

Local Area SEND Reform Plan

What is the Local Area SEND Reform Plan?

The Local Area SEND Reform Plan is a whole-system, multi-agency strategy (education, health and care) that sets out how Solihull will transform its SEND system over the next 3 years – moving from a reactive, fragmented system to one that is inclusive, proactive and consistent. It:

- Defines the vision, priorities and outcomes for children and young people with SEND
- Aligns all partners (Local Authorities, Integrated Care Boards and health partners, schools, early years, post-16, parent carers) around shared goals
- Sets out a detailed roadmap, delivery plan and success measures
- Acts as the local response to national SEND reforms

Why do we need a SEND Reform Plan?

The Department for Education (DfE) require all local areas to submit a SEND Reform Plan by 19th June 2026 which responds to significant national system pressures and delivers areas within their recent [consultation on SEND reforms: putting children and young people first](#) which do not require legislation to be changed.

The DfE describe the key challenges as:

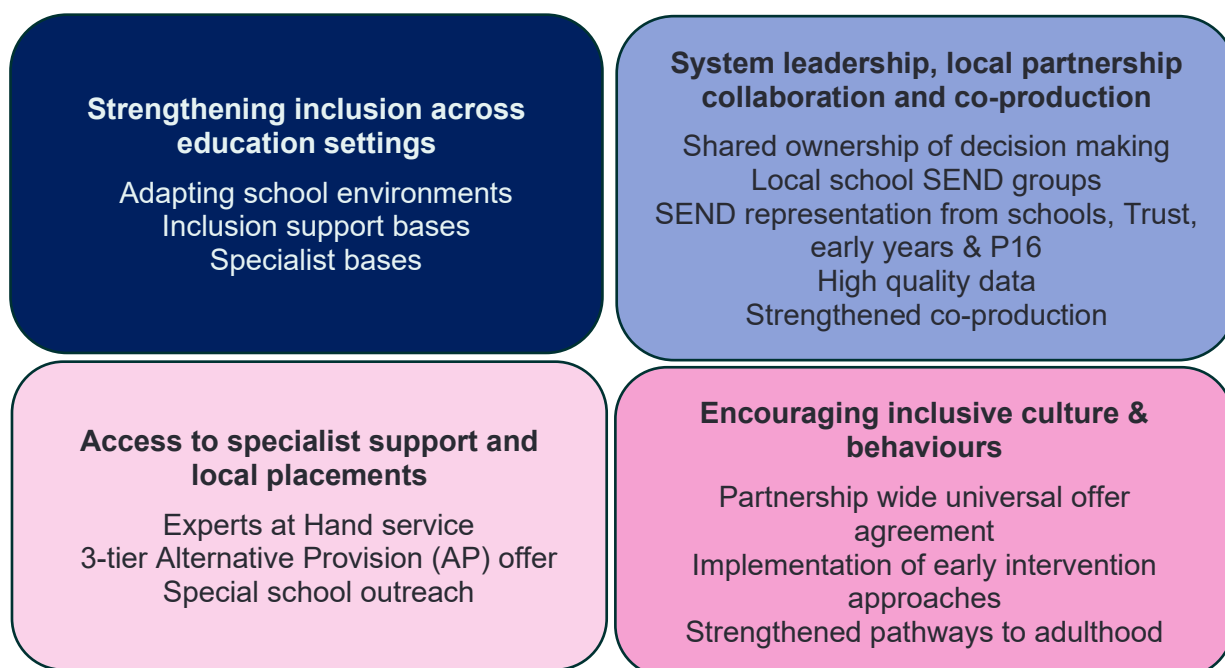
- Rapidly rising Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP) demand and complexity
- Over-reliance on special schools and independent placements
- Inconsistent inclusion across mainstream settings
- Services focused on 1:1 reactive support rather than prevention
- Alternative provision often used as a destination rather than intervention
- Workforce capacity constraints
- Declining parent confidence
- Unsustainable financial trajectory for SEND services and Local Authorities (LAs)

It wants to move from the current system to a new future:

Current system	New future
Children needing to “fail before getting help”	Children get the right support, earlier
Late identification of need	More children are educated locally and inclusively
Unequal experiences depending on school	Families have confidence and trust in the system
Fragmented services	Resources are used more sustainably

What needs to be included in the plan?

The DfE ask local areas to ensure their plans cover 4 key areas:



How are you going to encourage an inclusive culture?

We want to create a system where inclusion is “built in” not added on so all children and young people belong, are understood and can achieve and participate. This means practice in education settings needs to be proactive, evidence-based and consistent.

Schools in Solihull are already reflecting on how they can use inclusion by design principles to change what they are able to offer. Alongside other changes outlined in this document, we will further support greater confidence and capability of setting staff by:

- Co-producing Ordinarily Available Inclusive Guidance (OAIG) for settings which sets out clear expectations for classroom practice, reasonable adjustments and early intervention.
- Continuing to support workforce development including training, modelling and coaching in trauma-informed practice, speech and language, social emotional mental health needs and behaviour and neuroinclusive approaches.
- Using locality focussed SEND groups to improve how settings work together, including sharing practice, solving problems collectively and planning provision locally.
- Supporting schools to develop strong partnerships and relationships with their parents; improving communication, early identification of needs and a commitment to working together so lived experience shapes improvements and solutions are found before difficulties escalate.

What are support bases?

There will be two types of support bases in mainstream schools:

- **Support bases** – these are targeted provision in schools for children and young people who need more support; some schools have something similar already called ‘inclusion hubs’ or ‘nurture rooms’ etc.
- **Specialist bases** – there are specialist provisions within a mainstream school for children and young people with EHCPs who need specialist support and intervention. We already have these in Solihull but refer to them as Additional Resource Provisions (ARPs).

The DfE expect these bases to enable more children stay in local mainstream schools; giving a stronger sense of belonging and inclusion, better transitions and continuity of support. They want local areas to create specialist bases rather than expand special schools, so children and young people can go to school in their community.

What does our plan say we will do?

We will work with schools to consider how they can adapt and adjust their physical environment to make them more inclusive and provide funding to support this where we can.

Inclusion support bases:

- We will create a “Solihull Way” to support the design of these bases to ensure inclusive, welcoming environments that support with emotional regulation.
- We will pilot one support base in a primary school and a secondary school in the 2026/27 academic year.
- We will work with schools to create support bases in 14 secondary schools, 10 primary schools and Solihull College by 2029. We will start to work with school leaders shortly to agree where these will be.

Inclusion specialist bases:

- We will set up a working group and create one specialist base (ARP) in a primary school in the North of Solihull in the 2026/27 academic year.
- Over the next 3 years we will create 200 places in specialist bases in mainstream schools; taking care to ensure these are distributed geographically and meeting different needs so local children and young people can attend.

Our current ARPs will remain in place but we may need to review the needs of children they accommodate when the government publish new specialist provision packages which they will have to offer in the future. We will do this with schools and parents.

What is the Experts at Hand offer?

The DfE want this to be a new multi-disciplinary support model for all education settings. The offer is intended to build capacity of mainstream settings to meet SEND needs, by providing easy, earlier access to specialist expertise which is focused on whole-setting capacity building and integrated across services.

The DfE expect this offer to reduce reliance on 1:1 support, ensure more children and young people without EHCPs can be well supported and improve classroom practice. In time this should mean more children and young people can have their needs met without the need for an EHCP or change of setting.

Local areas have been given funding by the DfE until March 2027 to increase its specialist workforce to deliver this offer which covers: Educational Psychologists (EPs), Speech and Language Therapists (SaLT), Occupational Therapists (OT) and Specialist Teachers (including those from special schools and alternative provision). This funding is expected until March 2029.

The DfE have published guides for [mainstream settings](#) and [parents carers](#) on what to expect nationally from Experts at Hand.

What does our plan say we will do?

Following successful recruitment to these specialist roles, in September 2026 we will begin to offer education settings access to:

- **Educational Psychotherapists (EP's)**– for training and support with emotional resilience, social emotional and mental health, executive function and child development training and support, Emotion Literacy Support Assistants, emotionally based school avoidance programmes and facilitated consultation groups.
- **Speech and Language Therapists (SaLT) and Occupational Therapists (OTs)** – for environmental audits, targeted transitions, group interventions digital tools, WellComm and learning resources.
- **Alternative Provision (AP) outreach** – for targeted transitions, embedding building belonging and universal design for learning, four-tier solution circles to prevent suspensions and exclusions and a Key Stage 3 intervention model.
- **Specialist teachers** – for Neuroinclusive Education Network training and coaching, support for nurture, speech and language and autism leads, modelling assistive technology and AI and Boxall profiling.
- **Special school outreach** – for coaching, mentoring, in school classroom observation and advice (*from January 2027*).
- **Solihull Parent Carer Voice (SPCV)** – to support the set-up and running of parental engagement groups in schools.

We will consider the impact of this offer in the first year to review what is available in future years.

What do local areas need to do at a system level?

The DfE are clear that change is only possible at a local level where all stakeholders are working closely together, have a clear understanding of the strengths and challenges and respond to these collectively with shared ownership.

This includes all schools, and education settings, being part of local SEND groups and well represented in SEND forums alongside parent carers, with high quality data and strong co-production leading decision making.

What does our plan say we will do?

We have a strong SEND partnership already working in Solihull, but we will develop this by:

- Strengthening our governance structure to provide a stronger alignment between our strategy, financial investment and delivery and greater shared accountability for outcomes.
- Systematically embedding co-production to move from variable practice to consistent, system-wide co-production - working in partnership with parent carers and local community organisations to ensure lived experience informs decision-making, service improvement and evaluation of impact.
- Increasing the involvement of Multi-Academy Trusts, early years and post-16 providers in local SEND activity and decision making.
- Developing our use of data, including SEND dashboards, forecasting tools and outcome tracking so we can move to stronger data-led decision making and monitor the impact of this plan through qualitative information from children, young people and their families alongside quantitative measures.
- Ensuring our joint commissioning makes the best use of LA and health investment and focuses on early intervention and local provision.

What is expected to change?

These plans sit alongside the wider Government national SEND reforms which have been proposed; creating a system which families and settings find easy to navigate, transparent and responsive – with more parent carers feeling listened to, involved in decisions and confident in school support.

Current system	Future aspirations
Delays and escalation	Needs identified earlier and support accessed more easily
Inconsistent support between schools	More consistency in successful inclusive mainstream education
Heavy reliance on statutory processes and EHCPs	Stronger sense of belonging and more support without needing formal plans
Families lacking confidence	Better learning and well-being outcomes
Children educated outside their community	Children supported and thriving in their local school
Families do not always feel listened to	Parents are genuine partners in decision making

What will this mean for children and young people?

We know families want to understand what difference these changes will make to their child's day-to-day experience in education. Our aim is that children and young people with SEND receive support earlier, feel included in their local community and have access to the right help without unnecessary delays.

There will be no changes to any SEND legislation, nor EHCPs, before 2029 but over the next three years, families should see the following improvements:

Earlier help

We want children and young people to get support as soon as difficulties emerge, rather than waiting for needs to become more significant. These changes mean:

- Education settings will have clearer guidance about what support should be available without needing an EHCP.
- Staff will receive more training and specialist advice to help them identify and respond to needs earlier.
- Schools and early years settings will have easier access to specialist advice through the new Experts at Hand service.
- More children will receive support before problems affect their attendance, wellbeing or learning.

More support in local schools and settings

Many families tell us they want their child to feel part of their local community. These changes mean:

- More specialist support will be available in mainstream schools.
- New support bases and specialist bases will be developed across Solihull.
- More children and young people will be able to attend a school closer to home.
- Children will have greater opportunities to learn alongside their peers while still accessing additional support when needed.

More consistent support wherever your child attends

Families often tell us that experiences can vary between settings. These changes mean:

- All education settings will work towards the same expectations for inclusive practice.
- Schools will have access to shared training, guidance and specialist support.
- Parents should have greater confidence that children with SEND will receive appropriate support regardless of which school they attend.

Better access to specialist advice

Through the new Experts at Hand service, schools and settings will be able to access support from specialists to help their staff develop the skills and confidence to support children effectively in their everyday learning environment. These specialists include:

- Educational Psychologists
- Speech and Language Therapists
- Occupational Therapists
- Specialist teachers
- Alternative Provision specialists
- Special school outreach staff

Stronger support for emotional wellbeing and belonging

We want every child and young person to feel welcomed, understood and included. These changes mean:

- Increased support for social, emotional and mental health needs.
- Greater focus on helping children stay connected to education.
- More support to prevent exclusions and emotionally based school avoidance.
- Inclusive environments designed to support regulation, wellbeing and participation.

Smoother transitions

Children, young people and parent carers tell us that moving between nursery, school, college and adulthood can be challenging. These changes mean:

- Better information sharing between services.
- More joined-up planning between education, health and care.
- Improved support at key transition points.
- Stronger preparation for adulthood and employment opportunities for young people.

Stronger partnership with families

Families are experts in their children and young people. These changes mean:

- Parent carers will be involved in shaping services and improvements.
- Schools will be supported to strengthen relationships with families.

- More opportunities will be available for parents to share feedback and influence decisions.
- We will publish regular updates showing how feedback has been used to improve services.

How will all of this be implemented?

Due to timescales set by the DfE, we have needed to develop the outline of our plan at pace. We have been extremely grateful for stakeholder involvement so far in helping us co-produce this plan but know we have a lot more work to do together to ensure we can deliver these areas, and that they have the impact we intended.

Each of the four main areas of development outlined by the DfE, and in our plan, will have dedicated leads and workstreams responsible for continued development and co-production over the next 3 years; and beyond.

The writing of the plan really is the start of our journey, and whilst it outlines our direction of travel it still very much remains a working document which is subject to change following further input. We will keep our plans under regular review and communicate any changes to these in advance. It is important to note that we are still waiting for more guidance to come from the DfE so our plans may have to change in light of that over time.

We have a dedicated page on the [Local Offer](#) for parents and carers to keep them updated and a dedicated page on the [schools extranet](#) for education settings.

Sept 2026