



Annex A: Local SEND Reform Plan – Final Draft

19/06/2026

Developing a Local SEND Reform Plan is an important first step for local areas to set out how they will lay the foundation for reform, and design an approach tailored to their local context. A shared plan which focuses on co-designing the local approach as system partners and with children, young people and families will help foster collective responsibility for delivering the reforms.

It is critical that all system partners, including health, education and childcare settings, work together to design and deliver the Local SEND Reform Plan, under the local authority's leadership. It is also crucial that representative family carers e.g. the local Parent Carer Forum, are involved in the development of the plan.

The expectation is that this plan is discussed, agreed, and signed off at your relevant SEND Governance Board. As a minimum, the plan must be formally signed off by the Local Authority Chief Executive (CEO), the Integrated Care Board (ICB) Chief Executive, the Local Authority Director of Children's Service (DCS), the Integrated Care Board NHS Place Director, and the Local Authority Chief Financial Officer (CFO/Section 151 Officer). We encourage other colleagues and partners who have contributed to also review and sign-off the plan, particularly early years, school, college and trust leaders.

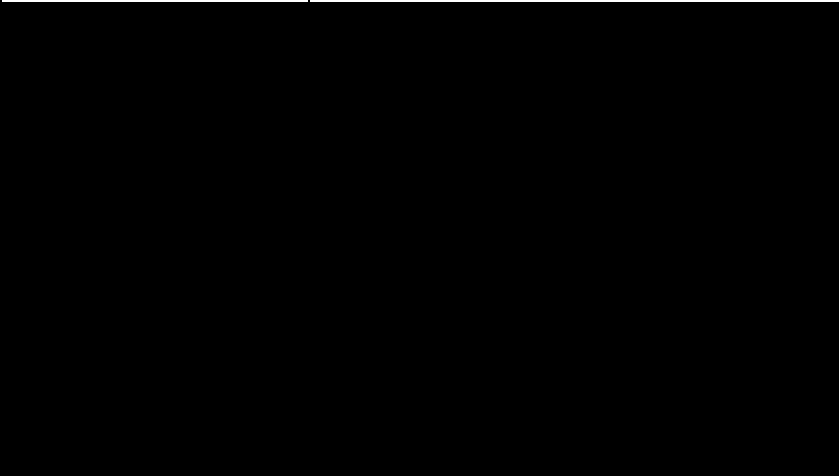
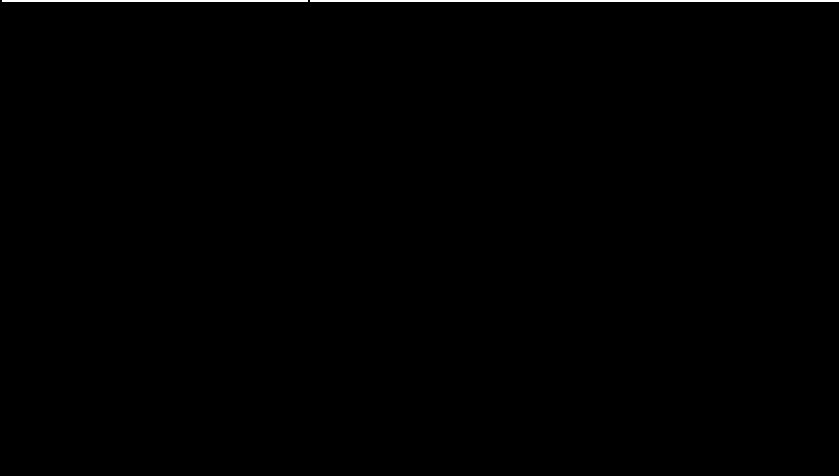
Name of Local Authority: Somerset Council

Name of Integrated Care Board: NHS Somerset Integrated Care Board

Local SEND Reform Plan SRO: Claire Winter, Executive Director for Children, Families and Education Services



Signatories

Role	Name	Signature	Email contact	Date
LA Chief Executive	Duncan Sharkey			19/06/2026
ICB Chief Executive	Jonathan Higman			19/06/2026
LA DCS	Claire Winter			19/06/2026
Place Director, Bath and North East Somerset	Lucy Baker			19/06/2026
LA S151	Clive Heaphy			19/06/2026



Contents

Executive Summary	4
Section 1 – Vision and Goals	7
Section 2 – Strategy	10
Section 3 – Monitoring and Evaluation	50
Section 4 – Governance	53
Section 5 – Central Government Support	59
Annex B - Supporting Documents	61
Annex C – Risk Matrix (Guide Only)	62

Executive Summary

A brief summary of your local system 'change story' – your local context, where you are now, where you want to get to in the next 3 years, how you know you are succeeding and how you will know you have achieved your vision for the next 3 years. Please include a brief qualitative summary. This summary should also include your assessment of current and performance against the headline metrics.

Please structure your 'change story' using the following aims:

- *Build a 0-25 system where children and young people receive support to achieve and thrive through (a) more inclusive settings and (b) stronger local partnerships*
- *Improve capacity and capability of the mainstream and specialist workforce to identify and meet need*
- *Improve confidence of children, families, and stakeholders in reform and readiness of the system*
- *Stabilise finances and improve value for money*

Somerset's change story is rooted in our SEND Strategy. This was co-produced with partners, children, young people and families and sets out our shared ambition to build a more inclusive, responsive and sustainable system for children and young people with SEND, aged 0 to 25 years.

Our vision is that children and young people with SEND are supported to achieve and thrive in their local communities, with their health, educational and social needs identified and met as early as possible. High quality and consistent educational support is delivered through local mainstream settings wherever possible, as part of a holistic multi-professional local area offer.

Families have told us that they want to **"Move through the world without having to force our way through it."** This new system will be easier for families to navigate and be more joined up. The professionals will be equipped with training and skills and access to specialist expertise so that they are confident to meet a wider range of needs.



We are starting from a position of significant system pressure. Our most recent SEND inspection revisit, in 2022, identified that outcomes for children and young people were poor due to inconsistent practice in assessing and meeting their needs, and that too many children and young people were unable to access education due to high levels of exclusion and poor inclusive practice.

In 2025, 3192 children and young people with SEND experienced at least one vulnerability marker, including severe absence, exclusion, elective home education, care involvement or missing education. In addition, EHCP numbers have increased by 50% in four years from 4232 in January 2022 to 6362 in January 2026, with evidence of increasing complexity of need and costs for specialist provision. There are significant delays in the statutory assessment process, pressure on specialist placements and variable confidence from families that children and young people will receive the provision they have been assessed as needing. The cumulative DSG deficit has grown from £13m in 2020/21 to £105m in 2025/26.

The SEND Reform Programme will expand local provision, enable earlier intervention, achieve a better placement mix, and reduce reliance on high-cost independent placements, which will lead to improved value for money and support long-term financial sustainability. However, the financial benefits of these initiatives will take time to fully materialise, as we develop new provision and support children and young people in the most appropriate settings.

The annual High Needs deficit is forecast to peak at £68.1m in 2029/30 before falling by 18% to £57.7m by 2032/33. This demonstrates the longer-term financial benefits of the reforms and marks a positive shift towards a more sustainable SEND system. Further financial detail is provided in Appendix 4.

Our programme will focus on:

1. Strengthening inclusion culture and practice in mainstream settings:



We will improve the capability and capacity of mainstream settings from early years, through statutory school age and post 16, building on our successful Best Start in Life programme, securing ordinarily available provision, developing the graduated response and embedding the early success of our new SEND Specialist Inclusion Bases. Central to this will be the delivery of Somerset “Experts at Hand” model to ensure high quality equitable access, at all stages, to local early support, that enables and supports mainstream inclusion. See Appendix 1 for full details of how this will be developed.

2. System leadership, local partnership, collaboration and co-production:

Working more closely with families and children through a whole system participation approach, local system leaders will better understand what works for children and their families. This will enable partners to oversee and challenge each other to deliver better quality, locally based and more inclusive support as early as possible.

3. Access to specialist support and local placements:

Delivering the Experts at Hand offer, alongside creating new places via Specialist Inclusion Bases on mainstream sites (school-age and post-16) will enable more children and young people to access support in their local community. Increasing special school places in areas of the county that lack this provision will allow children and young people to return to education closer to home and support integration into their local mainstream school over time, wherever possible. Our award-winning, supported internship programme (Imagine the Possibilities) will be expanded to enable more young people to access training and employment locally.

Section 1 – Vision and Goals

1. What the local area partnership is trying to achieve?

Please set out your goals for your local system. These should be clear, aligned to the vision set out in the Schools White Paper, small in number and measurable. These goals should include clear reference to:

- Outcomes for children
- Confidence of parents, carers and young people in the system
- Management of finances to secure value for money

Somerset's SEND Partnership vision is for children, young people and parent carers to:

“Move through the world without having to force our way through it.”

Where we are now

Somerset has made some progress from a period of instability, with improved education attainment performance. Collaboration across partners is now a clear strength. However, demand for SEND services continues to rise sharply, with delays in EHCPs, long waiting times and increasing complexity of need.

Where we want to be

We aim to deliver a 0-25 SEND system where children and young people and families are confident they receive the right support at the earliest point, are included in their communities, and achieve strong outcomes into adulthood, with a focus on local inclusive mainstream provision, early intervention, deescalation and effective local delivery.

The reforms are expected to reduce reliance on high-cost independent placements and EOTAS over time, while increasing the availability of local provision across Somerset. This will support a more sustainable placement mix and help ensure children and



young people can access the right support, in the right place, at the right time. While the financial benefits of reform will take time to emerge, reflecting the time needed to develop new provision and support changes in demand, the programme is expected to improve value for money and slow expenditure growth over the longer term.

As a result, the annual High Needs deficit is forecast to reduce from a peak of £68.1m in 2029/30 to £57.8m by 2032/33. Further financial analysis is provided in Appendix 4.

This will be delivered via the following practical programme, made up of 10 projects to achieve the noted priorities, goals and measures of success (consistency, early identification and inclusion) alongside financial stability.

Priority (Building Blocks)	Goal	Delivery Projects	Targets/ Success Measures by 29/30
1. Strengthening Inclusion across Education Settings.	1. Improve mainstream inclusion and education outcomes for CYP with SEND	1. Experts at Hand Also enabled by 2,4,5,6,7,9 and 10	- Improved attendance, reduced suspensions and PEX - Reduce attainment gap 26/27 onwards (KS2 RWM & A8) - EHCP trajectory is reduced from current forecast
2. System leadership, local partnership collaboration and co-production	2. Further strengthen partnership working and co-production with children, young people and families.	2. Co-Production 3. Partnership and Dashboard Development Also enabled by 8,9, 10	- The number of “has improved” statements in the parent carer survey increases from 3/8 to 8/8 in 2028/29, then sustained - New “You Said: We Did” tracking evidences 100% listening and response. - Improved EHCP timeliness and quality
3. Access to specialist support and local placements	3. More CYP access to support successfully at SEN support level which enables them to be educated in their local mainstream settings.	4. Specialist Inclusion Bases (SEN Units) and Specialist Places 5. Support Bases (Mainstream +) 6. 0-25 Placement and Transition Management 7. Supported Employment Pathways Also enabled by 1, 2	- Reduced reliance on INMS and out of area placements 432 additional specialist placements in area by 2029/30 - Supported internships will increase to 150 by 2029, with 55% progressing into sustained employment or apprenticeship.
4. Encouraging inclusive culture & behaviours	4. Settings routinely share resources and learning so CYP with SEND are included in their local mainstream provisions. 5. Costs and demand for other education settings reduce.	8. Joint Commissioning Plan 9. Disputes and Resolutions 10. SEND Finance Policy and Processes Also enabled by 1,2 and 3	- Reduce complaints and tribunals year-on-year by 10%, 20% and 30% based on a 2025/26 baseline of 673 complaints and 284 tribunals. - Increased number of children supported at SEN support level in mainstream settings - Shared inclusion learning culture evident across all education sectors (case study evidence)

Section 2 – Strategy

2. Where the local area partnership expects to be in the next 3 years

A description of what your local system would look like in the next 3 years in line with the national vision set out in the Schools White Paper and set within the context of where you are starting from as a local system.

In particular, as commissioning system partners, you should reflect on and agree what your fully fledged **Experts At Hand Offer** model should be and how this will be deployed via mainstream settings and providers (including those not based in your area – e.g. further education colleges attended by your young people) to build their capacity as well as identify and meet the needs of children and young people earlier and without the need for a statutory assessment for Education, Health and Care.

To help you fully consider the scope and scale of change required, you may find it useful to structure your response using these 4 building blocks of an inclusive system, reflecting on what is working well in your system, what you are most worried about, what needs to change, and how the enablers will help you achieve your 3 year vision.

When summarising where your local area partnership currently is, please include an assessment of where you are in reference to the core minimum requirements above and how you bridge the gap, making reference to and attaching additional documents that provide underlying evidence for your summary.

Strengthening inclusion across education settings– organising places and provision to meet as many needs as possible, as close to home as possible, with all settings and providers moving towards a shared understanding and consistent practices around inclusion.

System leadership, local partnership collaboration and co-production – putting in place the enabling conditions across a local area that ensures planning and provision reflects the local area & is joined up, including strategic co-production with parent carers and children and young people.

Access to specialist support and local placements – improving collaboration between settings and deploying expertise from a range of specialist and expert sources, to support schools and settings to meet the needs of children and young people earlier and locally.

Encouraging inclusive culture & behaviours – using funding and shared accountability towards a system that works for children and families while achieving value for money.

Local blueprint for the next 3 years	Where we are (All agreed by the Local Area SEND Partnership)	Where we will be in the next 3 years
Block 1. Strengthening Inclusion across Education Settings.	Delivering Inclusion for CYP 0-25 Our Maturity Self-Assessment (MSA) says: Strengths Partners share a strong commitment to meeting needs without diagnosis, supported by investment in early neurodiversity support. Schools use the graduated response and local tools effectively to identify and meet need early. SENCo networks and the Inclusion Forum support consistency and collaboration. Multi-agency panels, robust QA processes, and learning from disputes strengthen decision-making. The AP and PRU partnership is developing a shared outcomes framework to improve consistency. Somerset has a well-established and increasingly connected SEND workforce and universal offer. SENCo networks are strong and well attended, supporting professional development, shared learning and system communication. A broad and flexible training offer is in place across education, health and care, alongside SEND newsletters and induction modules for new staff. Links between education and specialist services are strengthening, with Educational Psychologists and Speech and Language Therapists aligned to school clusters in local areas and contributing to early identification through planned discussions. Health recruitment has improved, with increased capacity in paediatrics and therapies, and workforce planning in	We have and regularly update a partnership-wide universal offer, co-produced with schools, MATs, early years and post-16 providers through workshops, and informed by current needs-based data. This will be delivered using the Experts at Hand (EAH) model, which provides the mechanism for consistent delivery and access to support across all settings (see Appendix 1 for full details). This has been agreed and signed off by key partners, including the Local Authority, the Integrated Care Board, Mult academy Trusts and the Somerset Parent Carer Forum, ensuring shared ownership and accountability. The approach aligns with the National Inclusion Standards, building on our existing collaborative work to strengthen and embed our Ordinary Available Inclusive Provision guidance. The Local SEND Reform Plan has enabled us to embed a high-quality workforce, delivering a well understood and impactful Experts at Hand (EAH) offer. This approach will build on existing provision, ensuring that schools, settings, and post-16 providers have reliable and equitable access to multi-agency specialist advice, through both Tier 1 (universal) and Tier 2 (targeted) elements of the EAH model, enabling high-quality universal and targeted support to be delivered at the earliest stage. It will support a shift away from reactive, individual responses towards earlier intervention, greater use of group-based support, and stronger whole-setting practice, as set out in the EAH tiered inclusion framework. The Programme closely aligns with the Best Start in Life agenda, extending the experts at hand model into early

Local blueprint for the next 3 years	Where we are (All agreed by the Local Area SEND Partnership)	Where we will be in the next 3 years
	place in some areas. The Partnership are currently reviewing and strengthening our graduated response tool for early years settings, schools, and post-16 provision to provide a clear definition of ordinarily available inclusive practice. This work is a key part of our commitment to embedding a culture of inclusion and ensuring consistent, high-quality support for all children and young people. The Parent Carer Forum has led the Partnership in supporting the education system to develop and publish clear SEND information on school websites, from a position of 7% in 2015 to 92% this year. Accessibility Plans are now visible on 90% of websites compared to 40% in 2015. This work and learning will be the basis for supporting schools to publish their Inclusion Strategy by the end of December 2026. Work to do Although improving quality of SEND data is available to education settings data and needs analysis are not yet consistently driving commissioning or inclusive practice and listening and addressing to feedback from families is not embedded across all services. Key drivers for change include: • In 2025/26 60% of Primary and Secondary schools inspected received Expected or Higher Ofsted Inspection grades for inclusion, significantly lower	years provision and family hubs, ensuring a coherent and seamless pathway from 0–25, including during key transitions. This reflects the EAH 0–25 integrated delivery approach across early years, school-age, and post-16 phases. The Offer includes a clear and fully embedded Tier 1 Practice Model and Tier 2 Experts at Hand Model (see Appendix 1, where all core minimum requirements are covered). These tiers are delivered through the EAH workforce and locality-based multi-agency coordination model outlined in Appendix 1. We evidence success by children and young people receiving the right support at the right time, with needs identified and addressed earlier retaining children and young people in mainstream and community settings. There will be stronger inclusion in mainstream provision, clear access to specialist input, reductions in reliance on high-cost and out-of-area placements, and more timely and effective statutory processes, as a direct result of strengthened Tier 1 provision and targeted EAH intervention at Tier 2. Outcomes in attendance, children and young people's and families' participation, pupil wellbeing, and preparation for adulthood have improved. Importantly, families, settings and practitioners increasingly experience the system as joined-up, consistent and easy to navigate using a graduated response approach.

Local blueprint for the next 3 years	Where we are (All agreed by the Local Area SEND Partnership)	Where we will be in the next 3 years
	than the Southwest and National averages. - Many families are waiting too long for EHCNAs to be completed, with 99% issued beyond 20 weeks since December 2025. - The current waiting time for autism diagnoses is up to three years. - Over 1,900 children and young people are severely absent from their education setting. - Older children and young people with SEND struggle to find work experience. There is not yet a clearly prioritised, system-wide workforce strategy or shared training framework. Variability in outreach and specialist training persists, alongside national workforce shortages. Baseline (SEND Vulnerability Indicators): - severely absent: 1,123 (current year-to-date snapshot) - on a part-time timetable: 508 (pupils with at least one C2 absence mark recorded in each of the last six weeks) - in EOTAS: 281 (current snapshot) - Section 19 eligible: 1,098 (pupils with 15+ days illness absence in 2025/26 academic year to date) - permanent exclusion: 59 (in 2025/26 academic year to date). - EHE: 740 (current snapshot)	There is growing confidence that needs are understood early and met successfully through a coordinated offer, underpinned by the accessible and locality-based EAH support model. Best Start in Life (BSiL) & Family Hubs Early years delivery is fully integrated through the Best Start in Life model, with a clear focus on school readiness, inclusion, and improved Good Level of Development outcomes. Family Hubs act as a consistent contact point into early years SEND and wider support, improving access and navigation for families, with EAH practitioners and pathways aligned to Family Hub access routes. We have strengthened Section 23 pathways and information sharing with locality-based Inclusion Practitioners, ensure earlier identification, clearer referral routes and timely, coordinated intervention across education, health and family services, supported by EAH multi-agency locality teams and shared intelligence approaches. We have improved information sharing pathways between health visitors, early years providers and reception classes, so children and young people's needs are well understood and have clear support plans as they transition into school, with continuity of support through the EAH 0–25 model and transition planning focus. Delivery Projects:

Local blueprint for the next 3 years	Where we are (All agreed by the Local Area SEND Partnership)	Where we will be in the next 3 years
	Family Hubs are in place as a key access point for families, and the Best Start in Life (BSiL) approach is being developed to strengthen integration across the 0–5 system. However currently: • Consistent pathways into support are still in development • early identification and response varies across localities • information sharing and transitions are not yet fully standardised across all settings See Appendix 1 Experts at Hand for further detail.	Experts at Hand and Universal Offer (See Appendix 1) Targets: • Improved attendance, reduced suspensions, and PEX • Reduce attainment gap 2026/27 onwards (KS2 RWM and A8) • EHCP trajectory is reduced from current forecast
Block 2. System leadership, local partnership collaboration, and co-production	Co-production with Parent Carers and Partnership Working Our Maturity Self-Assessment (MSA) says: Strengths Somerset has strong arrangements for co-production and partnership working. The Parent Carer Forum is a well-established strategic partner, with significantly increased membership representing a wide range of needs and experiences. System leadership is supported by a clear governance framework and a single multi-agency action plan, with established partnerships across education, health, and care.	We are confident co-production is embedded as a valued ongoing activity, through our annual benchmarking activity. This will enable the partnership to engage regularly in meaningful development work, widen engagement, and reach deeper into disadvantaged communities and families whose voices are less well heard. Alongside co-production, partnership working, oversight and evidence-based decision making is supported by a further strengthened SEND Partnership Board, which oversees delivery of the SEND Reform Plan, with clear co-produced plans, KPIs and monitoring dashboards (from December 2026). Our work is aligned with Family Hubs and Families First activity, with early identification of SEND need - common to

Local blueprint for the next 3 years	Where we are (All agreed by the Local Area SEND Partnership)	Where we will be in the next 3 years
	The Somerset Parent Carer Forum is represented on boards including the SEND Partnership Board, providing bi-monthly feedback to partners from parents and carers, alternately with feedback from children and young people. The Forum and the Children's Participation Team hold partners to account for addressing issues raised and celebrating good outcomes. Membership has grown 134% to 5,472 over the last 3 years, representing families of children and young people with over 75 conditions across diverse education settings and age groups. This ensures a broad range of parent and carer perspectives inform local planning and decision-making. Somerset benefits from a range of youth forums, including the Unstoppables, a participation group for young people aged 13–25 with SEND. The Unstoppables act as a steering group for the Young Unstoppables, launched in the last 12 months, to gather feedback from younger children aged 5–12. In the last Parent Carer Forum SEND survey, we saw an increase in parental confidence that their child or young person is supported to build their independence, and their child or young person is supported to be as healthy as they can. Work to do Addressing issues raised in feedback is not yet	all assessments - completed in locality-based services. This will ensure that needs of the child are assessed holistically. There are clear criteria for which children and young people are supported by the Children with Disabilities Service and a shift-pattern staffing structure in the early help element, so that children, young people and families can access support at key transition points (e.g., home to school and school to home, bedtime) Targets: By March 2027, a coproduction tracker will be embedded and cover: • The number of “has improved” statements in the parent carers’ survey increases from 3/8 to 8/8 in 2028/29 then sustained. • New ‘You Said, We Did’ tracking evidences 100% listening and response. • Improved EHCP timeliness and quality. Delivery Projects: • Co-Production • Partnership Data, Dashboard and Governance.

Local blueprint for the next 3 years	Where we are (All agreed by the Local Area SEND Partnership)	Where we will be in the next 3 years
	consistently embedded in service design, delivery and evaluation, and the impact of co-production is not always visible or communicated well to families. Opportunities to gather feedback, such as engagement events, are underused. Evidence of meaningful engagement with parent carers, and children and young people with SEND at education-setting level has improved significantly through the PINS project, for those schools that took part but in other settings is variable.	
Block 3. Access to specialist support and local placements	Building Local Mainstream Places Our MSA says: Strengths: Somerset is building on strong collaboration with schools, trusts and partners to address a long-standing sufficiency gap, with over 700 children and young people currently in independent / non-maintained specialist (INMS) placements and fewer special school places than national averages. Too many children and young people are educated away from their communities or experience disrupted provision. A well-developed strategy is now in place, co-designed with education partners, to increase local capacity. This includes 344 new specialist places (2025/26–2028/29), primarily through Specialist Inclusion Bases on mainstream sites, alongside 88 additional special school places. A new alternative-provision dynamic-purchasing framework allows groups of providers to develop packages according to individual need.	By 2029, Somerset data will evidence significantly stronger local inclusion and sufficiency, ensuring more children and young people are educated closer to home, in mainstream settings. With the support of Specialist Inclusion Bases and strong inclusive practice, most children and young people can have their needs met within their local mainstream settings. However, particularly at secondary school level, some pupils have complex needs that cannot be effectively supported in a mainstream environment. In these cases, there is a need to develop additional specialist school placements. There is less reliance on the private sector due to increased parental confidence in mainstream provision, with evidence that this is supporting children and young people with SEND successfully. Fewer children of primary school age access special schools or INMS as specialist inclusion bases enable them to remain with their peers in mainstream primary schools.

Local blueprint for the next 3 years	Where we are (All agreed by the Local Area SEND Partnership)	Where we will be in the next 3 years
	Work is underway to reshape pathways into new post-16 provision (from September 2026), and to improve assignment of appropriate specialist provision closest to home, to reduce travel time and costs. Supported Employment Somerset has a strong track record in Supported Employment, with around 180 young people engaged in Supported Internships over the past three years and delivery expanding rapidly across multiple providers. Evidence shows improved confidence, independence and progression into sustained employment, alongside significant wider impact, including an estimated £9.35 return to the local economy for every £1 invested. Work to do: However, demand for complex needs, in particular, continues to rise, with INMS placements projected to peak at ≈710 by 2026, alongside increasing EOTAS use, due to lack of suitable specialist support and inclusive practice. This also reflects historic under-sufficiency and highlights the need to accelerate local, inclusive solutions. Supported Employment will deliver 150 internship placements with 55% progressing into sustained employment or apprenticeship	432 new places will be delivered by 2029/30. Specialist inclusion bases are embedded as a core part of the mainstream school and college site offer. Demand for high-cost provision will stabilise, with INMS placements peaking in 2026 and beginning to reduce from 2029, and EOTAS numbers following the same trajectory. More children, particularly at primary age, will be supported in mainstream settings through enhanced local provision and outreach from Experts at Hand. The system will demonstrate improved balance, with special schools increasingly focused on secondary need, and alternative provision operating consistently across the county. Most children and young people will have a suitable local school place, with reduced travel, lower costs and improved continuity of education and outcomes. Supported Internships and wider employment pathways now extend access beyond young people with EHCPs to those with SEND support. This supports preparation for adulthood and sustained employment, reducing reliance on EHCPs and High Needs funding for young people over time. Targets: • Reduced reliance on INMS and out of area placements • 432 additional specialist places available by 2029/30 • Supported internships will increase to 150 by 2029, with 55% progressing into sustained employment or

Local blueprint for the next 3 years	Where we are (All agreed by the Local Area SEND Partnership)	Where we will be in the next 3 years
		apprenticeship • Support bases – expand intervention from 15 schools and at least 300 students supported to at least 43 schools and at least 900 students supported by 2028/29 By the end of 2027 an assessment of sufficiency of current level of childcare provision for 0–5s, detailing: a. availability of early years places b. availability of specialist SEND early years places c. any local gaps for children and young people with complex and emerging needs and plan to address these including the role of wider partners such as Best Start Family Hubs, is complete. Delivery Projects: • Specialist Inclusion Bases (SEND Units) • Additional Special School capacity • Support Bases (Mainstream Plus) • Area-based Transition Planning / 0–25 Placement Management • Supported Employment Enabler • Experts at Hand <i>Please note that Health-related support services are covered under Experts at Hand in Block 1 rather than here (as services rather than provision).</i>

Local blueprint for the next 3 years	Where we are (All agreed by the Local Area SEND Partnership)	Where we will be in the next 3 years
Block 4. Encouraging inclusive culture & behaviours	Working together to ensure consistent ways of working and shared resources Our MSA says: Strengths Somerset is building on strong foundations of partnership, data development, and developing inclusive practice; further work is needed to improve consistency, shared understanding of good practice, and positive impact for children and young people. SENCo networks and the Inclusion Forum are well established, enabling collaboration, shared learning, and multi-agency engagement. There is a shared commitment to meeting need without diagnosis, supported by early intervention approaches across systems (LA and NHS) and effective use of tools such as the graduated response tool. Joint commissioning is in its infancy, with limited services commissioned through pooled budgets. Data maturity is improving, with a SEND dashboard, regular reporting to the SEND Partnership Board and to all school and colleges settings and MAT CEOs with strengthened data-sharing through commonly understood and accessible systems such as SIDER (NHS case management system) and Transform (LA hosted information sharing platform).	Somerset has a fully aligned, data-driven SEND system where joint commissioning is embedded across education, health and care, with agreed principles, clear accountability and measurable outcomes. High-quality working practices are in place across all education settings, with head teachers, SENCOs and school leaders and colleges working collaboratively to deliver consistent, inclusive, and needs-led SEND provision, sharing learning and providing mutual support to maximise inclusion. A consistent SEND finance policy and transparent processes is in place that ensure well-understood-equitable, efficient resource allocation and improved value for money. Disputes and resolutions have significantly reduced through strengthened early intervention, confident mainstream practice and co-production with families. We deliver a co-produced sustainable inclusive system with improved experiences and outcomes for children and young people, underpinned by strong partnership governance and evidence-led decision-making. Delivery Projects: • Joint commissioning strategy and annual Action Plan • Disputes and resolutions • SEND Finance Policy and Processes

Local blueprint for the next 3 years	Where we are (All agreed by the Local Area SEND Partnership)	Where we will be in the next 3 years
	Decision-making has been strengthened through robust multi-agency panels, quality assurance and learning from disputes. Qualitative insight is increasingly used alongside quantitative data. This has led to the number of tribunals reducing from 448 in September 2024 to 294 September 2025. More to do Consistency of inclusion practice remains variable, particularly in embedding the graduated response tool and supporting mainstream confidence to meet complex need, contributing to placement pressure and parental-led disputes. Specialist sufficiency remains constrained, though improvement programmes are underway (see Block 3). Joint commissioning and system-wide alignment need further development, alongside clearer communication of strategic priorities to frontline services. Data is not yet consistently driving commissioning or practice, and further work is needed to strengthen outcomes focus, embed qualitative feedback, and ensure insight translates into system change.	Targets: • Reduce complaints and tribunals year-on-year by 10%, 20% and 30 based on a 2025/26 baseline of 673 complaints and 284 tribunals. • Maintain average EHCP costs at £25,687 by 2028/29

3. What is the local area partnership's strategy for delivering on the above?

A brief summary of your local system's theory of change or reform strategy. Reflect on the output of your **Local Partnership Maturity Assessment Tool**, particularly your *Local System 'change story.'*

Somerset's Reform Plan is based on a clear understanding of the need to shift from a reactive, referral-led model to one that is proactive, inclusive and locally delivered. Our Local Partnership Maturity Self-Assessment highlights strong partnership commitment to inclusivity and improving shared strategic direction, alongside challenges including the variability in mainstream setting inclusion, over-reliance on statutory processes, diagnostic pathways and private specialist provision, current workforce capacity and the impact of this on the consistency of experiences for children, young people and their families.

Central to change will be building on our existing universal and targeted SEND offer via Somerset's **Experts at Hand model**, with local area multi-agency teams providing consultative and group-based local specialist support to mainstream settings, alongside flexible central capacity that can be drawn down as needed. Experts will model good practice in education settings, early on, skilling up mainstream staff capability to meet need quickly, and sustainably. See Appendix 1.

Delivery will align with **Family Hubs, Early Years and post-16 pathways**, and evolving **place-based working with the ICB**.

These changes, supported by workforce planning, capital investment, improved data and aligned commissioning, will improve our coproduced children and young people's outcomes, increase staff and parent confidence, and deliver a more sustainable SEND system for Somerset children and young people as part of the Families First Programme.

See Somerset's Theory of Change illustrated in the Chart below.

Theory of Change - Somerset SEND Reform Plan



Strategic Vision

We want to be able to move through the world without having to force our way through it.
My life – not a service. (SEND Strategy)

? RATIONALE

What and why?

Despite progress on increasing sufficiency and partnership working on SEND in Somerset:

- Too many children in Somerset are waiting too long for help.
- Costs are rising.
- Around 1,000 children are waiting for EHCP assessments, autism diagnoses can take over three years.
- More than 2,300 children are educated other than at school and over 1,900 are severely absent.
- Older children with SEND struggle to find work experience..



How?

The causes are:

- **Early years** - unmet need and early identification. More support for parents, parenting and outreach
- **Schools** - More placements and local provision is needed
- **Internal/external dysregulation** – limited capacity and skills to support and de-escalate.
- **Post-16** – Some opportunities on offer but need to expand. The job market is challenging for everyone also..
- **Need to increase internal staff capacity and processes.**



INPUTS



Funding: Capital £9.3m, ,
Experts and Hand and
Transformation £3.6m 26/27
Council DMP investment £2.17M



Buildings: Schools, SEND Units,
Family Hubs (Peripatetic), PRUs



Governance – Children and
Families Partnership Board,
Operational –SEND
Programme Partnership Board



Key delivery stakeholders:
Programme Team; Parent Carer
Forum, Hostopables, Virtual School,
Children's Commissioning, Children's
Finance Team, Health Partners (ICB,
OT, SLATH, Somerset FT)



Information Systems (multiple)



ACTIVITIES

10 PROJECTS TO DELIVER SEND REFORM



WORKSTREAM 1. STRENGTHENING INCLUSION THROUGH EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

1. Experts at Hand and Universal Offer



WORKSTREAM 2. SYSTEM LEADERSHIP, LOCAL PARTNERSHIP AND COPRODUCTION

2. Co-Production (with CYP and Parent Carers)
3. Partnership and Dashboard Development



WORKSTREAM 3. ACCESS TO SPECIALIST SUPPORT AND LOCAL PLACEMENTS

4. Specialist Inclusion Bases
5. Supported Bases (Mainstream) +
6. 0-25 Placement Management
7. Supported Employment Pathways



WORKSTREAM 4. ENCOURAGING INCLUSIVE CULTURE AND BEHAVIOURS

8. Joint Commissioning Strategy
9. Disputes and Resolutions
10. SEND Finance Policy and Processes



OUTPUTS (SOME EXAMPLES):

- Improved attendance, reduced suspensions and PEX
- Reduce attainment gap 26/27 onwards (KS2 RWM & A8)
- EHCP trajectory is reduced from current forecast New "You Said: We Did!" tracking evidences 100% listening and response.
- Improved EHCP timeliness and quality
- The number of 'has improved' statements in the parent carer survey increases from 3/8 to 8/8 in 2028/29, then sustained
- Reduced reliance on INMS and out of area placements
- 432 additional specialist placements in area by 2029/30
- Increase numbers of children with SEND attending sustained Mainstream Provision placements
- Reduce complaints and tribunals year-on-year by 10%, 20% and 30% based on a 2025/26 baseline of 673 complaints and 284 tribunals.



OUTCOMES / GOALS :

1. Strengthen mainstream inclusion and reduce crisis, ensuring children and young people achieve better outcomes.
2. Further strengthen partnership working and co-production.
3. More provision and service to support local mainstream places.
4. Settings routinely share resources and learning so CYP with SEND are included in their local mainstream provisions.
5. Costs and demand for other education settings reduce.

4. Please upload a completed copy of the Local Partnership Maturity Assessment Tool.

See Appendix 6 attached. – Maturity Self-Assessment.

5. What is the local area partnership roadmap for the next 3 years?

Reflecting on the broad timescales and expectation for deliverables set out in the Schools White Paper, key documents and core minimum requirements set out in this document, please provide a high-level roadmap for the next 3 years. Please highlight key milestones and a trajectory to the target metrics identified above, including leading indicators.

In the 2026-27 column, in particular, please reference how you plan to meet the core minimum requirements in your narrative, including details and evidence in supporting documents.

You can insert or upload supporting documents including graphics/visuals that illustrate your data trajectory.

Local roadmap for the next 3 years	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Block 1. Strengthening Inclusion across Education Settings.			
1. Experts at Hand and Universal SEND Offer <i>Provide early, local multi-agency access to specialist SEND expertise, supporting</i>	EAH Offer co-produced and procedures in place (Tier 1 – Universal Offer and Tier 2 – Targeted).	Workforce expansion, delivery rollout in all local areas. EAH teams fully resourced.	Repeat and embed Year 2 activities. Agree, deliver and monitor jointly commissioned contracts.

Local roadmap for the next 3 years	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
<i>staff and families to meet needs and prevent escalation.</i> <i>See Appendix 1 for full details</i>	EP, SALT and OT resource in place with 2 local area trials completed. Ready for wider roll out in Year 2. 50% of Year-2 roles in post ready to deliver. Joint Commissioning plan for 2027/28 agreed between ICB, Council and Partnership with procurement activity to commence in Year 2.	EAH Joint Commissioning procurement processes completed for roll out in Year 3. Bi-monthly dashboard reporting in place and showing positive trend on metrics. Continuously review progress and agree plans for sustainability beyond Year 3.	Evaluate progress and implement plans for longer-term sustainability.
Block 2. System leadership, local partnership collaboration and co-production			
2. Parent Carer co-production <i>Ensure co-production is deepened further to be at the heart of everything SEND Reform and that there is evince of increased voice, response (you said: we did) and increased parent carer and CYP confidence.</i>	Toolkit for settings to evaluate and improve engagement with Parent Carers produced. Learning from PINs and expanded plan in place. Coproduction tracker with metrics in place by end of year.	Evaluation of the Year 1 SEND Reform Plan implementation from a parental perspective published. Coproduction tracker embedded and showing progress.	Evaluation of the Year 2 SEND Reform Plan implementation from a parental perspective published/ Regular Unstoppables reviews on progress (yearly).

Local roadmap for the next 3 years	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
<i>PCF, Unstoppables Youth Group</i>			
3. Partnership Governance and Data <i>Further establish partnership working via the SEND Improvement Programme Board alongside improved use of data and dashboards to monitor impact.</i> <i>Head of SEND Reform</i>	Finalise SEND Reform Partnership Programme Governance – TOR, Membership, Forward Plan, meetings. Partnership Programme and Membership in place with established workplan. Attendance target 100%. Task and finish groups in place as required (e.g. EAH). Forward workplan in place and being delivered in full. Dashboard in place and monitoring progression of plan.	System governance training for stakeholders. Track performance of SEND Reform Plan, reviewing and improving where necessary.	Continue to track. Review of Programme and Benefits achieved.
Block 3. Access to specialist support and local placements			
4. Specialist Inclusion Bases and Additional Special School capacity <i>Expand existing successful HNPCA project and team with addition phases and</i>	The Education Places Team will continue to liaise with a wide range of schools and educational settings to deliver, in-year, an additional 128 specialist inclusion resource base places, alongside 16	Next project tranche. This will be expanded to deliver an additional 96 specialist inclusion resource base places and 32 additional special school places.	Next project tranche. This will be expanded to deliver an additional 64 specialist inclusion resource base places and 16 additional special school places.

Local roadmap for the next 3 years	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
<i>tranches of development in liaison with Somerset schools and settings.</i> <i>Head of Education Places</i>	additional special school places in 2027/28. Will be evidence led considering school estate, demand, geography and travel – in liaison with schools and parent carers (see Sufficiency section for full details).		
5. Support Bases (Mainstream Plus) <i>Provide expanded targeted, specialist support within mainstream schools to meet needs early, strengthen inclusion, and reduce reliance on specialist placements.</i> <i>SEND Units Implementation Lead</i>	Relaunch Additional Learning Provision (ALP) and Enhanced Learning Provision (ELP) across 15 schools supporting at least 300 pupils. Agreed funding for expansion of programme. Continue to refine the model and develop evidence base for future expansion. QA process and impact monitoring established.	Deliver an additional 14 support bases (providing support for approx. 300 pupils) for September 2027 go live. Target 600 Interventions by March 2028.	Deliver an additional 14 support bases (providing support for approx. 300 pupils) for September 2028 go live. Target 900 inventions by March 2029.
6. 0-25 Placement Management (including Transition) <i>To better use data and processes to manage</i>	Confirm revised processes and procedures of new Specialist Placement Team and dedicated posts in the SEND teams.	Embed new processes and interventions, reviewing and evaluating benefits and success. Childcare Sufficiency assessment includes	0-25 placement trajectories implemented for all pupils needing specialist placements. Work with special schools in each locality to establish

Local roadmap for the next 3 years	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
<i>placements and transitions in a timely manner.</i> <i>Full project under development and co-production Summer 26</i> <i>Head of Service SEND</i>	Co-agree plan and project targets, involving PCF, partners and finance. Numbers, approach and financial forecasts. Establish and build strong, positive and 'critical friend' relationships with special schools and units. Develop new data monitoring tool. Pilot area-based transition sessions for September 2027 using the Year 6 specialist unit cohort. Early Years – S23 Project fully operational with links to early help provision at Family Hubs.	consideration of SEND Sufficiency. Develop a pathway tool which supports identification of specialist placements early and highlights potential movements in advance of phase transfers. Develop a Value for Money INMS tool which calculates VFM based on quality, outcomes and cost. Roll out area-based transition sessions for September 2028 to all six local areas. Deliver audit of Early Years Placement Sufficiency (in liaison with Family Hubs).	transitions at an early stage is embedded. Stabilise INMS numbers short-term to reduce from 680 in Jan 2026 to 481 by 2032/33. INMS identified as Value for Money are identified as partners, and benefit from focussed commissioning arrangements such as block contracts.
7. Supported Employment Pathway <i>To expand existing award-winning Supported Employment project.</i> <i>Senior Expert Advisor Careers & Pathways</i>	Expand and set up internship and employment opportunities with employers. Supported Employment will deliver 130 internships with at 55% progressing into sustained employment or apprenticeship (+30 on 2026 baseline).	Expand and set up internship and employment opportunities with employers. Supported Employment will deliver 140 internships with 55% progressing into sustained employment or apprenticeship (+10 on 2027).	Expand and set up internship and employment opportunities with employers. Supported Employment will deliver 150 internship placements with 55% progressing into sustained

Local roadmap for the next 3 years	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
			employment or apprenticeship (+10 on 2028)
Block 4. Encouraging inclusive culture & behaviours			
8. Joint commissioning Strategy <i>Ensure partners jointly plan, fund and deliver integrated, high-quality SEND services improving outcomes and value.</i> <i>Service Director Commissioning & Performance, ICB</i>	Review CYP commissioning across the Somerset footprint: identification of potential alignment and joint commissioning, scoping of a joint outcomes framework and measures using shared data and intelligence. Scope long list of opportunities. Agree financial targets and plan.	Development of a joint and collaborative commissioning strategy for CYP and families, progress arrangements for pooled or aligned budgets. EAH pilot activity underway – procurement (See EAH).	Joint commissioning of key services (including therapies – SALT/OT/PHYSIO, MH, ND) and joint arrangements for commissioning of specialist packages. EAH contracts being delivered and monitored.
9. Disputes and resolutions <i>Reduce formal SEND disputes through early resolution processes agreed and consistently applied across all partners.</i> <i>Head of Virtual School</i>	Standardised communications to support engagement developed and rolled out. Involving SENDIASS and PCF. Monitoring and improvement plan in place.	Complaint processes re-evaluated following statutory SEND management and staffing changes.	Report on outcome of longitudinal learning from complaints and tribunals and impact of service improvements.

Local roadmap for the next 3 years	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
10. SEND Finance policy and process <i>Cross-partnership SEND finance policy ensures transparent decisions, clear communication, Head of Education Operations.</i>	Process for costed plans and protocol with schools revised for 2026/27. Wider review of SEND funding policy commissioned to include banding and costed plans.	Conclusion of SEND Funding Policy review and consultation with education settings and trusts.	Implementation of SEND Funding Policy Review.

6. What will the local area partnership deliver in the first year?

Please outline the key workstreams, milestones and trajectory your local area partnership will deliver and achieve in 2026-27 as well as how you plan to spend the investment allocation that will help fund this year's delivery. Please share key milestones and anticipated dates, success measures, cost breakdown and category. These should incorporate the core minimum requirements, be mapped to the building blocks above and should reflect a more detailed trajectory to the narrative, milestones and target metrics outlined in the 2026-27 column above.

2026-27 Local delivery plan		Q2		Q3		Q4	
All agreed with Leads and Partnership							
Workstream outline – mapped to building block	Responsible lead per workstream – accountable for the delivery of the workstream and the identified outcome.	Milestones per workstream What key milestones will enable you achieve your targeted trajectory	Target trajectory per workstream Where do you expect your data to be?	Milestones per workstream What key milestones will enable you achieve your targeted trajectory	Target trajectory per workstream Where do you expect your data to be?	Milestones per workstream What key milestones will enable you achieve your targeted trajectory	Target trajectory per workstream Where do you expect your data to be?
Outcome - what you want to achieve with this workstream							
Success measures – how you measure progress drawing on metrics from the accompanying data template							
Block 1. Strengthening Inclusion across Education Settings.							
1. Experts at Hand Offer (see Appendix 1 for full details)	Head of Education Curriculum & Training Somerset Council	Establish partnership EAH Steering Group and draft development plan. Confirm membership of Schools, EY Settings, and TOR.	31/07/26	Led by working group, co-produce the offer with schools and trusts and agree the terms / prioritisation for access to support. EP resource in place to pilot area-based models and expand ELSA offer.	Autumn Term 2026/27 ASAP. Monitoring baseline dashboard agreed with partnership	Offer co-produced and procedures in place. Trials completed 50% of Year 2 roles in post ready to deliver.	31/03/27 2 Local Areas, 40 schools, 90 settings supported by pilot.

		Commence recruitment and procurement for EAH roles and contracts. Commence learning from PINs offer. Agree Service Level Agreement with ICB for Experts at Hand	30/09/26	Recruitment for Year 2 underway. Health and EP resource mobilising with pilot activity. EAH Data Dashboard in place and updated bi-monthly.	working group alongside final metrics and targets.	Neighbourhood pilots x2 completed – ready for wider roll out in year 2. Joint Commissioning plan for 2027/28 agreed between ICB, Council and Partnership with procurement activity to commence in Year 2.	50% Staff recruited.
Block 2. System leadership, local partnership collaboration and co-production							
2. Co-production (See Appendix 2 for full details)	Somerset Parent Carer Forum	Recruit co-production lead. Kick off meetings.	31/07/26	Fully establish group to oversee engagement and communications, with key documentation and materials. Develop the comms and engagement plan. Agree plan, priorities and start delivery.	30/09/26	Develop the coproduction and assessment and benchmarking tool and tracker. Delivery of plan embedding and established.	31/03/26.
3. Partnership Governance, Data and Dashboards	Head of SEND Reform Somerset Council	Secure formal sign off of new partnership arrangements and draft TOR for SEND Improvement Partnership Board – in this confirm wider membership and collective responsibility for inclusion. Confirm delivery plan and quick wins.	31/07/26 31/07/26	Confirm Children and Families Transformation Programme Board with Independent Chair for oversight by exception. SEND Improvement Partnership – dashboard and monthly monitoring and dashboard in place and embedded – meeting every 2 months.	31/10/26 31/12/26	Finalise and embed SEND Partnership Programme Board governance. Delivery plan monitored and on track. Attendance maintained at 100%. Agree consistent dispute resolution and escalation procedure.	31/03/27 100% attended Partnership meeting with evidence of challenge.
Block 3. Access to specialist support and local placements							
4. Specialist Inclusion Bases (SEN Units) and Additional Special School Places	Head of Education Places Somerset Council	Work ongoing with educational settings, parents and carers to deliver Phase 3 capital works. for September 2026. Activity ongoing to plan and commission works for future phases 2027/28.	Ongoing to 31/08/26	Induction training for new bases. Partnership, and Council Executive approval for delivery of future phases.	31/12/26	Delivery of Phase 3. Additional 128 inclusion base places delivered – 16 additional Special School Places.	31/03/27 128 SEN Unit Places 16 Special School Places

5. Support bases (Mainstream Plus)	Assistant PEP & SEN Units Implementation Lead Somerset Council	Draft investment business cases for expansion of support base programme for 2027/28 delivery.	31/08/26	Re-launch of ALP and ELP programme to cover of 15 schools, supporting at least 300 students. Sign off and planning with schools for establishment of expanded support base programme from September 2027.	30/09/26 31/10/26	Deliver an additional 14 support bases (providing support for approx. 300 pupils) for September 2027 go live. 2027/28 Expansion Targets TBC. QA Process and Impact Monitoring established.	31/09/27 Target 300 students will be supported 2026/27
6. 0-25 Placement Management (including Transition Planning)	Head of SEND Commissioning Somerset Council	Focus on reviewing 16+ endings or extensions, ensuring young people are moving on to appropriate opportunities. Develop targets and metrics to track students in specialist placements. Establish baseline numbers with specialist provision, identifying potential movers for focus in Q3.	31/07/26	Pilot area-based transition sessions for September 2027 cohort to. Deliver priority placement planning for all specialist unit placements. Begin work on potential movers for Sept 2027 – chasing Annual Reviews, identifying move-on options and working with SEND teams to implement.	31/12/26	Review achievements and barriers, refining processes and plans accordingly. Begin work on potential movers for September 2028, ensuring pupils and options are identified for roll out of priority placement meetings during Q2/3 2027. Confirm Early Years placement review and audit timelines (in liaison with Family Hubs).	31/03/27 Work in year one will deliver movement of 16 pupils out of INMS by September 2027.
7. Supported Employment Pathways	Expert Advisor Careers and Pathways Somerset Council	Preparation for new starts, negotiations with providers and planning internship offer and training. Marketing to promote wider take up.	130 (+30) Prepared 31/07/26	Expand offer. 130 Supported employment starts for September.	130 places progressing 31/12/26	Preparation for expansion for next year – assurance in place for additional places set up.	31/03/27 130 places prepared by 31/03/26.
Block 4. Encouraging inclusive culture & behaviours							
8. Joint commissioning Strategy	Service Director Children's Commissioning Somerset Council	Revise existing Joint Commissioning Steering Group TOR, Governance, Membership; agree forward work plan; Agree co-production.	31/08/26	Reviewing of CYP commissioning across the Somerset footprint: identification of potential alignment, shared outcomes, measures and joint commissioning opportunities.	31/12/26	Complete review. Priority joint commissioning list and benefits identified with plan to progress in 2026/27.	31/03/27
9. Disputes and resolutions	Head of Virtual School Somerset Council	Recruit SEND lawyer to advise Service Manager on disputes and resolutions who will also advise on practices, processes, policies and monitoring.	31/07/26 Procedures and monitoring established.	Develop communications and plan to engage and finalise. To include SENDIASS and co-production with partnership and PCF.	31/10/26 Procedures and monitoring embedded.	Standardised communications to support engagement developed and rolled out. Procedures fully reviewed.	31/03/27 Reduce complaints to 606 and tribunals to 264 (<10%)

		Co-produce mediation monitoring and metrics.		Complaints and disputes monitoring in place.			by September 2027
10. SEND Finance policy and process	Head of Education Operations Somerset Council	Revise and consult with school on the protocol for costed plans in 2026/27.	31/08/26	Undertake a wider review of SEND funding policy to include banding and costed plans.	31/12/26	Continuation of the wider review. Agree financial targets and metrics for Years 2 and 3.	31/03/26
11. Programme Development (Additional)	Head of SEND Reform Somerset Council	Fully co-produced delivery plan in place agreed with Member sign off. Recruitment of data lead prepared for and programme management support for EAH.	07/08/26 Programme documentation in place, investment approved. Core team in place.	Recruitment of data lead and programme management support; posts onboarded Recruitment and onboarding of Head of SEND Reform (short-term cover from interim postholder) Delivery and monitoring.	31/10/26	Resource fully in place. Dashboard developed. Revitalised partnership fully in place with TOR and KPI set. Annual partnership maturity assessment completed.	Dashboard in place to monitor

The following table sets out the proposed spend by quarter to deliver the Experts at Hand offer. The EAH grant will be subject to a key decision prior to committing any expenditure and co-produced with the ICB and Parent Carer Forum. Total funding for 2026/27 has been confirmed as £3,624,802. **THIS IS THE DRAFT SUBMITTED AND WILL BE WORKED UP FURTHER**

Proposed Grant Spend per quarter	2026/27 Q2 £m	2026/27 Q3 £m	2026/27 Q4 £m
Transformation To include the following: programme oversight and management, programme management office, data and finance leads	0.120	0.120	0.120
EAH Administration This will include co-production and project administration to support recruitment of EAH in Year 1	0.120	0.120	0.120
EAH Workforce			
This will require the recruitment/redeployment of a range of workforce roles:			
Health (Specialist therapy intervention)	-	0.145	0.152
Educational Psychology staff (Agency/Permanent)	-	0.375	0.375
Allocation of funding for staff to deliver Outreach (PRU, Special Schools and Specialist Inclusion Bases), to include: transition posts, assuming recruitment will commence in Q2 but expenditure to be incurred from Q3 Also to include Supported Employment Pathways.	-	0.688	0.691
Allocation of funding to recruit Inclusive Curriculum Specialist Teachers	-	0.082	0.082
Setting to Setting Peer Leaders 30 days per neighbourhood (360 days per year) @ £300/day	-	0.054	0.054
Learning from PINS - Equivalent of 550 hours direct support to settings.	0.067	0.070	0.070
Total Spend	0.307	1.654	1.664

Total			3.625
--------------	--	--	--------------

7. How will the local area partnership deliver the first-year plan?

Please set out how you will ensure the required capacity and capability is in place from organisational corporate functions to support implementation of the plan. This could include reference to how you plan to build or bring in project delivery capability to manage delivery against the plan, support prioritisation, and effective use of resources; and how you plan to build the capacity and capability in data and analytics to support effective tracking against the measures in the plan and reporting that informs decision making.

We will have a standing item at bi-monthly partnership meetings, supported by weekly transformation meetings and an EAH working group, involving Council and ICB Officers and the PCF.

A dedicated PMO will be supporting SEND Reform.:

- 1) SRO will be the Executive Director for Children's Services, with support from Interim Deputy Director of Education to free up senior leadership capacity for transformation leadership and Head of Service - SEND Improvement Quality and Value once recruited and onboarded (interviews scheduled for end of June 2026).
- 2) New Head of Service - SEND Improvement Quality and Value to lead the SEND Reform programme management and delivery. Additional DCS and interim programme management resource is in place to mitigate and add capacity in the short term to October.

- 
- 3) Two permanent Project Managers to ensure continuity over the life of the programme, alongside business support. An additional locum Project Manager will also be needed in 2026/27 for six months to support delivery of Experts at Hand.
 - 4) Dedicated Finance Interim with expertise in SEND transformation.
 - 5) Ongoing data and intelligence support, additional resource sought.
 - 6) Ongoing Health and Parent Carer Forum representation.

The funding of this team will be supported by the SEND Reform Transformation Grant, detail to be finalised and agreed summer 2026.

The group will report to the quarterly Member Steering Panel, with updates to Scrutiny and Executive as required, and to ICB Executive cluster meetings.

The bi-monthly SEND Improvement Partnership Board will oversee progress of the delivery. Early discussions are ongoing to combine this with a Children's Wide Partnership Board to report, oversee and align all improvements in one place.

The monthly Education Finance Oversight Board will monitor SEND Reform progress in relation to value for money, efficiency and return on investment with monthly highlight reports from Service Leads, and designated project management support.

8. Other funding Local Authorities.

Block Transfers: If you have made a block transfer (Schools Block to High Needs Block) for 26-27, please set out how your plans for this funding align with the activities outlined above.

No block transfer has been agreed.

Capital: We have announced at least £3 billion in high needs capital between 2026-27 and 2029-30 to support children and young people (CYP) with SEND, or those requiring alternative provision (AP). This funding is intended to support place delivery across the full 0-25 age range, including early years and post-16. We expect funding to support the following outcomes:

- a. Inclusion at the core of high needs sufficiency strategy, resulting in more children and young people with SEND accessing suitable places in mainstream settings, across all phases of education
- b. Every child or young person who needs a place in an inclusion base can access one
- c. Fewer children and young people with SEND needing to travel a long way to access a suitable placement
- d. Improved suitability of the mainstream estate to support children and young people with SEND, with adaptations to improve inclusivity and accessibility of the physical environment

We also welcome innovative uses of high needs capital to drive inclusion, for example, investment in assistive technology for use in mainstream settings.



Please outline your strategy for how this funding will meet the outcomes above, with reference to the core minimum requirements and other workstreams in this reform plan where appropriate. We would like to see detail around your plans to increase capacity for inclusion bases (formerly known as SEN units, resourced provision and pupil support units – SU/RP/PSUs), such as schools, colleges or early years providers identified, engagement with relevant settings and trusts, and target cohort of needs.

If your plans include increases to places in special schools or specialist post-16 institutions, please include a clear rationale, showing the need that is being met, and why it cannot be met through other types of provision, such as inclusion bases. If you are receiving additional capital funding to replace one or more planned special or AP free schools, please set out how this funding will meet need in your area, and plans for engaging relevant trusts in your sufficiency planning.

Somerset established a High Needs Capital Programme in 2025 to deploy approximately £20m of HNPCA funding, delivering 352 new specialist inclusion places between September 2025 and August 2028. The programme strengthens mainstream inclusion while ensuring children and young people (CYP) with complex needs access high-quality provision locally.

Delivery includes specialist inclusion bases (SEND Units) on mainstream sites, special school expansions, satellite provision, and targeted accessibility improvements in mainstream settings. These interventions support CYP with physical, sensory, medical, and complex learning needs. Seventy new places are already operational. Eight new or expanded provisions will open in autumn 2026, creating 90 additional places, with further developments scheduled throughout 2026/27.

Additional HNPCA funding for 2026/27 (part of the SEND Reforms) will enable programme expansion by an additional 80 places, extending capacity and accelerating delivery.

Costs are modelled using the 2025/26 forecast outturn, inflated annually by 3%. In 2026/27, the average independent placement will cost £74,000, compared with £30,000 for a local special school and £17,000 for a specialist inclusion base (including Elements 1, 2 and 3). This

delivers average savings of between £44,000 and £58,000 (increasing over time) per placement respectively, with further savings achieved through reduced transport costs as more CYP attend provision closer to home.

The programme will slow and then reverse growth in independent non-maintained placements. Numbers will peak at approximately 710 placements by the end of 2026, including 51 Post-16, before declining from 2027. EOTAS numbers will also peak in 2026 before reducing annually. The programme rebalances the system, reduces reliance on high-cost provision, and secures sufficiency through a stronger local offer.

Target Number of New Places by Provision Type

Provision Type	25/26	26/27	27/28	Initial 3 yr HNPCA Programme Total	28/29 – Additional HNCPA Programme	Total
Specialist Bases – School/SEN Units (Refurbishment)	40	96	64	200	64	264
Specialist Bases – Schools/SEN Units (New Build)	16	32	32	80	0	80
Specialist Bases Sub Total	56	128	96	280	64	344
Special School Places	24	16	32	72	16	88
Specialist Placements - Total	80	144	128	352	80	432

Aligned to the Council's "local first" principle, the programme increases state-maintained capacity across Somerset, reducing reliance on high-cost independent provision. Delivery is collaborative, involving school leaders, multi academy trusts, local authority services, and stakeholders, including the Somerset Parent Carer Forum.

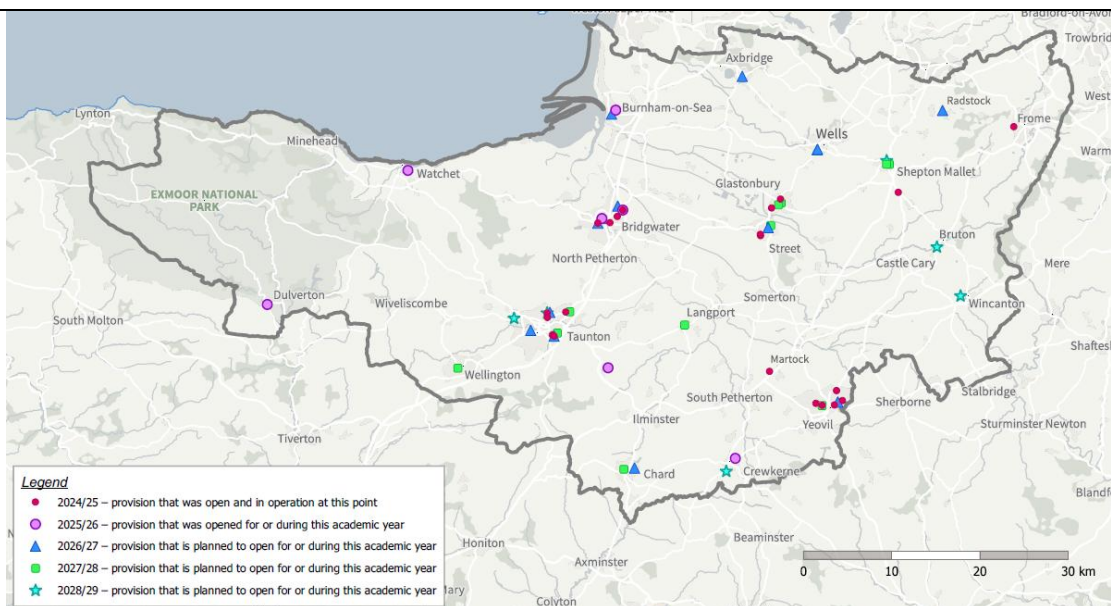


Decisions on location and provision type are evidence-led, informed by analysis of Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) numbers, needs profiles, current placements, school capacity, demographic forecasts, and identified gaps. Geographic factors, including travel distances, shape planning to reduce disruption and transport demand. Delivery also reflects practical considerations such as school capacity (falling rolls), building suitability, and benchmark cost assumptions set in October 2025. We also have a programme of mainstream adaptations and improvements, to ensure accessibility for CYP with SEND.

While the majority of new places will be delivered through specialist inclusion bases on mainstream sites, there will be targeted growth in special school places. This reflects the need to ensure appropriate provision for CYP with more complex or externalising behaviours, particularly in the secondary phase. This aligns with our strategy to create more primary-age capacity developed within mainstream inclusion bases close to home, enabling special schools to focus more on secondary-age pupils and providing clearer pathways through phase transfer.

The programme spans Early Years to Post-16. Early Years provision prioritises inclusion in mainstream settings. At Post-16, new specialist provision addresses gaps, including a base opening in Cannington in September 2026, to reduce reliance on independent placements and EOTAS.

The following map shows how investment is extending provision into rural and underserved areas, improving access and equity. Travel route mapping optimises placement distribution, reducing journey times and costs. Statutory consultation and ongoing engagement ensure provision is well-located, responsive to need, and delivered to high standards.



Alternative provision

Earlier this year, Somerset consolidated its four Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) into two larger provisions operating on an east / west model to improve quality and efficiency. A key part of this restructure was binding them through a Partnership Agreement and aligning them with a third partner, the Bower Learning Partnership, which has expertise in broader and more complex SEND. This enables the PRUs to improve their ability to meet the needs of children with SEND in their care and better support mainstream schools through a stronger outreach offer, keeping more children with SEND in local mainstream schools.

In 2023 Somerset secured agreement from the DfE for a new Special Free School, initially planned for 2027, its delivery has slipped and a new date is yet to be confirmed. It will align with the SEND Reform and serve as a secondary-phase specialist pathway for children leaving specialist inclusion bases in local primary schools. North Star Academy Trust have been selected to run the school and we have already engaged with them and linked them in with other MAT CEO's.



9. System partner and stakeholder engagement, and co-production.

Please outline how the local area partnership plans to engage system partners and stakeholders to develop and implement the plan – include planned engagement with schools and early years settings, alternative providers, FE and post-16 providers (including those your young people attend that are not within your local area), Parent Carers and children and young people with SEND, with reference to the core minimum requirements. Consider changing roles and responsibilities in the context of the Schools White Paper and how you work collaboratively to manage the transition. Please indicate where additional support is required to engage partners or stakeholders - senior officials at the Department for Education will be available to contribute to summer term events with education leaders and parent carer forum leaders.

Somerset has a strong partnership with its Parent Carer Forum, reflected in the Maturity Self-Assessment, with both shaping SEND Reform from the outset. Engagement has been intensive and grounded in co-production, ensuring ownership across the system. Since early 2026, this has included children and young people (CYP) with SEND, parents and carers, education leaders and practitioners, health and social care partners, and wider stakeholders.

The Parent Carer Forum acts as a co-designer through regular engagement, SEND Partnership Board workshops, and events such as the Frome Engagement Day. Young people contribute through the Unstoppables Youth Group and wider participation networks, including the Youth Council and Children in Care and Care Leavers forums.

Education partners across the 0–25 system are fully engaged, including headteachers, MAT CEOs, governors, SENCos, Early Years providers, schools, alternative provision, PRUs, and Post-16 and Further Education providers. School associations and the Schools Forum are also actively involved. Health partners, including the ICB and NHS providers, work alongside social care and commissioning teams through regular multi-agency engagement.



Voluntary, community, and faith organisations are involved, with further strengthening planned for FE providers and smaller VCSE partners during delivery. Co-production continues throughout implementation, supported by Somerset's established engagement framework.

The SEND Partnership Board will oversee delivery with revised terms of reference and broad representation, including the Council, ICB, Parent Carer Forum, Unstoppables, education providers, and family services. Partners will lead operational delivery through programme and project groups. The Board will embed collective responsibility for inclusive practice and strengthen decision-making through a clear 2026 forward plan and escalation processes. A dedicated co-production role will coordinate activity, introduce benchmarking aligned with NHSE guidance, and lead the Year One self-assessment.

Co-production extends into mediation and dispute resolution, with parents actively involved and CYP participating where appropriate. Monitoring of timeliness, resolution rates, and effectiveness will strengthen this approach.

Mediation volumes increased from 123 in 2021/22 to 367 in 2024/25, with 2025/26 levels remaining high. Resolution rates improved, and more cases settled before mediation. However, tribunal numbers remain elevated despite a lower proportion following mediation, indicating sustained system pressure.

SENDIASS will be invited to support further development as an independent adviser and early intervention partner, to continue to raise awareness of SENDIASS and the independent support it can offer families via the advice line or referral.

Partnership with health will deepen through expanded joint commissioning, clearer alignment with health priorities, and co-produced best practice. This will establish a consistent universal offer, improve outcomes, and embed integrated working to deliver timely, effective support for CYP.



The plan will also strengthen partnership working with health by expanding joint funding opportunities and clarifying how SEND Reform aligns with existing health commissioning. Best practice will be co-produced to establish a consistent universal offer, improve outcomes, and embed integrated working to deliver timely and effective support for children and young people.

Initial success metrics are:

By March 2027 a coproduction tracker will be embedded and covers:

- The number of “has improved” statements in the parent carers survey increases from 3/8 to 8/8 in 2028/29 then sustained.
- New “You Said, We Did” tracking evidences 100% listening and response.
- Improved EHCP timeliness and quality.
- Reduce complaints and tribunals year-on-year by 10%, 20%, and 30%, based on a 2025/26 baseline of 673 complaints and 284 tribunals (Project 9).

This will be supported by use of the NHS England co-production assessment tool to benchmark practice, identify gaps, and drive continuous improvement in partnership working (measures to be coproduced).

10. Risks and Mitigations

What are the key risks that could affect the successful implementation of your Local SEND Reform Plan, and what mitigation strategies are in place to manage these risks? Please include a maximum of 5 risks with impact and likelihood RAG for each risk. See Annex C for suggested risk matrix.

	Impact	Likelihood	RAG	Mitigation	Residual RAG
National shortage of educational psychologists, speech and language therapists and occupational therapists may constrain the pace at which the EAH offer can be built.	4	3	A	Somerset's mixed-profession and skill mix recruitment model reduces dependence on any single workforce. MAT and school involvement in employing cluster workers expands the talent pool. Regional collaboration through ICB cluster being explored. National workforce supply support requested from DfE. The advanced SLT practitioner will have a key role in developing the therapy workforce of the future.	A
Rising demand for statutory EHCPs continues to outpace the system's capacity to prevent escalation, constraining financial headroom for investment in reform.	5	4	R	Demand management through earlier intervention is a core purpose of this plan, but savings will not materialise in Year 1. Somerset has requested clarity from DfE on the realistic financial trajectory expected over the plan period and will continue to invest in placement management as the primary short-term lever.	A
New ICB Cluster Coordination – new relationships and partnerships may destabilise	3	4	A	Build on early relationships with new Cluster and establish accountabilities as roles are confirmed in ICB. Programme to develop the Somerset Plan	G

	Impact	Likelihood	RAG	Mitigation	Residual RAG
ability to deliver commitments.				partnership and strengthen governance arrangement and shared strategic priorities. Work in collaboration with the 6 Places in the Cluster to utilise clinical expertise and share good practice.	
Legislative change is delayed, impacting longer-term reform relative to pace of rising demand and parental and professional confidence is lost locally in effectiveness of plans overall.	3	4	A	Engage stakeholders in achievable goals and maintain a clear message on the reasons change can take time. Ensure key players are well informed of reform and able to act as champions within their sectors.	G
Low parental confidence in the mainstream system to be inclusive results in continued demand for special school placements.	4	5	R	Delivery of the Experts and Hand offer and expansion of role of SEN Units modelling mainstream expertise. Communications - working with families to build confidence back up, learning from PINs work. Update of graduated response toolkit to include broader communications with parent carers.	A
Due to external demand factors, costs are rising for staffing and/or building specialist inclusion bases, resulting in delivery issues and/or fewer places resulting	3	4	A	Accept and monitor. Achieve value for money via tendering process for revenue and capital activities.	A

	Impact	Likelihood	RAG	Mitigation	Residual RAG
in less children and young people being supported as planned.					

11. Dependencies

Please detail the key areas of the local area partnership's proposed SEND future state and roadmap that may be impacted by wider reforms nationally and locally and outline how you will manage these. We expect these will include but not be limited to:

- NHS reforms
- Local Government Re-organisation
- Reforms to Children's Social Care
- Best Start in Life, including Family Hubs
- Best Start in Life Strategy
- Curriculum and Assessment Review

National Reforms: We do not anticipate there is a significant risk of delay due to dependencies. Things to note include:

- EAH Guidance may delay implementation if does not have the focus anticipated and set out in this plan.
- Non-approval of the plan could delay commencement of high-spend activity – e.g. procurement approval.

Procurement: EAH recruitment may require procurement, which may take a few months to process. We are scoping potential



timescales.

NHS reforms (including developing of the ICB Cluster): Changes to Integrated Care Board (ICB) commissioning and workforce models directly affect the availability, specification and governance of therapy, paediatric and mental health services required to deliver early intervention and inclusive support without escalation to EHCPs. The rollout of NHS Neighbourhoods locally must be aligned to Families First locality-based work, which will integrate local SEND reforms.

Best Start in Life, including Family Hubs: Delivery of Family Hubs is a key dependency. It provides the universal and targeted early years infrastructure through which early identification of SEND, parental guidance and integrated health and education interventions can be delivered consistently before needs escalate. Family Hubs are integrated in the plan and will be overseen within the same shared governance structure.

Local Government Re-organisation: Somerset is a unitary authority and is not in the first tranche of devolution. If there were to be a mayoral authority covering the Somerset area, this could affect delivery of responsibilities in ways that are unpredictable.

Reforms to Children's Social Care: Families First is a dependency for SEND reform because the programme enables earlier, coordinated support for children and young people with SEND, common thresholds and reduce duplication, escalation and fragmentation across education, health and social care. Family Hubs are integrated in the plan and will be overseen within the same shared governance structure.

Curriculum and Assessment Review: A strong local partnership between multi-academy trusts, the local authority and Five Counties Teaching School Alliance (Southwest Specialist Leaders) is a key element of our ability to deliver more inclusive curriculum and teaching. Supported employment 'Imagine the Possibilities' has won three national and two regional awards and is shortlisted for one more due to the breadth and effectiveness of the offer; continuing to grow this is a priority, though loss of DWP funding has created some risk to the programme.

Local Government Finance: Financial sustainability remains a key priority for Somerset Council, with the Deficit Management Plan



agreed in 2025 now forming part of the wider SEND Reform Plan. The programme focuses on increasing local provision, strengthening inclusion within mainstream settings and reducing reliance on high-cost external placements wherever appropriate. While these reforms are expected to improve the long-term sustainability of the High Needs Block, demand for SEND support continues to grow and remains one of the most significant challenges facing the system.

Section 3 – Monitoring and Evaluation

12. How will the local area partnership know delivery is on track?

Please set out how you will monitor and track progress referencing:

- **Monitoring tools and processes** - the specific tools, systems, and data you will use to track delivery milestones and measure the impact on outcomes.

Some Local Area Partnerships hold data in a central SEND operational dashboard. This is used by teams on a weekly basis to identify trends in demand or inform conversations with local school or setting leaders.

In some Local Area Partnerships, a view of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) is reviewed monthly by a SEND Board to take decisions on prioritisation, resourcing and delivery of services informed by regular data.

Please set out how you will use data to track demand (e.g., EHCP applications for assessment), Service delivery (e.g., Speech and Language Specialists deployment; places created), Service quality (e.g., parental satisfaction) and outputs (e.g., pupil attendance; pupil exclusions)

- **Feedback and adaptation mechanisms** - what feedback loops and stakeholder input you will use to review progress and adjust your approach.



Somerset will oversee delivery of the SEND Reform Plan through a robust, data-led framework embedded within existing governance and enhanced by strengthened digital capability. Using dashboards, monitoring will take place at both operational and strategic levels, ensuring that progress against milestones, performance indicators and outcomes directly informs decision-making.

At an operational level, Somerset is developing an integrated SEND data system, bringing together EHCP processes, MRI dashboards and Transform Family View. This will provide near real-time insight into demand, delivery and outcomes, enabling services to identify emerging pressures early and respond proactively, including targeted support to individual settings where required. The Child Needs Index will further support a shared understanding of vulnerability, helping direct resources to those most in need.

Strategically, a defined set of KPIs aligned to the Reform Plan and national requirements will be reviewed through the SEND Reform Partnership Programme Board and wider partnership governance. Regular performance reporting, including half-termly dashboards, will track delivery, risks and impact. A maturity framework will monitor system-wide progress, supporting informed decisions on prioritisation and resource deployment. This will be reviewed at least annually, next by March 2027.

Performance will be assessed across four domains: demand; service delivery; quality and outcomes, including measures such as EHCP activity, access to specialist services through Experts at Hand, audit findings, attendance, exclusions; and preparation for adulthood.

Somerset's established data-sharing approach—supported by DfE investment—includes benchmarking dashboards for schools and trusts, alongside a SEND Performance Report drawing on integrated datasets across education, health and care.

Lived experience is central to evaluation. Insight from the Parent Carer Forum, SENDIASS and participation groups will be gathered through co-production, surveys and engagement activity, complemented by large-scale surveys, such as the SEND Annual Survey and the Children and Young People's Wellbeing Survey.



An evidence-based approach, including the Risk of NEET Indicator, will support early identification and targeted intervention.

Together, this creates a continuous improvement cycle where evidence and lived experience drive refinement, enabling Somerset to respond effectively and improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

Plan metrics will start simple focused on the metrics identified within this report, with more detailed reporting to follow as required and co-produced as the programme develops.

13. Reporting to DfE

Using the attached data template, the local area partnership is required to provide quarterly data returns to DfE against selected key metrics. DfE will, in turn, provide quarterly data reports with visualised analysis and benchmarking that will support your local delivery, monitoring and evaluation. This will include data the department holds on **Attendance**, **Exclusions**, and **Unauthorised absence**.

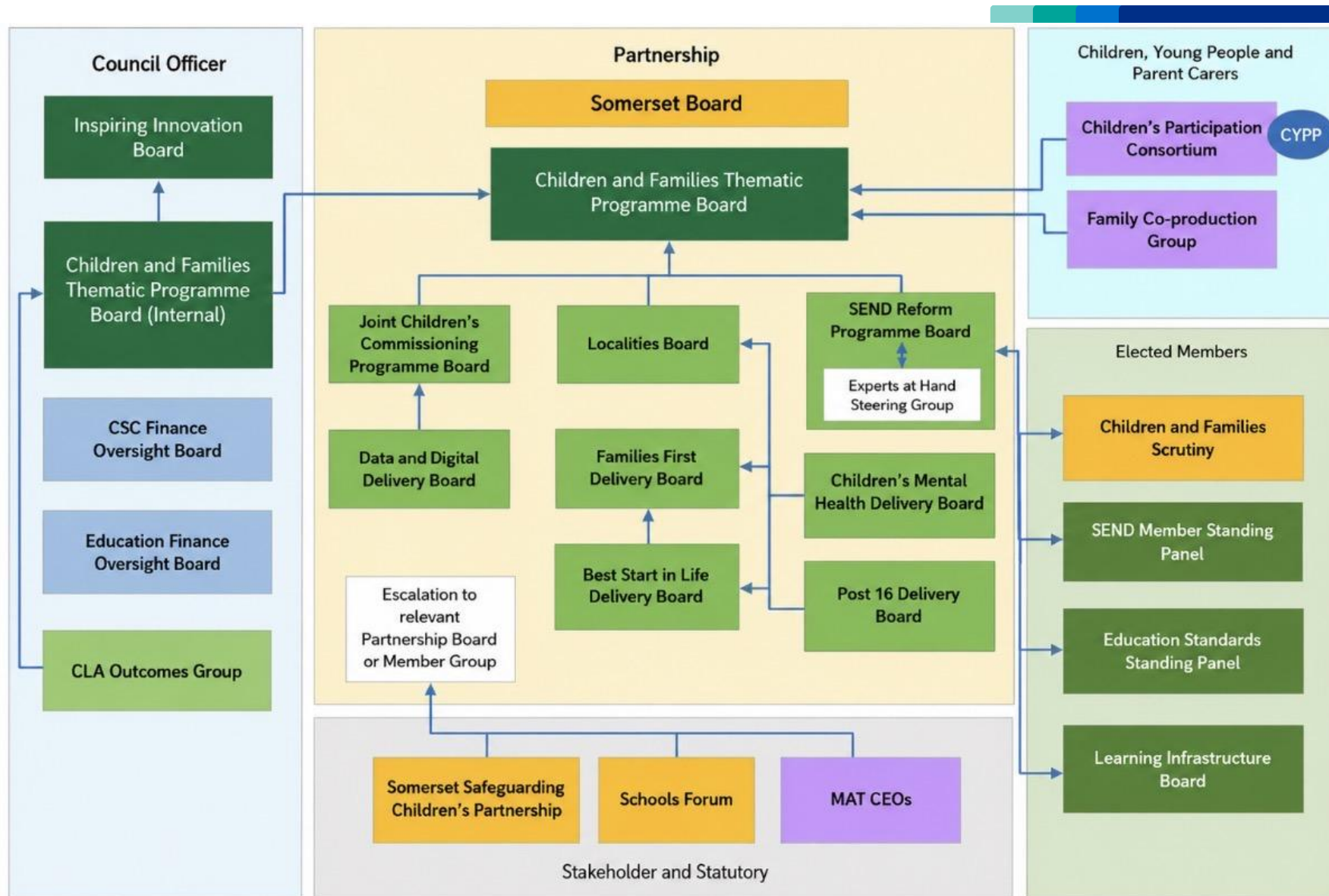
Please use the attached data template to upload your initial data return to DfE.

Section 4 – Governance

14. How will the local area partnership ensure delivery of plans remain on track?

Please outline the governance structures in place to oversee delivery. Clearly set out who is responsible for overseeing reform delivery, what each governance group or individual is accountable for, and how these arrangements ensure progress is monitored and decisions are made transparently. Please identify where the named SRO for the Local SEND Reform Plan sits within the governance structure and ensure your response incorporates the core minimum requirements.

If you have a diagram to show the relationship between these governance mechanisms, please upload this here.



Governance Mechanism <i>This may be a governance group, or an individual (e.g. SRO).</i>	Purpose/ Responsibilities <i>What is the function of this governance mechanism? What are they accountable for overseeing? What information is reported to this governance mechanism?</i>	Membership <i>Who does this governance mechanism comprise of? [should include health and PCF representation] What stakeholders are represented at this governance mechanism? Please indicate who chairs this. (Include n/a if an individual).</i>	Cadence <i>How regularly does this governance mechanism meet?</i>	Decision Rights <i>What decisions can this governance mechanism make?</i>	Escalation Route <i>Where can this governance mechanism escalate issues or decision to?</i>
SRO	The role of the SRO is to provide visible leadership and connect accountability across organisations through the governance structure, keeping the aims of the programme at the forefront of focus, activity and agendas.	Executive Director for Children, Families and Education, supported by Interim SEN Programme Lead.	n/a	The SRO can take decisions within the scope of delegated authority based on the Council's Scheme of Delegation. This extends to financial decisions delegated to the Education budget.	The SRO escalates to the Children's Thematic Transformation Partnership Board
Children's Thematic Transformation Partnership Board	The purpose of this Board is to act both as the accountable body for Children's Transformation within the Council and across the partnership. This is a strategic board that oversees the long-term goals of the programme (and linked programmes such as Families First and Family Hubs). This is our equivalent of the SEND Improvement Partnership Board, but covers all of Children's Services, with operations	There is an Independent Chair and the Board membership comprises: DCS, CEO Parent Carer Forum, Director level representation from Children's Social Care, Education, Children's Commissioning (LA), Place Director Somerset and SRO Maternity, Children and Young People (ICB), Health Trust Directors CAMHS and Paediatrics, Chairs of: Schools Forum, MAT CEOs Group, Post 16 Partnership, Early Years Partnership.	Every 4 weeks, alternating between a thematic Deep Dive and a Full Board meeting	The Board has no executive decision-making powers, but any partnership plans, strategies, or programmes must be endorsed by the Board before seeking formal adoption by individual agencies. Partners are all mutually accountable for oversight of delivery in TOR.	The Board can escalate strategic risks to the Somerset Board, which is the statutory Health and Wellbeing Board for Somerset and includes Elected members and CEOs for the LA and Health Trust. Issues requiring financial decision escalate internally in the LA to the Inspiring Innovation Board. Decision points in

Governance Mechanism <i>This may be a governance group, or an individual (e.g. SRO).</i>	Purpose/ Responsibilities <i>What is the function of this governance mechanism? What are they accountable for overseeing? What information is reported to this governance mechanism?</i>	Membership <i>Who does this governance mechanism comprise of? [should include health and PCF representation] What stakeholders are represented at this governance mechanism? Please indicate who chairs this. (Include n/a if an individual).</i>	Cadence <i>How regularly does this governance mechanism meet?</i>	Decision Rights <i>What decisions can this governance mechanism make?</i>	Escalation Route <i>Where can this governance mechanism escalate issues or decision to?</i>
	undertaken at SEND Reform Programme Board Level.				the ICB are to be confirmed.
SEND Reform Partnership Programme Board	The purpose of this programme board is to maintain oversight of a) the SEND Reform plan as a whole and progress towards the five goals and b) deliverables where these are not assigned to delivery boards (e.g. Capital and EAHO).	Rotating Chair SEND Reform (LA) and ICB SRO for Maternity and CYP Membership: Activity leads (Section 6), Somerset PCF, DCO, NHS Foundation Trust, CYP Voice Lead, Chairs of Special, Primary and Secondary Associations, AP Group, Trust, College and EY SEND lead	Half-termly	This Board agrees changes to the programme at project level through change control, within budgetary envelopes and in line with overall programme goals. Partners are mutually accountable for delivery in TOR.	Escalation to Children's Thematic Transformation Partnership Board
Localities Programme Board	The purpose of this programme board is to maintain oversight of the development of Localities and Neighbourhoods and coordinate Families First, early help through Family Hubs. Experts at Hand will need to be represented at this to coordinate.	Chair: Service Director Children's Social Care, Somerset Council Membership: Children's Social Care, Education Leadership (Inclusion Advice Line), Virtual School, Education Psychology, Connect Somerset (VCSE), NHS Neighbourhoods Lead	Monthly	This Board agrees changes to the programme at project level through change control, within budgetary envelopes and in line with overall programme goals	Escalation to Children's Thematic Transformation Partnership Board
Experts at Hand Steering Group	A monthly multi-agency Steering Group provides overall leadership, coordination and accountability. Meeting	Representatives from Health, Education Service, Schools and Settings from the LA and	Monthly	Oversees EAH daily operations and delivery	SEND Reform Programme Board

Governance Mechanism <i>This may be a governance group, or an individual (e.g. SRO).</i>	Purpose/ Responsibilities <i>What is the function of this governance mechanism? What are they accountable for overseeing? What information is reported to this governance mechanism?</i>	Membership <i>Who does this governance mechanism comprise of? [should include health and PCF representation] What stakeholders are represented at this governance mechanism? Please indicate who chairs this. (Include n/a if an individual).</i>	Cadence <i>How regularly does this governance mechanism meet?</i>	Decision Rights <i>What decisions can this governance mechanism make?</i>	Escalation Route <i>Where can this governance mechanism escalate issues or decision to?</i>
	monthly and reporting to the SEND Reform Programme Board, it: >Sets strategic direction and priorities >Monitors impact, reach and equity >Uses data and feedback to identify emerging pressures >Directs resource and drives continuous improvement This ensures strategy and operational coordination are fully aligned.	MAT settings and Somerset Parent Carer Forum.			
Joint Commissioning Programme Board	The purpose of this programme board is to develop stronger joint commissioning across the LA and new arrangements in the ICB Cluster.	Chair: Service Director Children's Commissioning. Membership from Somerset Council, ICB Cluster Commissioning Directors and responsible officers, Finance, Business Intelligence	TBC	This Board agrees changes to the programme at project level through change control, within budgetary envelopes and in line with overall programme goals	Escalation to Children's Thematic Transformation Partnership Board
Delivery Boards: Mental Health Best Start in Life Post 16 Partnership Data and Digital Families First	The purpose of the Delivery Boards is to bring together relevant expertise for tactical and operational conversations about clear deliverables and goals, ensuring work is prioritised across organisations and	Membership is drawn from across the stakeholder landscape, relevant to the deliverables. All groups include LA, Health, education provider (0-25), VCSE, and PCF representation as appropriate.	Frequency set by Chairs in consultation with membership	These Boards can agree the 'how, who and when' of project delivery, within the scope of agreed project briefs	Escalation to relevant Programme Board

Governance Mechanism <i>This may be a governance group, or an individual (e.g. SRO).</i>	Purpose/ Responsibilities <i>What is the function of this governance mechanism? What are they accountable for overseeing? What information is reported to this governance mechanism?</i>	Membership <i>Who does this governance mechanism comprise of? [should include health and PCF representation] What stakeholders are represented at this governance mechanism? Please indicate who chairs this. (Include n/a if an individual).</i>	Cadence <i>How regularly does this governance mechanism meet?</i>	Decision Rights <i>What decisions can this governance mechanism make?</i>	Escalation Route <i>Where can this governance mechanism escalate issues or decision to?</i>
	barriers to progress surfaced and resolved in a timely manner.	Chairs: Mental Health (ICB) Best Start in Life (Public Health) Post 16 Partnership (Yeovil College) Data and Digital (Business Intelligence) Families First (Children's Social Care)			
Scrutiny and Standing Panels (SEND Reform and Education Standards)	Children and Families Scrutiny provide political and stakeholder scrutiny of Council and partner activity. Standing Panels are vehicles for greater member depth on key topics.	Elected members, co-opted Special school representative	Monthly Scrutiny, Standing panels by agreement	No decision-making role	Can make recommendations to the Council Executive
CYP and Parent Carer Voice and Co-production Groups	The purpose of these groups is to act as a consortium for a wide range of consultative and co-production activities, and to hold partners to account for delivery of the Children and Young People's Plan.	Children and Young People's representatives, Parent Carer representatives	Quarterly	No decision-making role	Can make recommendations to the Children's Thematic Programme Board

Section 5 – Central Government Support

15. How can we help you?

Please outline any practical support you need from central government to implement your plan effectively.

This may include:

- Access to specialist expertise or advisory support
- Help with workforce development or recruitment challenges
- Tools or templates to support data collection, reporting, or evaluation
- Facilitation of peer learning or regional collaboration
- Support with system-level coordination across education, health, and care
- Guidance on navigating regulatory or policy barriers

Tribunal interpretation: The local sufficiency plan for rapidly expanding specialist inclusion bases is at risk due to Judges locally giving a legal view that the fact that mainstream schools are not registered for specialist provision means that any child or young person identified as needing specialist support should not be placed in a specialist inclusion resource base. We have written to the Judges making clear our view that this is a misinterpretation of the guidance and does not accord with the national steer to expand specialist provision on mainstream sites; this dispute remains unresolved. National clarity on the role of mainstream schools in providing specialist provision through inclusion bases would help mitigate this legal risk to our ability to place.

Workforce supply: The Experts at Hand offer is dependent on recruiting from a workforce — educational psychologists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists — where supply is nationally constrained. Somerset requests access to national workforce



planning data and any central programmes to increase supply, as well as support in connecting with other local authorities to explore regional approaches to workforce development and recruitment.

Financial trajectory: The national evidence base for cost mitigation in High Needs expenditure is unclear and there is an expectation that EHCP numbers will continue to rise for the next three years at a minimum. Somerset requests that DfE provide clearer guidance on realistic financial trajectories and what constitutes satisfactory progress in managing High Needs expenditure in a context of continuing rising demand.

SEND Specialist Packages: Guidance on specialist inclusion bases and SEND specialist packages is outstanding. Somerset has implemented a funding model for SEN Units. Clarity on revenue funding for bases would enable further development at Targeted and Targeted Plus level. Stability is requested for existing arrangements to enable adjustment if future guidance sets new expectations for access or funding.

Annex B - Supporting Documents

Somerset Appendices

Appendix 1 – Experts at Hand

Appendix 2 – Engagement and Coproduction

Appendix 3 – Evidencing how the Plan meets SEND Reform Requirements.

Appendix 4 – Financial assumptions linked to data template

Appendix 5 – The Local SEND Reform Data Template

Appendix 6 – Maturity Self-Assessment

Supporting National Documents:

The Schools White Paper	Every Child Achieving and Thriving
SEND Consultation Document	SEND reform: putting children and young people first.
LA and Schools Budget 2026-27	Schools Operational Guide 2026-27
Experts at Hand Guidance and Grant Conditions	Supporting SEND reform: developing the Experts at Hand offer - GOV.UK Experts at Hand & Local Authority SEND Transformation Fund: grant conditions - GOV.UK

Annex C – Risk Matrix (DfE Guidance for Reference Only)



IMPACT DESCRIPTION	IMPACT LEVEL	PROBABILITY/LIKELIHOOD				
		<u>≤ 10%</u>	>10% - <30%	>30% - <60%	>60% - <90%	>90%
		Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Possible	Likely	Very Likely
Cannot deliver Reform Plan; Failure of mission critical activity.	Crisis					
Significant impact to objectives; Significant and sustained disruption to activity.	Critical					
Delivery targets are compromised; Project delay / budget overrun.	Moderate					
Limited impact on delivery targets; Deviations from project resource, timescale or targets.	Marginal					
Minimal impact on delivery targets; Minimal impacts to project / programme efficiency.	Negligible					