



Report: Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy Update

Date: 16th March 2023

To the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

REPORT TITLE: Special Educational Needs Strategy 2022-2025 Update

Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Wards Affected	Key Decision
Councillor Lani-Mae Ball Councillor Rachel Blake	All	No

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of this report is to update on the progress of the refreshed Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy. It sets out the vision, principles, and priorities for the next 3 years, with the aim to improve outcomes for children, young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their families.
2. The SEND Strategy was approved by cabinet in November 2022, with delivery beginning in January 2023. Consultation with the wider system took place during September- November 2022. Implementation began in January 2023.
3. The refreshed SEND Strategy has also been aligned to our local policy and strategies around Localities and accountable as part of the Education and Skills Strategy 2030, with a clear mandate nested in Priority 5, Equity and Inclusion.
4. A new SEND Board and supporting work streams aligned to the priorities has been established to oversee the delivery and governance of the strategy.
5. To ensure the success of the SEND Strategy, consultation, engagement, and co-production has been undertaken with children, families, young people, schools, settings, other education providers and wider partners. Consultation with all key stakeholders in Autumn 2022, saw clear support for the priorities of the strategy, with some additional areas being added to the implementation plan in order to reflect some of the views of stakeholders. The vision of the Doncaster SEND Strategy is to ensure that children who have SEND, will have the best possible start in life, and as they grow up, they will have prompt access to reliable local, high-quality education, health, and care services.

6. To realise the vision of the SEND Strategy, six key priorities have been identified and will be delivered over the next 3 years. All the priorities are centred on an early intervention model and one of joint accountability, ownership and co-production across the partnership. The key priorities are:
 - **Priority 1:** To ensure that the graduated response to meeting special educational and disability needs is delivered coherently and consistently. Children and families and will be supported by earlier intervention, collaboration and capacity building across local areas. We will prioritise improvements in the quality and timeliness of EHCPs. This will be supported by a workforce plan, which will demonstrate how all agencies can be supported to deliver these changes.
 - **Priority 2:** To ensure there is a clear and partnership wide response to young people's mental health needs
 - **Priority 3:** To ensure children and young people on the Autism, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and other neurodevelopmental pathways have their needs identified and met in a consistently timely manner.
 - **Priority 4:** To ensure Doncaster schools provide teaching that effectively meet the needs of students with SEND so that they make good progress and are well prepared for their next stage in education and future employment.
 - **Priority 5:** Improve positive transitions for young people with SEND so transitions are planned, young people are prepared for adulthood and they are able to independently access suitable sustainable employment or supported employment.
 - **Priority 6:** Improving the use of data and information to inform strategic planning and joint commissioning.
7. In this report we have also set out the progress made so far in our work with the 'Delivering Better Value' project, which will support the delivery of our strategy.

EXEMPT REPORT

8. There is no exempt information detailed within this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

9. It is recommended that members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Panel note the contents of this update paper and presentation to be provided at the meeting.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

10. The SEND Code of Practice, under part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014 sets out the legal requirements and duties placed on local authorities, health bodies, school and colleges to provide for children and young people with special educational needs. The SEND Strategy sets out how we as a partnership will deliver this duty under an early intervention model and revised governance arrangements.
11. The strategy will deliver a stronger range of provisions and interventions to ensure that children and young people with special needs and disabilities are happy and successful in their lives. It will also aim to ensure a much stronger landscape of training and employment activities.

12. An underpinning principle of the SEND Strategy is co-production both with our partners but importantly with children, young people and their families, ensuring lived experience and local intelligence influences the decisions we make. The strategy is supported by a cycle of co-production activity with children, young people, parents and carers.
13. A key principle is to ensure that children and young people are educated as close to home as possible, supporting not only their educational outcomes but also providing a sense of community and belonging in the area they live and go to school.
14. By moving the resource and decision making closer to schools and settings, alongside ensuring quality assurance of its impact, will support an early intervention approach, making sure special educational needs are identified and met in a timely fashion.
15. Alignment and reference to other key strategies is crucial in the delivery of the strategy, in particular Education and Skills 2030 and the All Age Learning disabilities and Autism Strategy.

BACKGROUND:

16. Since the start of the pandemic Doncaster has seen a significant rise in the overall number of young people identified as having special educational needs or disabilities. This increase has particularly affected the number of young people with Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs). This sudden rise in the number of assessments and plans has placed council teams under significant pressure, which has slowed the timeliness of the production of plans within statutory timeframes.
17. The rise in demand, alongside increasing financial pressures, has also placed challenges upon the wider workforce connected to those with special educational needs including those in the health, care, and school sectors. The pandemic has impacted upon the number of young people who are identified as having autistic spectrum (ASD) related needs and those with social and emotional needs (SEMH). These increases have placed strain upon local systems, which has resulted in an increasing number of young people being educated in independent specialist provision, as local specialist provision is unable to cater for the increase in need. This, in turn has put pressure upon local high needs funding. In this report we give an update on the continuing pressure in the local system.
18. These local trends have also been reflected in the national picture, with a small number of areas being able to balance the high needs block and the national high needs deficit predicted to be above £3 billion by the end of 2023-2024. Doncaster have volunteered to be part of a DfE (Department for Education) project called 'Delivering Better Value in SEND' which seeks to understand the key drivers behind local high needs spending and then bid for financial support to local authorities in order to plan changes that will relieve pressure in the longer term. Doncaster have participated in this programme and have, recently, made a successful bid for funds to support our implementation plan.

National Context

19. In 2018/19 councils faced a High Needs funding gap of almost £500 million, by 2019/20 this was £806million and £1.2 billion by 2020/21, with a forecast for this to be over £3 billion by the end of 2022/23 (Local Government Association). The DfE have continued to work with local authorities to try and identify ways of managing or controlling local deficits through the 'Safety Valve' and 'Delivering Better Value' projects.
20. The Government SEND Review which was launched in 2019, concluded in March 2022, with the publication of the SEND 'Green Paper'. This paper acknowledged the current pressures around SEND nationally. The paper concluded that:
 - Outcomes for children and young people with SEND or in alternative provision are poor.
 - Navigating the SEND system and alternative provision is not a positive experience for children, young people and their families
 - The system is not delivering value for money for children, young people and families.
21. Whilst it is not expected that the Green Paper will become legislation in the immediate future, a new national SEND implementation plan is likely to be announced in March 2023.
22. OFSTED have produced a new handbook and framework for Local Area SEND inspections. This new framework reflects the themes within the 'green paper' and focuses on the voice of children and families and the impact of the work of the local area. The new Local Area SEND Inspection framework for local areas has been in operation since January 2023.
23. The DfE 'Delivering Better Value in SEND' project began in October 2022. This supports local areas to analyse trends in their local areas and supports the production of an implementation plan through a grant for each of the 55 L.A.s involved. The DfE will also collect overarching themes from this research to inform national policy.

THE LOCAL PICTURE- UPDATE:

24. The launch of our new local graduated approach to meeting need is impacting upon the consistency of identification of need within the borough, with our rates of identification for SEND support (12.80%) now being in line with national (12.60%) and regional averages (12.90%) after being much lower than both in 2017-2018 (by 2.5%) .
25. At the last census (May 2022) the number of EHCPs amounted to 3.1% of the school population, as opposed to 4% nationally, but this is rising quickly. At the end of the 2018/19 financial year, Doncaster maintained a total of 1898 EHCPs, and by the beginning of February 2023 this had increased to 2489, a 31% increase.
26. Demand for statutory assessments for Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) has continued to increase. In the year 2016/17 there were 238 referrals for statutory

assessment received and in 2022 this had increased to 600 for the year in total. Whilst not all requests progress to an EHCP, around 60% do each year. This pressure has, in turn, affected the timeliness of producing EHCPs in line with statutory expectations. This figure has dropped during 2022 and is now 23%, against a national average of 59.9%.

27. Currently 161 young people with EHCPs are educated in out of area provision for their Post 16 education. This has increased from 111 in 2019, but has decreased from 169 in September 2022.
28. Of children and young people pre -16s, 199 children and young people are educated in out of area provision, which is just over 7.99% of the total plans. This has grown from 168 in September 2022. .Of these; the majority have a primary need of Social, Emotional and Mental Health.
29. The High Needs Block funding in Doncaster is predicted to overspend in 2022-2023 by £7.6m. This will add to the cumulative DSG overspend. A quality assurance process is in place and Doncaster is participating in the Delivering Value programme facilitated by the DfE.
30. In addition, Doncaster has also been awarded £7m (covering the period 2022-23 to 2023-24) in High Needs Capital Funding. This will support the delivery of the SEND Strategy and the need to increase capacity across the borough to provide provision for pupils with special educational needs.

'Delivering Better Value in SEND' in Doncaster:

31. Doncaster volunteered to take part in this programme and began this work in October. We have undertaken a 'deep dive' into the local data, trends and projections around the local SEND system alongside working with a range of partners and stakeholders. We have developed a costed implementation plan, supported by a grant application for £1m to show how we are going to make these changes. This application has been supported by the DfE and has been successful, with work beginning on the related actions in April 2023. The key findings of this analysis were:
 - High needs block trajectory is projected to increase in the coming years, unless action is taken to mitigate the costs of independent special school placements.
 - Recent reduction in the proportion of young people with EHCPs educated in mainstream and increase in pre-16 out of area placements.
 - Spending is driven by increase in ASD spend in mainstream schools and SEMH needs in specialist schools.
 - Recent shift in proportion of young people moving out of mainstream via EHCP process, particularly at transition points.
 - One key factor driving spend is the lack of parental confidence in mainstream settings, especially at transition points, and particularly at secondary.
 - Case reviews revealed that 30% of CYP in special schools could have been educated within mainstreams, without the need for an EHCP. Placements in independent special schools were often expensive and also did not deliver good outcomes for the young person.

- Support services vary in operating practices and do not always get involved early enough to prevent young people requiring expensive provision later.

32. The 'Delivering Better Value' project findings corresponded clearly to the priorities within our SEND Strategy'. They set out key actions required now to improve the system. These are included within our implementation plan and fall into 3 main categories:

- Improve local processes
- Develop mainstream culture and practice.
- Workforce transformation.

33. The specific areas needed to now make these improvements include:

- There is a need for stronger advice and guidance for schools so that they are more equipped to meet need at an early point.
- Improve EHCP processes and quality assurance of plans.
- Develop a funding model that will enable schools to meet need without needing an EHCP.
- There is a need for a clear sufficiency plan that outlines how future specialist provision will meet emerging needs.
- Ensure that specialist services are more coherent and intervene at the correct point.
- Develop workforce skills and understanding across a range of stakeholders in order to ensure that children, young people and families get support at the correct point.

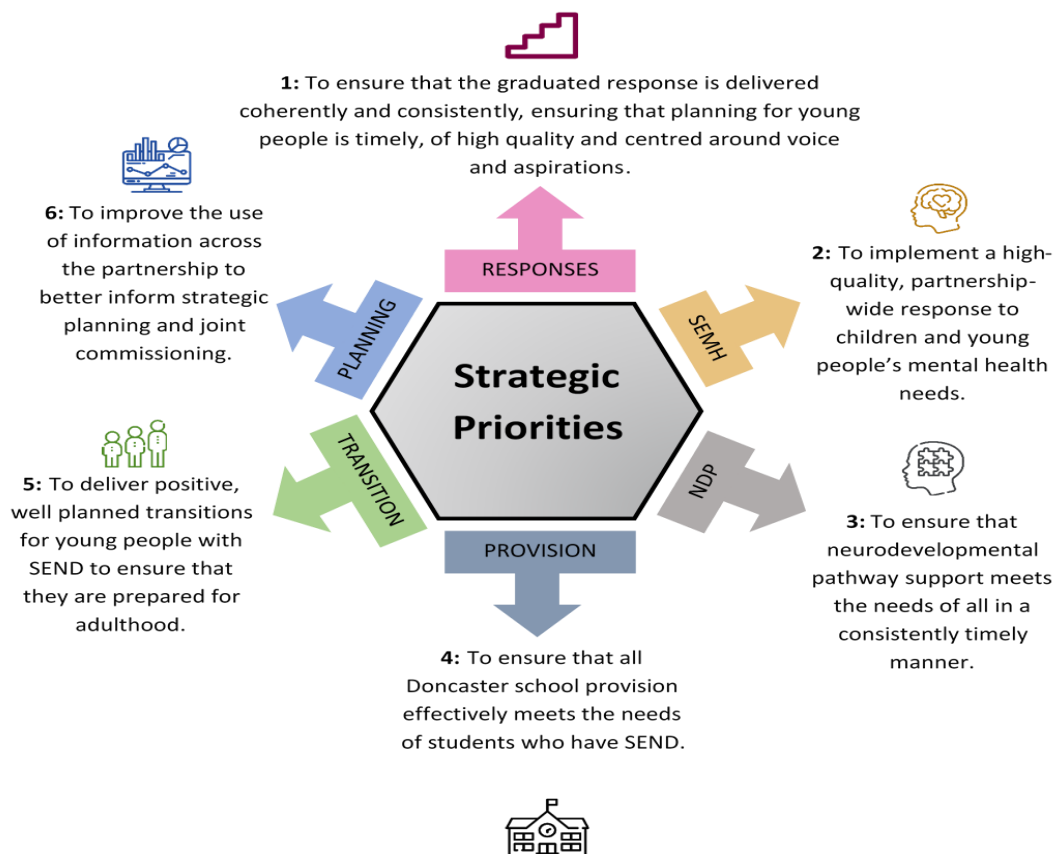
34. Our implementation plan sets out the steps needed to do this, including:

- Develop a multi-agency handbook, toolkit and professional development framework to support practitioners in managing young people's needs.
- Develop a new assessment framework and funding model, to support schools in making effective provision at the right time.
- Improve the operating model for support services.
- Developing a sufficiency strategy that outlines the future of specialist provision in the borough.
- Increase school capability through the appointment of a Mainstream Inclusivity Team who will ensure accountability and direct support and guidance for schools.
- Develop an online tool for Education, Health and Care Plans so that processes are more efficient and easily accessed by parents and professionals.

- Ensure an effective single data point for all SEND information and improve the Local Offer site so that it is more accessible for parents, children and young people.
- Set out our local parent and young people co-production arrangements through a local charter.

SEND Strategy:

35. The SEND Strategy has these 6 priorities:



36. The strategy document was produced through consultation between key partners, including health agencies, social care and through our Special Educational Needs and Disabilities board. The strategy priorities have been developed also through a sequence of co-production sessions with parents/ carers and children and young people. We are currently working with strategic groups of head teachers, SENCOs, parents and children and young people to ensure timely delivery. A Young People's SEND board has been established in order to ensure that the priorities are delivered in an appropriate manner.
37. In order to ensure effective monitoring, the Local Area SEND Board will meet every six weeks and report upon the progress of work-streams attached to each of the above priorities. Prior to each board a Parent Co-Production Group, a young people's 'Shadow Board' and a Head Teacher group will meet in order to scrutinise progress and develop key issues. The council are reviewing the delivery of statutory SEND

services and are monitoring performance of timeliness and spend through a series of performance clinics led by the Director of Children, Young People and Families. Further detail about these priorities can be found in the strategy document, which is found here: [\(hyperlink\)](#) and in the implementation plan [\(hyperlink\)](#).

38. Delivery of the strategy began in January 2023. Progress so far is set out below:

Priority	Update
<p>PRIORITY ONE: Ensure that there is a consistent approach to identifying, assessing and meeting the needs of young people, which is centred around their needs and aspirations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key meetings held with Stakeholders to identify contents of a Handbook and Toolkit. Products to be compiled and created in March/ April. • SENCO group have developed new funding tool and assessment arrangements. • Handbook and toolkit team to be appointed in March. • EHCP Work-stream established meeting on a 3 weekly basis to focus on strengthen advice and guidance contributions, quality of EHCPs, and to evaluate SEND team activity in order to consider more effective deployment. • SEND Team currently developing proposal for purchase of new system. Project Manager has been brought in to lead on this work which is to implement a new system to support with improving timeliness of EHCPs. • New EHCP Quality Assurance mechanism has been agreed • Sufficiency Work stream established and work is progress with compiling data and working with partners to develop report for April. • Local Offer Steering Group is in motion. Peer review of the site has been planned for May. Revisions to site planned for Autumn. • Weekly strategy update meetings are now held between L.A. Health and Social Care. • Co-production workshops with Parents and Carers have been arranged for March, with charter to be produced in April. • Development of a co-production charter is due to take place at the end of March.
<p>PRIORITY TWO: To implement a high-quality, partnership-wide response to children and young people’s mental health needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEMH Hubs-Expression of Interest process has ended and evaluations are now in review. Providers to be named early March and mobilisation begins in March for September start. • Workstream has been progression next steps in terms of decision making, preparing contract and preparing monitoring processes once hubs have been established • Mental Health and School culture group have met and are currently consulting with schools on relevant areas of the plan. • Mental Health audits completed with first 20 schools.
<p>PRIORITY THREE: To ensure that neurodevelopmental pathway support meets the needs of all in a consistently and timely manner</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Developmental Pathway pathway panel is underway. New procedures agreed and shared with schools through SENCO Network. • Reduction in referrals in January and February through pathway compared to previous years.
<p>PRIORITY FOUR: To ensure that all Doncaster school provision effectively meets the needs of students who have SEND</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work has progressed to develop content for a SENCO Charter. First draft to go to Head Teachers group in March. • Work has been completed around reviewing the element 3 funding models from other authorities within school practitioners. SENCO and Head Teacher group have defined a funding formula and future arrangements to support locality working. • We are currently working with a range of schools to develop shared placements between special and mainstream schools and to develop a recruitment campaign for teaching assistants.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
PRIORITY FIVE: PRIORITY FIVE: To deliver positive, well planned transitions for young people with SEND to ensure that they are prepared for adulthood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-agency strategy group created for Preparation for Adulthood and Employability. • Handbook and toolkit group working on advice and guidance and new templates for EHCP and SEND planning in schools. • Currently auditing Preparation for Adulthood strategy with National Development Team For Inclusion • Employability audit completed. • First meeting of SEND employment board in March 2023. • Planning borough wide career events for SEND young people. • Working with mainstream providers to review current offer of Post 16 education.
PRIORITY SIX: To improve the use of information across the partnership to better inform strategic planning and joint commissioning for CYP with SEND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First draft of a Joint SEND Commissioning Strategy is complete. Awaiting final inputs then this will be shared with Joint Commissioning Resource Group at the end of March for approval and sign off • SEND specific Joint Strategic Needs Analysis is in the final stages of completion. To be published in April. • Partnership SEND Data Dashboard is complete.



OPTIONS CONSIDERED:


39. Not applicable

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

40. Not applicable:

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY OUTCOMES

Great 8 Priority	Positive Overall	Mix of Positive & Negative	Trade-offs to consider – Negative overall	Neutral or No implications
 Tackling Climate Change	✓			
<p>Comments:</p> <p>Improving the range of local provision will ensure that less young people will have to travel out of borough for school. This will, in turn, limit the amount of transport that is provided by the council, thereby limiting ecological impacts.</p>				
 Developing the skills to thrive in life and in work	✓			

<p>Comments:</p> <p>This work will ensure that educational provision is more effective in developing the skills of our children and young people. It will also create a new landscape of employment and training for young people when they leave school.</p>				
 <p>Making Doncaster the best place to do business and create good jobs</p>	✓			
<p>Comments:</p> <p>As part of this strategy, we will work with training providers and employers to ensure that young people with special needs or disabilities are able to access meaningful and successful employment in later life.</p>				
 <p>Building opportunities for healthier, happier and longer lives for all</p>	✓			
<p>Comments:</p> <p>The partnership will improve joint planning and commissioning arrangements in order to ensure that health provision is timely and appropriate for children and young people.</p>				
 <p>Creating safer, stronger, greener and cleaner communities where everyone belongs</p>				✓
<p>Comments:</p> <p>Not directly relevant</p>				
 <p>Nurturing a child and family-friendly borough</p>	✓			
<p>Comments:</p> <p>This principle is key to our work in supporting schools to deliver improved practices to work with families to meet the needs of young people at an earlier point. We will focus on a joined up, family- focused approach and seek to ensure that services are delivered so that the needs of our children are met earlier and more effectively by all services.</p>				
 <p>Building Transport and digital connections fit for the future</p>				✓
<p>Comments:</p> <p>Not directly relevant</p>				
 <p>Promoting the borough and its cultural, sporting, and heritage opportunities</p>	✓			

Comments: We will seek to build higher levels of involvement of SEND pupils in cultural and community activity.				
Fair & Inclusive	✓			
Comments: Fairness and inclusivity underpin the core principles of this strategy. Young people have a right to a high quality education and to employment, regardless of their needs. This strategy aims to build the skills and awareness across Doncaster that will deliver enhanced inclusion so that young people with special needs or disabilities can access education, close to home, with their peers.				

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

41. No Legal Implications have been sought for this report as it is just an update for information. Further specific advice can be provided in relation to any issues raised by the Committee.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

42. No Financial Implications have been sought for this report as it is just an update for information. Further specific advice can be provided in relation to any issues raised by the Committee.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

43. No Human Resource Implications have been sought for this report as it is just an update for information. Further specific advice can be provided in relation to any issues raised by the Committee.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

44. No Technology Implications have been sought for this report as it is just an update for information. Further specific advice can be provided in relation to any issues raised by the Committee.

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

45. **Risk:** Key stakeholders such as schools and wider providers do not engage productively with this strategy.

Mitigation: We are mitigating this by building relationships with schools and between partners, through consultation and working groups. We will work with a body of head teachers to ensure that the strategy is owned and delivered collaboratively and

embedded in wider commissioning arrangements. Also, we have established a cycle of meetings with parents, children and young people to ensure that their experiences are central to all activity. We are also mitigating this by working with DFE in order to ensure that national perspectives are presented to partners so that partners are able to understand the wider context.

46. **Risk:** If there is insufficient resource attached to the devolution of funding this will mean that needs will remain unmet.

Mitigation: We have been mitigating this by working with other councils who already have devolved funding in order to compare models. Where such an arrangement exists, there is a much smoother trajectory of cost and need, with basic costs being stable over time. We will also create a contingency fund from our planned spend in order to ensure that needs can be met. We are also mitigating this by delivering more funding to schools for earlier intervention and developing more local provision. This will enable us to intervene earlier and more locally to ensure that greater efficiencies are made within the high needs block. We will also work with parents during the Summer to ensure that they have a good understanding of the new mechanism.

47. **Risk:** Actions within this strategy will not be delivered on time and this will exacerbate existing pressures.

Mitigation: We are working on an implementation with patterns which will set out clear milestones and outcomes. The SEND Board and the DFE will monitor this plan to ensure accountability and timeliness will monitor this plan.

CONSULTATION

48. The SEND Strategy was devised with a range of partners and consulted upon during autumn 2022. There was clear support and no objections to the priorities above. Further suggestions offered by the system have been incorporated into the Implementation Plan.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

49. [SEND Review - right support, right place, right time - government consultation on the SEND and alternative provision system in England \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/consultations/send-review-right-support-right-place-right-time)

[High needs budgets: effective management in local authorities \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/consultations/high-needs-budgets-effective-management-in-local-authorities)

Doncaster Local Area OFSTED SEND Report
(<https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50094861>)

[Doncaster SEND Implementation Plan](#)

[Doncaster SEND Strategy](#)

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

50. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)
Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)
Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH)
Multi-Academy Trust (MAT),
Department for Education (DFE)
Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED)
Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)
Mental Health Support Teams (MHST)
General Developmental Assessment (GDA)
Further Education (FE)
Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)
Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)

REPORT AUTHOR & CONTRIBUTORS

Martyn Owen Head of Service SEND Transformation
Martyn.owen@doncaster.gov.uk

Leanne Hornsby Assistant Director, Education, Skills, Culture and Heritage
Leanne.hornsby@doncaster.gov.uk

Riana Nelson
Director of Children, Young People and Families