

SEND Reform

JAND Briefing Paper

The Schools White Paper (**Every child achieving and thriving**) and the accompanying special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) reform consultation paper (**Putting children and young people first**) offer a 10-year plan to transform England's education system focused on standards, inclusion, early intervention, and family support.

In response to the challenges faced within the SEND system in particular, the proposed reforms aim to shift the system toward earlier identification, mainstream provision capable of meeting a wider range of needs, consistent national standards which reduce reliance on statutory thresholds, and fostering a more inclusive and responsive approach to supporting all children effectively moving funding away from Councils to schools for all but the most complex.

Every Child Achieving and Thriving

The government intends to align higher academic standards with inclusion, strengthen evidence-based teaching, and reform how mainstream provision meets SEND needs, through:

- Higher academic standards
- Inclusion by design and focus on belonging
- Improved curriculum
- Tackling persistent disadvantage
- All schools joining or forming MATs
- Greater accountability of trusts
- All schools participating in a local SEND collaboration group
- Strengthened pupil and parental engagement
- Strengthened attendance, behaviour, and transition support
- 6,500 more teachers and Headteacher coaching and retention

Putting Children and Young People First

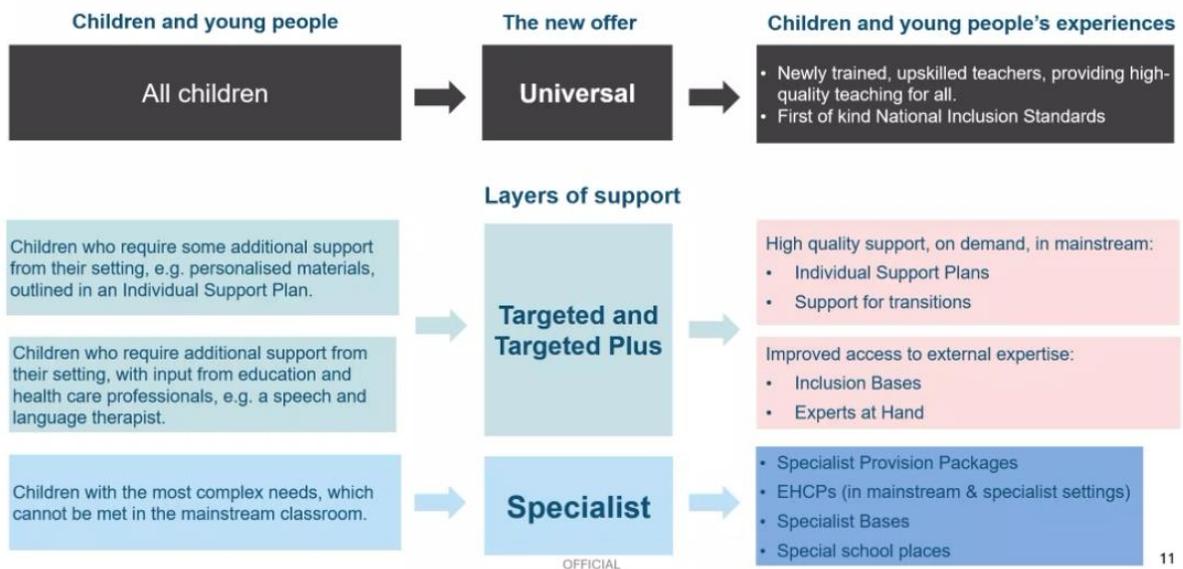
The proposed SEND reforms set out a layered model of support, intended to move away from an over-reliance on statutory processes and towards a system where help is available as needs emerge and change, through:

- A layered model of support (Universal, Targeted, Targeted Plus, Specialist) with most children having their needs met below the threshold for specialist support with a greater focus on the whole school universal offer.
- Investment in inclusive mainstream provision (£1.6bn over 3 years) to increase core SEND budgets to enable schools to have direct funding from 2026 to enable them to increase inclusive practice and meet more children's needs. In the future, there will be change made to the high needs block to provide continuation of this funding.
- Digital Individual Support Plans (ISPs) for all children with SEND co-produced between schools, children and parents to improve oversight and accountability. A national standard EHCP template will also be created which will become digitised.
- Reconfiguration of SEN units into Inclusion Bases supported by national guidance; with support bases being created by schools as part of their targeted offer to meet children's needs and specialist bases being commissioned by the LA to provide Specialist Provision Packages. All secondary schools to have a support base, and an equivalent number of places at primary phase (with schools working together to achieve this)
- A new Experts at Hand multidisciplinary support offer (£1bn) with LAs and ICBs working to bring together education and health specialists alongside special school and alternative provision out-reach to provide direct support into schools to build capacity and provide advice (£0.8bn). With an aim that by 2028/29 primary schools can access equivalent of 40 days support and 160 days for secondary schools through Experts at Hand
- Nationally defined Specialist Provision Packages which will provide national consistency on the evidence-based support children with complex needs receive. Special schools will be commissioned to deliver one or more of these packages with a new cohort-bases funding model, alongside short-term placements and outreach to mainstream schools
- EHCPs will continue for those who require provision outlined in a Specialist Provision Package but will only be reviewed at Key Stages for school-age children. From 2029 children transitioning to another education phase will require a needs assessment against the new arrangements and will only

retain an EHCP where they need a Specialist Provision Package. Children in a special school in 2029 can remain there until they complete their education

- New National Inclusion Standards (2028) to define the provision expected of mainstream schools with a duty on schools to publish an Inclusion Strategy to create accountability on their offer and use of inclusive mainstream funding
- A move away from the current areas of determining a child’s primary SEND ‘need’ to the creation of areas of ‘development to better reflect child growth and learning (*Executive Function; Motor and Physical; Sensory; Speech, Language and Communication; Social and Emotional*)
- Legislation to bring Independent Special Schools into line with other special schools with provision of Specialist Provision Packages in accordance with national funding bands.

Tiered level of support:



The SEND reform consultation runs until 18 May 2026 and proposals will require future change to legislation; which is not expected until 2029. Until then, the current system for meeting SEND needs will remain (with the first cohort of children moving from their current EHCP to this new system in September 2030) – although there is a strong message from the DfE that local areas and schools should begin to develop practice from now.

The DfE have produced summary documents outlining the key changes for parent carers and education settings on their website: [SEND consultation supporting information](#).

Funding

The government understand that investment is needed upfront to enable local systems to prepare for the reforms.

Funding for the Experts at Hand service and Inclusive Mainstream Fund will begin to be received this year to support early change. Government is allocating £3.2 billion over the next 3 years respectively to these areas; but there has been no announcement of local allocations yet. That is alongside the capital funding LAs have already received to create inclusion bases.

In addition, each LA will receive a payment (a share of £200 million nationally) to support LAs undertaking transformation whilst maintaining current SEND services. This should be received shortly.

In the short-term, LAs are required to create and submit a high-quality Local SEND Reform Plan to the DfE by May/June (date to be confirmed) setting out how the local system plans to deliver these reforms.

Approval of these plans by the DfE will be required to enable Local Authorities to access the announced High Needs Sustainability Grant that will cover 90% of the LA's accumulated DSG deficit as at the end of the 2025/26 financial year.

In the longer term, there will be further consultations on changes to school funding and a rebalance of the high needs budget to redirect more funding directly into schools.

Local Area Reform Plan

The local SEND partnership has already begun meeting to complete a 'reform readiness maturity matrix' which is required by the DfE.

LAs were sent a reform pack on 9th March which outlined additional requirements to develop a Local SEND Reform Plan; which will need to be co-designed across the local SEND system.

This 3-year plan must be submitted to the DfE on 19th June and include how Solihull will deliver:

- a clear universal offer across all schools in the borough (leading to the National Inclusion Standards)

- an Experts at Hand service which provides whole school and group based support and advice to schools (including EPs, speech and language and occupational therapy and special school and AP outreach)
- new inclusion specialist bases in mainstream schools to support pupils with EHCPs
- renewed and strong SEND partnership governance; including the new local school SEND groups.

We are still awaiting further information on how much inclusive mainstream funding will be received by schools and how much Experts at Hand and transformation funding Solihull will receive as this will be essential to support our planning.

Future work

There is a strong message from the government that whilst the SEND reforms are under consultation, and will take until 2029 for legislative changes to come into effect, schools, LAs and ICBs must begin work now to respond to improving inclusion in mainstream schools. Solihull, like all LAs, has been given a SEND reform advisor by the DfE who will be monitoring and supporting progress.

This includes our Local Area SEND Reform Plan, but also the need for us to be planning at every stage for the longer-term change outlined within the reform proposals.

Key tasks for the SEND partnership

- Co-design Local SEND Reform Plan (including then maturity matrix) and review existing governance arrangements to ensure they support effective delivery and partnership working.
- Review the plan in line with planned high needs spend and understand the financial implications of reform.
- Understand how the Experts at Hand service can be developed over time - including availability of funding, local workforce requirements, how it fits with other support services and reviews. Creating a model which meets DfE guidance and meets children's needs locally. To include how the new SaLT advanced practitioner role in the ICB will support this development.

- Understand what specialist inclusion bases are necessary, how the model will be established and what support they may need from the partnership to be effective.
- Develop a model for special school and alternative provision outreach.
- Understand any new expectations upon health services when more detail about strengthened accountability is released.
- Improve the effectiveness of the DSCO role across the partnership.
- Support the creation of local school SEND groups and ensure these have effective relationships with the LA and ICB to support strategic commissioning and intent.
- Support schools to increase their offer to children and young people with SEND through a review of existing services and making needs-led pathways clear.
- Plan ahead for 2029 transition to new EHCP system; including the requirement for agencies to complete a new needs assessment for children with EHCPs as they reach a transition stage. To include workforce development and training to support new digital templates.
- Create a road-map of reform implementation and ensure effective communication across all levels within the partnership to ensure any developments or decisions in the SEND arena align to the reform expectations.
- Ensuring the Local SEND Reform Plan and future work takes account of, and aligns to, wider changes in the partnership, such as those linked to the Schools White Paper, Children's Wellbeing & Schools Bill, Families First Programme and the Best Start Plan.
- Continue to deliver high quality services to children and young people in line with current legislation and inspection framework!

Timelines for specific areas of work will be updated as more detail is received from the DfE.

Reform Timeline

| 2026-27 | 2027-28 | 2029 |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• DfE RISE support and attendance and behaviour hubs• Funding for Experts at Hand and Inclusive Mainstream Fund to improve inclusion• Capital funding to support creation of inclusion bases• School staff SEND training offer and conferences on inclusion• Guidance on reasonable adjustments and draft Specialist Provision Packages• Consultation on SEND Code of Practice and School Admissions Code• Consultation on school disadvantage funding | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• New national curriculum• National Inclusion Standards• Launch of SEND Workforce CPD• Introduce Individual Support Plans• Update SEND Code of Practice• Legislation for reasonable costs of independent special schools | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduce Specialist Provision Packages• Needs assessment review for first EHCP cohort transitioning• Rebalance high needs funding• Local groups of schools within SEND structures established• All schools monitoring pupil engagement |

Last update – 16/3/2026