“It does not clearly say who will do what, or when changes will happen.”

“The initial actions in the workstreams feel very big and this runs the risk of them being statements that are never realised.”

“The proposal needs... specific commitments to workforce expansion with timelines and funding allocations ... specific waiting time targets...”

“A stronger outcomes framework could act as a bridge: linking what happens in an individual EHCP with the system-wide ambitions for SEND in Sheffield.”

- Concerns about funding being sufficient (now and for change)

“Will there be more money available?”

“What about the big white elephant in the room - funding! There is not a person here who doesn’t already agree with the proposals but how will the changes be funded in schools. A lot of things that are going wrong with send in schools are not because of a lack of vision or professional knowledge, it’s because funding.”

- Importance of recognising the needs of children (both provision and systems)

“How will the wider health service from Sheffield Children’s be involved in this? Is there a process of engaging colleagues from across acute and community health services? Often ‘health’ is just perceived as a handful of therapy services, that work into schools. The reality is that many children with SEND have complex health needs and will move in and out of a range of community services. It is essential that children can be prioritised across all health services based on clinical urgency, not arbitrary review dates based on SEND processes and paperwork.”

“For many children with SEND the highly pressured and prescriptive national curriculum is a barrier to their education, until this can be changed it will continue to be a barrier to education.”

“Does this manifesto address the issue of children not having timely access to the most appropriate education setting / provision? The red tape in the EHCP system means we have children in the mainstream who should have been able to access specialist provision from the beginning of school but instead we have to “prove mainstream doesn’t work for them” and even then there isn’t capacity in an appropriate setting. We do the whole thing backwards by essentially saying “no they don’t need specialist provision because we haven’t got any specialist provision to give them”.

Other frequent themes (between eleven and nineteen occasions):

- Better support for parents/carers and families

“Parent carers need support. A SEN child can be so incredibly isolating for a family. ‘support the family, support the child’ we are constantly having to pour from an empty cup.”

- Workforce development (including workloads)

“I feel develop a coherent and connected workforce across the city is key and will require some changes to achieve.”

- Transparency in decision making

“The Manifesto also fails to address the chronic lack of transparency that families face when navigating the SEND system in Sheffield. Decisions about placements, funding, and support are often made behind closed doors, with little to no explanation or accountability. Parents are left in the dark, forced to chase answers, appeal decisions, and fight for basic information that should be freely available.”

- Inclusion in education settings

“Commitment to ... SEND students by creating truly inclusive school environments where all students can thrive”

- Collaboration and trust

“More collaborative working between health, social care and education is required. Feel bounced around services for tick box exercises rather than support.”

- Health input (including accessing services)

“How do we enable partner organisations to commit to these? Eg whole system improvement across health and education.”

- Provision specific feedback (ranging from early years to post-16)

“How are early years providers, including private nurseries, involved, invested and contributing to this? Early identification systems are failing and the expertise in early years is stretched/lacking.”

“I would really want to see much stronger explicit presence for PFA from the earliest point of relevance. That post 16 provision is equitably represented against schools and that there is specific focus on sustainable inclusive employment development.”

- Equity (especially relating to race and poverty)

“The system needs to be fairer - especially for parents who can't afford support.”

“...The manifesto falls short of making a clear, explicit commitment to tackling racial bias within SEND identification and provision. Given that the Sheffield Race Equality Commission report was published only three years ago, this feels like a timely and necessary area for focused attention. Without directly naming and confronting systemic bias, there is a real risk that racial inequities will persist within the very structures the manifesto aims to transform.”

“My key concern is that new developments consider how disadvantaged groups have equal access to high quality provision and support. Currently we have a system where those with the most resources are able to secure appropriate support for their children. Families who are disadvantaged and those new to English are last in the queue. This means that SENCOs who work on these schools have an additional challenge to support families to navigate the systems and advocate for them.”

- Importance of voice of children and young people

“What do children and young people say? Their own words or stories are not shown.”

Occasional themes (less than ten occasions):

- Want to know more about accountability (who and how it will work)
- Concerns relating to national government policy
- Healthy child development
- More detail on the outcomes framework
- It is a manifesto for childhood as well as SEND
- Commissioning
- Would like a more accessible version of the manifesto
- Communications (not including advice)
- Sufficiency (planning)
- Would like an apology from leaders

- **Conclusions**

There is widespread agreement that things need to change and improve. Whilst the volume of feedback reflected here is not large enough and does not include a high enough proportion of parents and carers, the consistency of the responses is significant.

The most useful aspect of the feedback are the themes which are being considered in the next phase of this work, to develop the new Inclusion Strategy. This report captures the themes that were covered by this feedback, but the specific and detailed content in many responses will also influence the direction of the new strategy.

Finally, the limitations of this feedback process clearly illustrate one of the key priorities for the future. We do not currently have suitable or sufficient mechanisms to understand the experiences of children, young people, their families or the professionals who work with them. The SEND Enquiry process provides some learning in this regard, alongside elements of stronger practice that can be found in parts of the system. Enquiring about children and young people's experiences will be at the heart of understanding the progress of our local area.