

# What our research shows: five key take-aways

## 1 Flexibility is key

Creating great learning spaces for young people with SEND requires creativity and imagination. Effective building and classroom design is a crucial element in learning and schools and delivery teams need to consider a wide range of issues when it comes to creating any SEND classroom or school building.

## 2 Bringing end users on the journey

It's essential to bring end users on the journey from the outset. A lack of focus on the importance of conversations between project stakeholders at the initial design and planning stage meant that headteachers often felt isolated and removed from the early stage of the process even though they often had opinions and insights which needed to be factored into the design process.

Young people with SEND can experience disruption and trauma if change is not carefully handled and communicated. Delivery teams need to engage with teachers and young people and equip teachers with the tools to communicate the development process to their cohorts – creating a positive and collaborative experience for everyone.

## 3 Prioritising the design stage

Current SEND school build and design processes mean that there is a shortfall in the amount of time dedicated to the design stage at the start of the process. This results in undue pressure being placed on architects, teachers and other parties to make key design decisions during this phase of work.

## 4 Understanding the cohort

Commissioners and the entire delivery team need to develop a deep understanding of the cohort in order to ensure successful delivery. This will enable an in-depth appreciation of SEND needs in individual areas and the bespoke nature of the specific challenges that each area might face. Both current and future need should be clearly and carefully assessed and a long-term view should be taken, which considers potential future shifts in care requirements and the changing needs of the cohort.

## 5 The knowledge gap

New platforms are needed to share knowledge gained through the delivery of SEND schools. Due to cyclical cycles of investment in SEND schools, a knowledge gap has formed and there is a lack of repeatable experience available to benchmark best practice. The sector also lacks a platform where insights and experience can be shared.