Department for Education

NHS England

The Local SEND Reform Plan

June 2026



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1. Introduction

Document Overview

This document is designed to support local area partnerships develop a **Local SEND Reform Plan** with most sections pertaining to the local area partnership as a whole, in particular, local authorities (LAs) and Integrated Care Boards (ICBs), multi-academy trusts (MATs) and schools. Sections that pertain solely to local authorities are clearly marked **Local Authorities**.

While this document addresses local area partnerships, the government's expectation is that the local authority is the system 'convener'; taking the lead to bring together all system partners and ensure they work together to develop and deliver the Local SEND Reform Plan. Similarly, the government has clear expectations on all system partners to proactively respond to the local authority's leadership, ensuring they commit resources and fulfil their responsibilities in the partnership. Central government will actively engage where system partners are not responding to the local authority's leadership.

The document contains the following:

1. **The Local SEND Reform Plan Guidance**
   Overview and a practical guide to help local area partnerships complete the plan.

2. **Local SEND Reform Plan Template – Annex A**
   The delivery plan that local area partnerships are expected to complete and return to the Department for Education and NHS England by **19 June 2026.**

3. **Supporting Documents – Annex B**
   A list of key resources and references including links to relevant policy documents, tools, and guidance referenced throughout.

The Local SEND Reform Plan

The 0-25 SEND system has been under significant and prolonged pressure, resulting in a system that is failing too many children and young people. Local services are overstretched, some children's needs are escalating unnecessarily to crisis point, and financial pressures have become unsustainable. Yet within this challenging landscape, many local area partnerships have demonstrated determination and leadership - working very hard to improve their local services and often developing compelling and innovative approaches to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. The government is committed to collaborating with local area partnerships to build on and scale what is working well.

We recognise that system-wide reform and investment is needed to deliver an inclusive and sustainable system that stands the test of time. However, realising this vision will only be possible if every local area takes full responsibility for driving significant improvement in the sustainable delivery of local services. It is imperative that all local areas begin this essential work through robust action plans that demonstrate clear ownership, ambition and accountability. This step change in the delivery of local services cannot be optional; it is a critical expectation of all local area partnerships.

As set out in the Schools White Paper, the government will reform the current SEND system, building on ongoing work to create a system that's rooted in inclusion, where every child and young person receives high-quality support early on and can thrive in their local early years setting, school or college. The government's plan is to ensure opportunity for all by delivering an excellent, inclusive education for every child with a world class education and highly trained workforce. This will be based on an inclusive mainstream education system, with professional support for children and young people that need it, and improved, efficient and effective local delivery, as detailed below.

- **Inclusive mainstream system**: most children and young people with SEND will be supported to achieve and thrive in mainstream education settings through high-quality teaching, inclusive practice, and targeted support. Settings will be equipped to create the right environments, and multidisciplinary professional support services will be commissioned at a group level to address needs efficiently.

- **Specialist support for children that need it**: Specialist settings will continue to play a vital role for children and young people who require a substantially different curriculum or highly individualised approaches that cannot be delivered in mainstream educational settings.

- **Efficient and effective local delivery**: investment in and improvement of local services, including health, care, and wider workforces and resources, will support the delivery of joined-up, place-based provision. Local authorities will work with Integrated Care Boards to commission multi-disciplinary professional support across early years settings, schools and post-16 providers, taking a whole school approach at group level, so children and young people can access the help they need. Improvement of local services eases the pressure on home to school transport, ensuring fewer children and young people with SEND need to travel a long way from home to attend a school or setting. Local authorities will work with all settings to plan and deliver the right physical spaces in mainstream nurseries, schools and colleges.

Delivering lasting change will take collective commitment and sustained effort from all of us; government, local authorities, health partners, early years, MATs, schools and colleges; working together with parents and carers to build the inclusive system our children and young people deserve.

The Local SEND Reform Plan is the key delivery and accountability vehicle for this collaborative commitment, with expectations that it is revised annually as proposed reform is rolled out. We recognise that delivery of the plan will be within the current statutory framework, as such, local area partnerships will not be required to implement any policy that is being consulted on or that will require legislative change.

This first iteration is about building on existing foundations and putting in place the groundwork for reform. It aims to:

- Support central government to understand how the SEND system is being transformed nationally, understand how investment funding is being used to achieve reform priorities, identify innovative practice that can be disseminated and scaled up, and identify where additional support may be required.

- Support local areas - local authorities, health partners, early years, MATs, schools and further education - to develop and deliver a clear pathway toward

an inclusive and sustainable local SEND system that identifies and supports needs **early**, meets needs within the **local** area, is **fair, effective** and **shared**; building on existing work and tailored to the unique context of the local area.

- Support local authorities to unlock investment funding and access support for historic and accruing deficits.

The Local SEND Reform Plan provides a framework that partnerships can use to establish a baseline for their local system and metrics against which transformation progress can be tracked.

The government, working alongside local area leadership, will use the plans - and the insights from regular progress reviews - to understand delivery, support decision-making on investment funding and access to the High Needs Stability Grant, and reflect progress on target metrics. The Department for Education, in particular, will use the plans - incorporating the data returns, local partnership maturity assessments and core local reform plan – to establish a baseline and ongoing monitoring of local area performance.

Throughout this process, DfE officials, health regional leads, SEND and financial advisers will support local area colleagues with access to tailored guidance and emerging insights to help shape and strengthen their plans. The Local Government Association (LGA) will also provide additional system leadership and transformation support through the children's and SEND improvement advisers.

2. Laying the Foundation for Reform

A central focus of this first iteration of the Local SEND Reform Plan is the introduction of the **Experts at Hand (EAH) Offer** and a strengthened approach to ensuring there are sufficient high needs places within mainstream settings, alongside a continued strengthening of effective partnerships and practice. Together, these initiatives aim to build a more inclusive and sustainable SEND system by ensuring mainstream settings, supported by collaborative and maturing partnerships, are equipped with both the right infrastructure and the specialist expertise needed to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.

The Experts at Hand Offer

The Experts at Hand Offer is a core pillar of the SEND reform programme, designed to strengthen the capability of mainstream education settings to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND more effectively and inclusively.

Local areas should provide a defined route for mainstream education settings to access specialist support, including from a range of experts with specialisms in education & health, such as in, educational psychology, speech and language therapy, and occupational therapy, as well as through outreach from specialist settings. By adding support to shift to increased group-based models and whole setting advice and support, health and education professionals can deliver evidence-based support and intervention with greater impact and value, ensuring, where possible, needs do not escalate. This not only makes better use of a limited workforce but also reduces dependence on costly, individualised provision. There will continue to be children and young people with complex needs that will require individualised and tailored support to meet their needs.

We know that strong practice and effective joint working already exist in many local areas where settings are supported to strengthen inclusive practice. We are keen to ensure that local areas are building on these as they develop and scale up their offer.

Local area partnerships (Local Authorities, ICBs, and system partners including settings) are expected to build their Experts at Hand Offer so that it becomes an ongoing and embedded element of the SEND system.

In order to achieve this, as well as to support a more effective SEND system overall, we need:

- To maintain access and referrals for those children who need specialist referral pathways identified at triage based on educational and clinical need.
- Better joint working across ICBs, LAs, and local system partners including education settings, Best Start Family Hubs, Parent Carer Forums (PCFs), health providers and children and young people.
- More effective joint commissioning between LAs and ICBs, including strategic planning and co-production with children, young people and families and local partners.

- A strong universal offer and fluid layers of support which can be accessed from day one, one of which should include an offer of support for mainstream education settings giving them access to universal and targeted support from services across health and education – the new ‘Experts at Hand’ offer.

The aim of this offer is for mainstream early years settings, MATs, mainstream schools and further education providers to improve across the following areas:

1. Understanding the needs of children and young people in their setting.
2. Putting structures in place to build relationships and co-production with the parent/carer community.
3. Strengthening the baseline level of capacity of settings and staff to meet commonly occurring SEND needs.
4. Reviewing practice regularly to ensure current approaches are the most suitable.
5. Improving knowledge of when and how to draw down additional expertise when required.

This model allows for more efficient deployment of multidisciplinary professionals, promotes broader skill development across settings, and supports a more dynamic and sustainable workforce. It also puts a stronger focus on collaboration between health professionals and education settings, enhancing the role of health professionals in education and enabling them to focus on strategic support to schools and settings as well as system-wide impact.

The offer is designed to build capability within mainstream settings through joint working, empowering education staff to identify and meet a wider range of needs and enabling more children and young people to thrive in inclusive environments; and is expected to be jointly owned and resourced by the Local Authority and Integrated Care Board.

Local areas should consider how they will develop this offer to ensure there is support and appropriate provision across early years, primary, secondary, and further education settings. This should include developing effective models and partnerships for supporting young people with SEND who access further education in a different local area.

Local areas[1] have flexibility in how they commission or employ the multidisciplinary workforce required to deliver the offer. They are encouraged to explore, alongside other options, deployment through special schools and colleges, alternative provision schools, Neighbourhood Health Services, Best Start Family Hubs[2], and Multi-disciplinary Family Help Teams. Local areas will need to work with neighbouring local area partnerships and representatives of the further education sector to consider how best to deliver this service to all colleges and other post-16 providers their young people attend – including those out of their area.

Local systems are expected to begin building this offer using allocated investment funding as a core focus of their delivery in the first year, with the aim of having all Experts at Hand offers established and operational as the new reforms are introduced.

Guidance relating to the Experts at Hand offer is due to be published **in Spring 2026**.

Core minimum requirements

Experts at Hand Offer

Local area partnerships will be expected to clearly and succinctly set out in their plan:

- The delivery approach for this offer and the rationale for why the outlined approach is optimal for the local area. This will include setting out if delivery will be local authority-led, contracted to the ICB, in partnership with another area or through an external partner, and setting out the role of Best Start Family Hubs. Where delivery involves an ICB or external partner, please specify the partnership vehicle (such as an SLA or MOU) and how performance will be assured.

[1] Local areas who have been involved in ELSEC and PINS can use the structures they have in place and the learning they have gained to support the design of their offer.
[2] New guidance to be published 23 March 2026.

- A summary of the partnership approach to agreeing an optimal delivery model including how all system partners were engaged and how the approach was informed by needs-based data.
- How the EAH funding will enhance existing routes to access specialist input, and how the delivery model will be integrated with other services or offers funded separately.
- Proposal to collaboratively recommission alternative provision to align with the 3-tier model and best practice identified through Alternative Provision Specialist Taskforces (APST) models.
- Where alternative provision capacity is constrained, whether the LA will contract provision, partner regionally, or share expertise and the route chosen.
- Proposals for commissioning outreach from high-quality specialist providers, where appropriate.
- Proposal for timely access to health and education professionals (e.g., in educational psychology, occupational therapy and speech and language therapy) for early years, schools and colleges based on assessed local need.
- A detailed year 1 implementation plan, including recruitment approach and success metrics (e.g. coverage, scale of support available), and a high-level plan for years 2–3.
- A proposed governance and accountability arrangement, as part of the Local Area Partnership Board, including oversight routes, budgets and funding arrangements, reporting cadence and escalation processes. This should include a single, named LA-based SRO to drive improvement and reform.
- Clear expectations for joint governance, monitoring and shared accountability across education and health partners.
- Proposed approach to settings accessing support which ensures support is not disproportionately accessed by the most proactive schools and settings and includes out of area mainstream further education settings attended by local young people with SEND.

Embedding the Experts at Hand Offer Within a Broader Reform Strategy

Local Authorities

While the Experts at Hand Offer will be a key building block to reform, it is not sufficient on its own to deliver the scale of change required for SEND. Local authorities are encouraged to continue to take a strategic approach to **place planning and capital investment** to ensure inclusive provision is available and accessible. Guidance relating to inclusion bases (formerly SEN units, resourced provision and pupil support units – SU/RP/PSUs) is due to be published in **Spring 2026**.

To support this, we expect that local authorities will:

- Set out how High Needs capital funding will be used to invest in new places and adaptations to the physical environment so that needs of children and young people with SEND are met in alignment with the reform aims of mainstream inclusion.
- Use capital investment to improve the inclusivity of provision in all settings, considering a range of interventions that could better support children and young people with SEND through the physical environment, working with professionals who can advise and support e.g. special school/alternative provision practitioners, Occupational Therapists, Speech and Language Therapists, specialist nurses, mental health practitioners and support workers.
- Identify where inclusion bases (formerly SU/RP/PSUs) in mainstream schools or nurseries, or specialist provision in colleges, currently exist, where additional capacity is needed, and how this varies across planning areas.
- Engage proactively with early years providers, schools, multi-academy trusts and further education providers as well as health providers, to co-develop strategies for enabling more children and young people with SEND to access mainstream education.
- Engage with parent carer forums and children and young people forums to co-produce strategies that work for children and families.
- Ensure that decisions about the location and type of new SEND provision explicitly consider the proximity to where children and young people live and

the implications for transport, recognising this may not always be possible when commissioning SEND provision in large, further education colleges.

- Ensure that all sufficiency and capital investment decisions include an assessment of transport impact, with a focus on reducing long-distance travel and increasing access to local, inclusive settings.

Core minimum requirements

Sufficiency and Place Planning

Local area partnerships will be expected to clearly and succinctly set out in their plan:

- A summary of local sufficiency pressures and how planned place growth addresses demand trends, including EHCP drivers and opportunities to meet need through capacity in mainstream settings.
- How the planned increases in capacity across setting types will reduce reliance on special schools, especially out-of-area placements and independent specialist provision.
- How collaboration between LAs and MATs could be strengthened to identify suitable sites and jointly plan the development of inclusion bases.
- Assurance that proposed inclusion bases in early years settings, schools, and colleges would reflect local demographic need, maintaining high quality standards and clear expectations on type of provision.
- How existing school premises are factored in when planning new inclusion bases, including opportunities created by falling rolls.
- Detailed plans to meet need for specialist places, by increasing capacity in mainstream settings through inclusion bases, and to improve the suitability of the physical environment. This should set out how the investment would align with local need and reduce future pressure. Where plans propose use of high needs capital to create additional special school places, this should clearly explain why need cannot be met in mainstream, including how the investment would align with local need and reduce future pressure.
- Proposals for flexibility to accommodate rurality and local variation, ensuring provision remains viable and context appropriate.

- Evidence that an impact assessment of travel arrangements has been carried out for any capital, inclusion base or special school expansion proposal, demonstrating expected changes to travel distances, journey times, and reliance on out of area placements. Including any explicit travel related mitigations.

Strengthening Effective Partnerships and Practice

Effective collaboration across all system partners, including local authorities, ICBs, health provider organisations, Parent Carer Forums, Best Start Family Hubs, early years settings, mainstream and specialist schools, further education, dioceses, multi-academy trusts (MATs), parents carers, and children and young people with SEND, is essential to delivering meaningful transformation.

A transformed system that works for children and families must include co-production, collaborative partnership working and stakeholder engagement. Strong relationships at system and setting level are central to this.

The success of this transformation depends on shared ownership of decision-making, design and delivery of the local offer, and responsibility by all system partners, particularly local authorities, Integrated Care Boards and education settings.

The department is clear that MATs and schools have clear responsibilities in the development and active deployment of a strong universal offer of support to children and young people with SEND in their settings. They are expected to proactively collaborate with their system partners, including local authorities and ICBs, drawing on up-to-date understanding of the needs of children and young people in their settings to deliver consistent and robust support, particularly for the most commonly occurring and growing areas of need.

In the long term, MATs and schools will work together to pool some funding from their Inclusion Share for a more collaborative, efficient system to meet needs across their group and allow for better sharing of expertise and resources across an area. Local school groupings will need to be actively engaged with the local authority and Integrated Care Board. We will look to local authorities and their partners to shape the formation of groupings in their areas and have an oversight role for

these groups. In designing local systems, local authorities, MATs, schools and other system partners should start to consider how they might integrate school groups into the bigger picture, to work closely with their Experts at Hand and wider reform offer to provide a comprehensive SEND system.

We would like to work with school and local authority partners to understand how these groups are best structured while we move long-term to a system where all schools are part of strong groups. Guidance relating to school groups and pooled funding will be published in due course.

Core minimum requirements

Local area partnerships will be expected to clearly and succinctly set out in their plan:

Effective Practice - Universal Offer

- Proposal to co-develop, and regularly refresh, a partnership-wide universal offer agreement with schools, MATs, early years settings and post-16 providers which will be underpinned by up-to-date, needs-based data and signed off by the local authority, ICB, MAT and school representatives and Parent Carer Forum (PCF). The agreed universal offer should draw on approaches that will be set out in the National Inclusion Standards.
- Evidence of the processes and mechanism through which MATs and PCFs are engaged in the development of the universal offer.
- How early intervention services will be strengthened, with enhanced mainstream support to prevent escalation of need.
- How a strengthened universal offer will support mainstream settings to meet the most commonly occurring and growing areas of need. This should include how well evidenced early intervention approaches focused on speech and language (e.g. ELSEC[3]/NELI[4]), autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and social, emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMH), could be deployed.

[3] Early Language Support for Every Child
[4] Nuffield Early Language Intervention

- How a strengthened universal offer and group level specialist support will reduce escalation into out-of-area placements with significant travel-assistance requirements.

Early Years (plans should align with LA Best Start in Life plans)

- Proposal for assessing 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; and (c) any local gaps for children with complex and emerging needs and plan to address these including the role of wider partners such as Best Start Family Hubs.
- Proposal to improve early years identification and intervention strategies, including the role of Best Start Family Hubs.
- Proposal to strengthen transitions from early years to primary school, ensuring effective information flow and timely specialist input.

Post-16

- Proposal to strengthen pathways to adulthood, supporting young people to access education, training, employment and supported internships.
- A clarification of pathways into and out of post-16 settings, informed by consistent information flow and timely, effective specialist support.

Effective Partnerships

- Evidence of effective, shared, partnership leadership and governance across all system partners, with clear and mutually understood accountability arrangements.
- Evidence of formal representation from early years, schools, MATs and further education on partnership boards, with appropriate links to Schools Forums to support coherent engagement across all settings.
- Proposal to underpin partnership working with shared, high-quality data, including joint dashboards and use of a partnership maturity matrix to assess effectiveness.

- How proposed/agreed mechanisms for engaging all schools, early years providers and post-16 providers (including out of area mainstream colleges accessed by local young people with SEND) would support collective responsibility for inclusive practice.
- Proposal to strengthen dispute resolution and decision-making processes so system partners can address issues early and consistently, supported by transparent escalation routes.
- A single named SRO who is part of the leadership team, to provide operational leadership and drive reform across the partnership. The SRO should be a senior local authority official.

Effective Co-production Practices

- Proposal to strengthen co-production arrangements so that parent carer forums are properly resourced and consistently engaged in shaping decision making.
- How the voice of children and young people is captured directly and distinctly from parent voice, with clear evidence of how their views influence decisions.
- How SENDIASS will be used to support parents carers with high quality, independent information and guidance, and how the local area will address variability in service quality where it exists, with reference to the minimum SENDIASS service standards. Please include proposed mitigation to any parental concerns about the perceived independence of SENDIASS within mediation processes.
- Proposal to adopt a minimum co-production benchmark (based on NHSE guidance) and self-assess against it in year one, identifying improvement actions where needed.

Mediation

- A description of local mediation and dispute resolution arrangements, demonstrating how they incorporate the voices of parents and children and young people.

- Proposal to maintain metrics for timeliness, resolution rates and effectiveness to support monitoring and accountability.

Governance

The Local SEND Reform Plan should be a local area partnership plan. The local authority, as the system convener, has an oversight role over the process of preparing, submitting and delivering the overall Local SEND Reform Plan with active participation from all system partners.

Governance arrangement is expected to include active representation from all key partners, including ICBs, PCFs, MATs and schools, with clear roles and accountability. Where local area partnerships involve multiple education partners, including those not always located within their area such as further education colleges, or may commission therapy services from different health providers, they should agree how those institutions/providers can be represented and have a fair voice in decision making.

The local area partnership should agree a single, named Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for the Local SEND Reform Plan and local area transformation who will be responsible for overseeing SEND improvement and reform for the area. The SRO should be a senior local authority official and part of the local area partnership leadership.

The Local SEND Reform Plan should be discussed, agreed, and signed off at the relevant SEND Governance Board. As a minimum, the plan should 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 Services (DCS), the Integrated Care Board NHS Place Director, and the Local Authority Chief Financial Officer (CFO/Section 151 Officer), reflecting the joint statutory responsibilities for SEND across the system.

We expect your Local SEND Reform plan to be aligned with other local strategic plans you are currently developing, including your Best Start local plan. Both plans sit firmly within the government's ambition to improve child development and health

outcomes, and to create a more inclusive, high-quality system of support for all children and young people with SEND. Together, they should provide a coherent local approach to raising outcomes for children, young people and families.

Funding

To deliver our ambition for an inclusive and sustainable SEND system, the Department has secured targeted funding through the Spending Review. Some of this funding will be delivered directly to LAs and ICBs, other funding streams will be delivered to settings and will need to be considered when developing plans.

LA and ICB Funding

Funding	Description
Experts At Hand Offer Funding (for LAs and ICBs)	This funding is provided to support development of an Experts at Hand Offer which provides a defined route for mainstream education settings to access support, including but not limited to Educational Psychology, Speech and Language Therapy, and Occupational Therapy. Rather than relying on individual referrals, the offer enables a whole setting approach to group-level support, tailored guidance, and strategic advice, allowing for earlier and more impactful intervention. The funding will be paid via the Local Inclusion Partnership Grant after June 2026. LA allocations and methodology will be published in Spring 2026.
Transformation Funding **Local Authorities**	Transformation funding should support authorities to deliver the necessary changes to their local systems in line with the Schools White Paper while continuing to deliver effective and efficient services to children and young people with SEND through transition. This could be done through expanding capacity and capability within the Local Authority to deliver the required changes. For example, building data and analytical capability to enable effective monitoring of system performance so that decisions on

	delivery are informed by high quality and good use of data or building project management functions that can organise and sequence work, ensuring efficient and effective deployment of resources. The funding will be paid via the Local Inclusion Partnership Grant after June 2026. LA allocations and methodology will be published in Spring 2026.
Best Start Family Hubs Funding **Local Authorities**	This funding supports the rollout of Best Start Family Hubs across England. Best Start Family Hubs will have a children and family services professional specifically trained in working to support inclusion for children with additional needs.
High Needs Capital Funding **Local Authorities**	This funding is provided to support local authorities to provide places for children and young people with SEND, or who require alternative provision (AP). This funding is expected to fund a transformative expansion of inclusion bases, as well as adaptations to improve the accessibility and inclusivity of mainstream settings, reducing the need for pupils to travel a long way to a special school and the costs of LA arranged transport. It can also fund places in special schools for the most complex needs. More details on this funding and local allocations will be published in Spring 2026.
Inclusive Early Years Fund **Local Authorities**	We expect early years settings to use the Inclusive Early Years Fund to strengthen inclusive practices across the whole setting. This may include freeing up staff time to participate in continuing professional development (CPD), collaborate on inclusive planning, or engage in early assessments. The funding can also support activities such as adapting the curriculum, improving the learning environment, or implementing targeted, evidence-based interventions for groups of children. These approaches aim

	to embed inclusive practice into everyday provision, reducing the need for individual applications or formal diagnoses.

Local areas should consider how these funding streams will be used strategically and effectively to support reform priorities, build capacity, and ensure priority outcomes are realised.

Other Inclusion Funding

We are also investing in mainstream settings to ensure that they are able to meet the needs of more children with SEND effectively.

Funding	Description
Inclusive Mainstream Fund (for Schools, and Post-16 settings)	We expect settings to use this funding to identify commonly occurring, predictable needs such as difficulties with reading or emotional regulation and take meaningful steps to improve everyday teaching and universal provision, so that it works well for all from the outset. Settings will also be able to spend the funding on developing more targeted evidenced-based support offers such as transition support or specific group interventions for those who need them, without the need for as many formal assessments or diagnoses.

Structure of the Local SEND Reform Plan

The Plan is structured into five key sections:

1. **Vision** – What the local area partnership is trying to achieve
   The vision and goals for your local system in line with the national vision set out in the Schools White Paper.

2. **Strategy** – How the local area partnership plans to achieve it

Where the local system expects to be in the next 3 years, its theory of change, roadmap for the next 3 years and delivery plan for the first year.

3. **Monitoring and Evaluation** – How the local area partnership will know delivery is on track

   The processes for tracking progress against milestones and outcomes and reporting to decision-makers.

4. **Governance** – What action the local area partnership will take to stay on track

   The governance and processes for monitoring progress and taking action to ensure delivery remains on track.

5. **Central Government Support** – How we can help the local area partnership

   An opportunity to identify practical support from central government that will help you deliver your plan.

The Local SEND Reform Plan is set out in **Annex A**.

3. Submission, Review, and Monitoring Process

Submission

Local areas are expected to submit the first iteration of their Local SEND Reform Plan by **Friday, June 19, 2026**.

A month prior to final local leadership sign-off and formal submission of Local SEND Reform Plans; SEND and financial advisers will be available to review a final draft of local area plans to flag any significant gaps or concerns, and together with health regional leads and DfE officials, will offer intensive support if they believe a plan is at risk of not meeting the minimum quality threshold. Local area partnerships will then have an opportunity to action these concerns prior to formal submission to the department.

Local area leadership are encouraged to self-assess their plans using the ***Local SEND Reform Plan Quality Assessment Framework*** prior to sign-off and submission.

Further guidance on the submission and review process will be shared closer to the submission date.

Review

DfE and NHS England will use the plans to help identify effective, innovative practice and barriers, and identify how to effectively target support through the period of transformation.

The government will use the ***Local SEND Reform Plan Quality Assessment Framework*** to assess the quality of plans and facilitate access to the High Needs Stability Grant for local authorities.

The department will apply a consistent multi-tier assessment and moderation process to ensure that the review and assessment of plans is rigorous, consistent and fair.

DfE officials, health regional SEND leads, SEND and financial advisers will support local area partnerships in reviewing the plans using the ***Local SEND Reform Plan Quality Assessment Framework*** in the first tier.

Assessment tiers will include Regional Directors and independent senior civil servants from across the department. A SEND Delivery Board chaired by Regions Group Director-General, Tim Coulson, with DfE non-executive directors, DfE Performance and Risk Committee members and Sir Kevan Collins, the Secretary of State's delivery advisor in attendance will sign off final ratings and agree recommendations to the Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State will make the final decision to approve or not to approve a plan with assessment outcomes will be communicated in September

Monitoring

DfE Officials, health regional SEND leads, SEND and financial advisers will support local areas to develop iterative reform plans and, together with the local area

leadership, jointly monitor the implementation of plans as reforms are rolled out.

The purpose of the joint monitoring is to:

i. provide assurance that funding is spent in line with reform priorities and that local area partnerships are working together to co-design and implement key changes to local service delivery, including changes to roles and responsibilities; and
ii. provide assurance that the implementation of reforms is delivering the anticipated changes and outcomes, by rebalancing the system towards early intervention, inclusive education, and sustainable local services.

DfE officials, health regional SEND leads, SEND and financial advisers will join quarterly review meetings with local area partnerships (utilising existing governance forums) to understand implementation progress and provide appropriate support and challenge as needed. Where applicable, these review meetings will be consolidated with other engagement or monitoring meetings from DfE or health regional SEND leads.

Local area leadership and officials are expected to discuss progress against the plan, including:

- Progress against key metrics
- Whether key milestones are on track to be achieved
- Whether risks are being effectively mitigated
- Identifying effective and innovative practice that can be shared; and
- Identifying where additional support may be needed or barriers unblocked.

Local area partnerships are required to provide quarterly data returns to DfE against the selected metrics outlined in the accompanying data template. DfE will, in turn, provide quarterly data reports with visualised analysis and benchmarking that will support local delivery, monitoring, and evaluation.

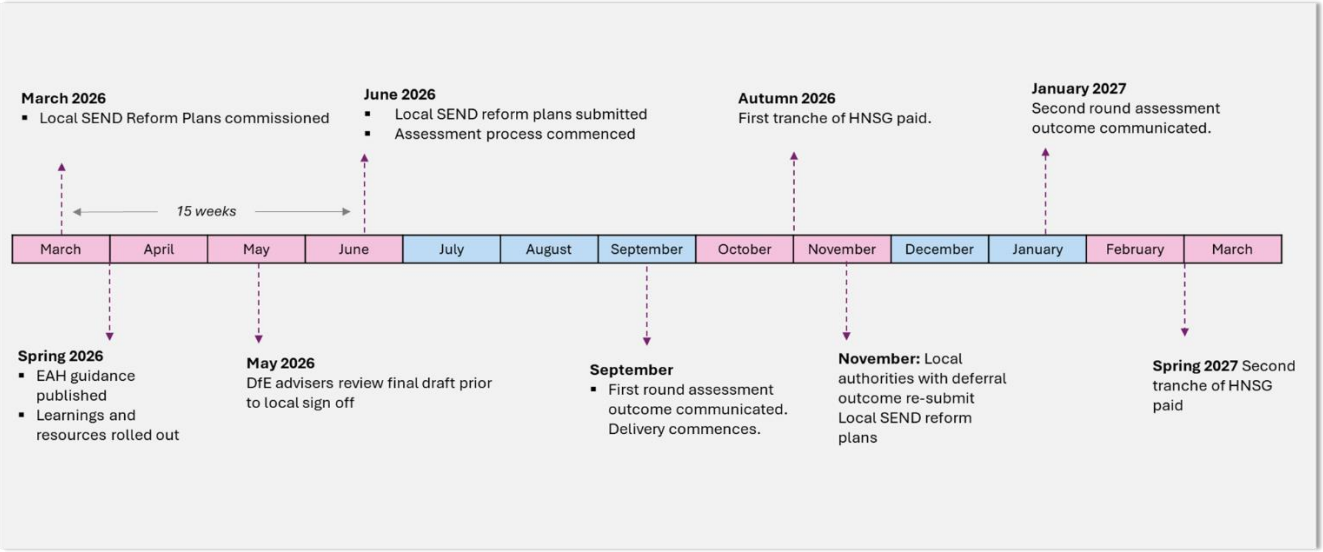
DfE officials and health regional SEND leads will use these data returns and discussions at review meetings, alongside submission of this Local SEND Reform Plan and the Local Partnership Maturity Assessment, as well as Area SEND inspection reports, to assess performance and delivery at the local level. These

assessments and this ongoing monitoring will ensure that support and engagement is best allocated and targeted throughout this period of reform.

High Needs Stability Grant

The government will address long standing SEND financial pressures by covering 90% of local authorities' High Needs-related DSG deficits accrued up to the end of 2025–26 through the High Needs Stability Grant. This grant will be paid subject to each local authority securing the Secretary of State for Education's approval of their local area's Local SEND Reform Plan. Payments will be made in Autumn 2026 for local authorities whose plans are approved. Local authorities whose plans do not meet the threshold for approval will be required to revise their plans to ensure they meet the required threshold, with appropriate support. Local authorities whose plans are subsequently approved will receive the grant payment in Spring 2027. Local authorities will not receive any payments until successful approval of their local area's Local SEND Reform Plan.

Review and payment timeline outlined below.



4. Questions

For any questions relating to this document or the Local SEND Reform Plan more widely, please get in touch with your DfE SEND Lead or contact Implementationsupport.SEND@education.gov.uk

Annex A: Local SEND Reform Plan

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.

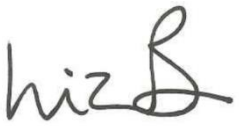
The expectation is that this plan is discussed, agreed, and signed off at your relevant SEND Governance Board. As a minimum, the plan must be formally signed off by the Local Authority Chief Executive (CEO), the Integrated Care Board (ICB) Chief Executive, the Local Authority Director of Children's Service (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: St Helens Council

Name of Integrated Care Board: Cheshire and Merseyside ICB

Local SEND Reform Plan SRO: Jamaila Hussain, Executive Director, Peoples Services, IH/ NHS Place Lead.

Signatories

Role	Name	Signature	Email contact	Date
Local Authority CEO – Delegate (Executive Director of Corporate Services)	Cath Fogarty		CathFogarty@sthelens.gov.uk	18.06.2026
Integrated Care Board CEO	Dr Liz Bishop		Liz.Bishop@cheshireandmerseyside.nhs.uk	17.06.2026
Exec. Director People's Services / Senior Responsible Officer, (SRO)	Jamaila Hussain		JamailaHussain@sthelens.gov.uk	18.06.2026

Director Children's Services	Paula Swindlehurst		PaulaSwindlehurst@Sthelens.gov.uk	18.06.2026
Sec. 151 Officer	Richard Gibson		Richardgibson@sthelens.gov.uk	18.06.2026

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 forecast 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*

Background and Context

St Helens is a metropolitan borough in the north-west of England that is home to approximately 189,000 residents. St Helens Borough Council and NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board, (ICB) operate as a local area partnership with shared accountability for

improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND. Together, we are committed to strengthening a more integrated, inclusive and financially sustainable system that identifies and meets need at the earliest point.

The local authority currently commissions a single provider to deliver education for children and young people who cannot attend school due to social, emotional, mental health or medical needs, as well as those who are at risk of, or permanently excluded from mainstream education.

St Helens experiences socio-economic challenge, particularly in the South and East of the borough. The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI), which measures the proportion of children and young people, (CYP) aged 0-15 living in income deprived families, indicates that 7,588 CYP aged 0-15 (23.7%) in St Helens live in income deprived families. We recognise deprivation not only as a contextual factor, but as a key driver shaping patterns of need, access to support and outcomes. Addressing SEND within St Helens therefore requires a whole-system response that tackles inequalities alongside improving service delivery.

As seen nationally, the local SEND system in St Helens has experienced sustained growth in both demand and volume. Approximately 11% of all CYP aged 0-25 in the local area are identified as having SEND and the number of children with an Education, Health and Care Plan, (EHCP) has more than doubled over the previous 5-year period and at the time of writing, 2,620 CYP, (5% of the CYP population) have an EHCP. This growth reflects increasing levels of need but also highlights systemic pressures in how and when support is accessed, with EHCPs increasingly becoming the primary route to securing provision.

Demand is particularly concentrated in Speech, Language and Communication Needs, (SLCN), Autism, (ASD) and Social, Emotional and Mental Health, (SEMH), which together account for 80% of EHCPs. This pattern reinforces the need to rebalance the system towards earlier identification, targeted support and strengthened universal and targeted provision, reducing reliance on statutory plans.

Rising demand for EHCPs, long waits for diagnostic pathways and increasing use of high-cost Independently Maintained Special School (INMSS) placements continue to place pressure on the system. These challenges are not isolated issues, but interconnected indicators of a system that requires reform to improve responsiveness, equity and sustainability. Our ambition is to move from a reactive, assessment-led model to one that is proactive, needs-led and delivered through strong, inclusive local provision.

Local Area SEND Reform Plan

St Helens' **SEND reform plan** will address these challenges by building a system built on the key principles of early intervention, inclusive practice and strong co-production. This reform plan has **4 agreed objectives** that partners will deliver together**:**

1. ***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***
2. ***Improve capacity and capability of the mainstream and specialist workforce to identify and meet need***
3. ***Improve confidence of children, families, and stakeholders in reform and readiness of the system***
4. ***Stabilise finances and improve value for money***

Early identification and intervention will be strengthened, ensuring CYP get the right support from the right people at the right time, ensuring CYP can access local provision and reducing the need for statutory intervention. This approach is strengthened through alignment with the

Best Start in Life programme and Family Hub model, including the introduction of Best Start Inclusion Practitioners (BSIPs), who will provide targeted early developmental support, build workforce capability, and act as a bridge between Family Hubs and SEND Pathways.

Our “Experts at Hand” model will be central to this approach. The model will strengthen the capacity and expertise of the existing mainstream workforce by providing direct access to specialist advice, alongside a single point of access to a multi-disciplinary team (MDT). This will enable needs to be identified and addressed earlier, within local settings, reducing delays and preventing escalation.

We will build on and scale the existing strengths of our MDT service, Triage, Education Specialist Support and Advice, (TESSA). This will ensure consistent application of a graduated approach across all settings, with co-ordinated specialist input available at the point of need, without requiring a diagnosis or an EHCP. In practice, this will shift the system that relies on escalation to statutory assessment, to one that intervenes early and effectively within mainstream provision.

The confidence of children, families and stakeholders in the reformed system will be strengthened through ongoing co-production work with our parent carer forum, (Listen 4 Change) and the SEND Young People’s Board, (SYP). Clear and consistent communication alongside regular engagement events scheduled throughout the life of the implementation phase will ensure transparency of progress and impact

Improved value for money will be achieved by reducing the increasing reliance on high-cost placements through strengthening inclusive provision. Reform grant funding will support investment in evidence-based approaches aligned to our key areas of need (SLCN, ASD and SEMH) alongside an ambitious and targeted capital programme to expand specialist and resourced provision within the borough. This will create a more responsive and flexible local system, ensuring that children and young people can access appropriate support as close to home as possible.

Success Measures

The partnership will use a range of data, information and insights to measure progress and impact of our reform plans. These will include:
Quantitative Measures:

- A reduction in the number of EHCP assessment requests, with more children’s needs met effectively at SEN Support through a consistent graduated approach.
- Improved early years identification of SEND and increased support through Family Hub pathways without escalation to statutory processes.
- An increase in the number of CYP attending appropriate local mainstream and specialist provision.
- Improvements in educational outcomes and progress for CYP with SEND.

- A reduction in the number of high-cost INMSS placements.
- A reduction in tribunal appeals, reflecting increased confidence and earlier resolution of needs
- Increased and more flexible capacity within local provision, aligned to areas of need (SLCN, ASD, SEMH)
- Reduced waiting times for diagnostic pathways and access to specialist advice, including MDT support
- A reduction of the HNB deficit, demonstrating improved system sustainability.

Qualitative Measures:

- Increased confidence and satisfaction among children, young people and families
- Increased workforce confidence and competence in meeting SEND needs within mainstream settings, supported by the "Experts at Hand" model.
- A consistently applied, high-quality graduated response aligned across education, health and care
- Strong and effective partnership working across the local area, with shared accountability for outcomes

Conclusion

We recognise that delivering high-quality provision for CYP with SEND requires a strong and shared culture of inclusion that places the voices of local children, young people and families at its heart. We are committed to "getting it right early", understanding that timely identification and effective intervention have a lasting impact on outcomes.

Through this reform programme, we will embed a system-wide culture that prioritises early identification, inclusive practice and shared responsibility across partners, ensuring that every child and young person is supported to achieve and thrive.

A confident and highly skilled, multi-agency workforce, supported through our "Experts at Hand" model, will enable the majority of SEND needs to be met effectively within local mainstream provision, wherever appropriate. This will reduce reliance on statutory processes and ensure that children and young people receive timely, specialist-informed support in their local community.

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

The St Helens SEND Local Area partnership has **4 agreed strategic goals:**

1. **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.**

We will deliver a system in which the majority of children and young people with SEND have their needs met effectively within mainstream provision, supported by high-quality teaching, inclusive practice and timely access to specialist advice. This will ensure that support is provided at the earliest point, improving outcomes and reducing the need for escalation to statutory processes.

A strong and inclusive universal offer will be underpinned by graduated layers of additional support that can be accessed quickly and flexibly. Through jointly commissioned, locality-based multi-disciplinary teams, education, health and care professionals will work together to provide coordinated, specialist-informed support within local settings, ensuring equity of access across the borough. Early identification and intervention in early years will be delivered through the Best Start in Life Programme and Family Hubs, with Best Start Inclusion Practitioners providing targeted support, strengthening SEND identification and improving transitions into education settings.

Targeted investment will strengthen the ability of schools and settings to deliver inclusive environments, including improved access to appropriate physical spaces and resources. Alongside this, we will continue to expand local authority-maintained specialist and resourced provision, ensuring that children and young people with the most complex needs can access high-quality support within their local area.

The adoption of a locality-based model will enable stronger operational partnership working across, education, health and care, including early years, schools, post-16 providers, Best Start Family Hubs, Listen 4 Change and local health services. This integrated approach will

improve the experience of children, young people and families, increase confidence in local provision and reduce reliance on high-cost placements.

2. **Improve capacity and capability of the mainstream and specialist workforce to identify and meet need.**

Partners will work together to strengthen the capacity, confidence and expertise of the workforce to meet the most commonly occurring SEND needs, particularly SLCN, ASD and SEMH. Evidence-based, whole-school approaches will be jointly commissioned and embedded across early years, schools and post-16 providers, ensuring a consistent and high-quality approach to inclusion across all localities.

Mainstream settings will have access to a single route for specialist advice and support through a locality-based 'Experts at Hand' model, building on the existing TESSA service. This will provide timely, consultative multi-disciplinary input at the point of need, enabling earlier identification and intervention without the need for diagnosis or escalation to statutory processes.

The EaH model will include integration with the Best Start Family Hub network, with Best Start Inclusion Practitioners operating as part of the wider multi-disciplinary system. These roles will:

- Support earlier identification (0-5)
- Delivery evidence-based interventions
- Provide coaching to early years workforce
- Act as a bridge into SEND pathways and triage processes

This combined approach will strengthen the universal offer while ensuring that specialist expertise is used more effectively at scale. As a result, workforce confidence and capability will increase, reliance on individualised specialist interventions will reduce, and more children and young people will have their needs met successfully within mainstream provision.

3. **Improve confidence of children, families and stakeholders in reform and readiness of the system.**

We will engage with our CYP and families, through Listen 4 Change and SYP to co-produce a system that is transparent, responsive and trusted by all stakeholders.

Children, young people and parent carers will continue to play a central role in governance, including representation on the Local Area SEND Partnership Board, ensuring accountability for the delivery and impact of this reform plan.

Improved confidence will be driven by a more responsive system in which needs are identified and met earlier, communication is clear and consistent, and support is accessible without unnecessary delay or escalation. Progress and impact will be shared regularly through structured stakeholder engagement events and other feedback mechanisms.

Service users will report improved experiences, outcomes and satisfaction through surveys, local offer feedback and regular L4C/SYP “Keep In Touch” / forum meetings.

As confidence in the local offer grows, this will be reflected in improved experiences and satisfaction alongside a reduction in requests for statutory assessments and tribunal appeals.

4. **Stabilise finances and improve value for money.**

We will deliver a more financially sustainable SEND system by strengthening inclusive mainstream provision and improving access to high-quality local support. This will reduce reliance on high-cost independent placements and ensure that resources are used more effectively to meet need earlier.

A locality-based delivery model will enable more integrated working across education, health and care, aligning key strategic programmes to maximise impact and reduce duplication. Investment in local provision, including mainstream capacity and specialist support, will increase sufficiency and reduce demand for out-of-area placements and associated transport costs.

By improving access to specialist advice through the “Experts at Hand” model and reducing reliance on diagnostic pathways, we will ensure more efficient use of specialist workforce capacity.

Overall, this approach will reduce pressure on the High Needs Block, delivery improved value for money and support a more sustainable system, while improving outcomes for children and young people.

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	Where we will be in the next 3 years
Strengthening inclusion across education settings **What we will do:** • Establish a consistent, system-wide baseline of capacity and capability across mainstream settings ensuring that the most commonly occurring SEND needs can be met without escalation.. • Embed a consistent graduated response across early years, schools and post -16 providers. • Ensure all settings are equipped to deliver inclusive learning environments, including appropriate physical adaptations, so that children and young people can access education in their local community. • Deliver local sufficiency as a core system principle, ensuring that a continuum of provision is available within the borough and reducing reliance on out-of- area and high-cost placements. • Establish and expand the universal and targeted support offer through the development of the Experts at Hand, (EaH) model providing a single, consistent route to multi-disciplinary specialist support that is accessible at the point of need and without reliance on diagnosis or statutory processes. • Embed evidence -based approaches as standard practice across all settings, jointly commissioned and applied consistently to address the key drivers rather than delivered as discrete interventions. • Redesign the deployment of specialist expertise through a locality-based, consultative model. **Enablers:** • Targeted capital investment via Inclusion funding allocation to improve inclusive environments across all settings and to deliver improved local sufficiency. • A shared, system-wide approach to screening, tracking and outcomes monitoring will enable consistent identification of need, early	St Helens faces significant socio-economic challenge, with deprivation concentrated in the South and East of the borough. The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) indicates that 7,588 children aged 0–15 (23.7%) live in income-deprived families. This has a direct impact on patterns of need, access to support and outcomes for children and young people (CYP) with SEND, reinforcing the importance of a system that can respond early and equitably. As seen nationally, the SEND system in St Helens has experienced sustained growth in both demand and complexity. Approximately 11% of CYP aged 0–25 are identified as having SEND, and the number of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) has more than doubled over the past five years, with 2,620 CYP (5% of the population) now supported through statutory plans. Demand is concentrated in Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN), Autism (ASD) and Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH), which together account for 83% of EHCPs. This reflects a system in which needs commonly experienced across the population are not yet being consistently met within mainstream provision at an early stage. As a result, the current system is characterised by: • increasing reliance on statutory assessment to secure support • variability in the quality and consistency of inclusive practice across settings • delayed access to specialist advice due to thresholds, waiting times and diagnostic pathways • growing dependence on high-cost and out-of-area specialist placements These factors combine to create a system that is often reactive rather than preventative, where support is accessed following escalation rather than delivered at the earliest point of need. This places pressure on specialist services, reduces system responsiveness and contributes to rising financial pressures within the High Needs Block. While there are strong foundations in St Helens, including established services such as TESSA and positive examples of inclusive practice, these are not yet operating as part of a fully integrated, consistent system. Current arrangements can be fragmented, with variation in access, experience and outcomes for children, young people and families.	Over the next three years, the SEND system in St Helens will be transformed in line with four key principles that underpin our vision: early intervention, inclusion, partnership and sustainability. The system will operate as a coherent, integrated model, ensuring that children and young people receive the right support, at the right time, in the right place. • **CYP will receive support to achieve and thrive through more inclusive settings, and stronger local partnerships:** The majority of children and young people with SEND have their needs met within mainstream provision, supported by a consistently strong universal offer and embedded inclusive practice across all settings. High-quality teaching, alongside early access to specialist-informed support, means that needs are identified and addressed without delay. . The Experts at Hand model is operating as the core delivery infrastructure in the system, with all settings have a single, consistent route to multi-disciplinary specialist advice. Support is accessible at the point of need, with no reliance on diagnosis or escalation to statutory assessment. Education settings are equipped to deliver inclusive environments, supported by targeted capital investment and a strengthened local offer. Local authority-maintained specialist and resourced provision is sufficient and responsive with children and young people with the most complex needs accessing appropriate support within their local area. A locality-based delivery model is integrated across education, health and care meaning there is a coordinated and consistent support within communities. • **There will be improvements in the capacity and capability of the mainstream and specialist workforce to identify and meet need:** The workforce across early years, schools and post-16 provision is confident, skilled and accountable for meeting SEND needs. There is a shared understanding of inclusive practice and a consistent approach to delivering the graduated response across all settings.

intervention and real-time understanding of impact across the partnership • Joint Commissioning Framework across the LA and ICB to ensure evidence-based approaches are embedded across the system • TESSA will transition into a locality-based "Experts at Hand" model, providing timely, proactive access to specialist support at the point of need. **Access to specialist support and local placements** **What we will do:** • Specialist MDTs will be jointly commissioned with the ICB and deployed as part of a locality-based model. • Expansion of local authority maintained specialist and resourced provision to continue. • Use expertise from EaH/ existing specialist provision to develop programmes of in-reach/outreach to support mainstream inclusion. • Scale the EaH offer, providing a single point of access for providers. • Complete 'SEND Audit' of each locality area to inform development of models of support. • Use a central children's services commissioning hub to improve oversight / ensure VFM regarding INMSS provision. **Enablers:** • A shift towards a locality-based delivery model. • Structured CPD/ Supervision frameworks. • Capital investment to expand the capacity of maintained specialist provision. • EaH Funding allocation • Joint commissioning with ICB to develop EaH **System leadership, local partnership collaboration and co-production** **What we will do:** • Ensure clear governance and accountability via the SEND Partnership Board and named SRO.	Aspiration: In line with the national vision set out in the Schools White Paper, the partnership recognises the need to move towards a system that is: • Early – where needs are identified and met without delay • Local – where children and young people can access support close to home • Fair – where all settings are able to meet the most common needs • Effective – where practice is evidence-based and consistently applied • Shared – where education, health and care partners operate as a single system The current configuration of services does not consistently deliver against these principles. In particular, there is a need to reduce reliance on escalation and statutory processes, improve consistency of the graduated response and strengthen inclusive practice across all settings. The partnership has a clear, shared ambition to shift practice upstream, moving from a model based on referral and individual response to one that provides earlier consultation, coaching and intervention at a system level. Central to this transformation is the development of a locality-based "Experts at Hand" (EaH) model, building on the existing strengths of the TESSA service. EaH will operate as the core delivery infrastructure of the system, providing all education settings with a single, consistent route to multidisciplinary specialist advice and support. This will enable needs to be identified and addressed earlier, without reliance on diagnosis or escalation to statutory assessment. By shifting from a referral-led model to a consultative, locality-based approach, specialist expertise will be deployed proactively and at scale, strengthening workforce capability and embedding inclusive practice within mainstream settings. Strategic Context The partnership recognises that this reform programme must deliver sustainable system change, rather than creating additional layers of provision.	Evidence-based approaches addressing SLCN, ASD and SEMH are embedded as standard practice across the system, reducing variation and ensuring that the most prevalent needs are met effectively within mainstream provision. Through the Experts at Hand model, specialist expertise is deployed through consultative, locality-based approaches, building capacity and capability across the system. As a result, reliance on individualised specialist interventions and statutory processes has reduced significantly, with more needs being met earlier and within universal provision. . • **The confidence of CYP, Families and Stakeholders in the reform and readiness of the system will have significantly improved:** The SEND system is now experienced as transparent, responsive and accessible. Children, young people and families report increased confidence in the local offer, with improved experiences and outcomes. Co-production is embedded at all levels of the system. Children, young people and parent carers play a central role in shaping, delivering and reviewing services, supported by strong representation within governance structures, including the SEND Local Area Partnership Board. Clear and consistent communication ensures that stakeholders understand how the system works and how to access support. This has resulted in increased satisfaction and trust, reflected in a sustained reduction in requests for statutory assessment and tribunal appeals. • **There will be a Stabilisation of financial pressures, and improvements in terms of Value for Money:** The adoption of a locality-based delivery model ensures effective joint working between delivery partners. The objectives of key strategic agendas, (Families First, Cradle to Career, Best Start in Life) are aligned, and efficiencies have been identified and realised.

• Establish 3 task and finish groups, (aligned to the 4 objectives) to report to the SEND Partnership Board. • Strengthen the monitoring of impact and progress via the production of an integrated local authority and ICB SEND Data dashboard. • Ensure consistent communication to wider stakeholders via a series of scheduled engagement events. • Ensure the experience of stakeholders and service users is captured via regular forum and Keep in Touch meetings. **Enablers:** • Clear governance structures with agreed TOR, accountability and escalation routes. • Integrated local authority / ICB SEND Data dashboard. • Additional capacity and resource to support wider engagement and co-production. • Engagement and support for task and finish activities for all partners. **<u>Encouraging inclusive culture and behaviours</u>** **What we will do:** • Strengthen the inclusive baseline to ensure the most prevalent local SEND needs can be met, (re-establish the expectations for the Universal and Targeted Offers). • Ensure consistency in approaches by developing a cross-sector approach to workforce development. • Adopt a locality-based delivery model that is aligned with wider strategic agendas, (Families First, Best Start In Life etc). • Tilt to a consultative, group-based model of specialist support and advice for localities to ensure greater impact and efficiency. • Ensuring specialist support and advice can be accessed in a timely manner and irrespective of diagnosis. • Use existing specialist expertise to support inclusive mainstream practice via programmes of in-reach/outreach. • Ensure timely access to a co-ordinated MDT approach where this is required via the EAH model. **Enablers:** • Consistent, system-wide engagement.	Inclusion funding will therefore be used to redesign and replace elements of the current system, ensuring that improvements to early intervention, inclusive practice and access to specialist support are embedded beyond the life of the programme. This will enable St Helens to transition from a system characterised by rising demand and reactive responses, to one that is proactive, inclusive and financially sustainable, delivering better outcomes and experiences for children and young people with SEND.	The SEND system now operates on a more sustainable financial footing, with resources focused on early intervention, inclusive practice and local provision. The strengthened capacity of mainstream settings, alongside improved access to specialist, consultative advice through the Experts at Hand model, has reduced demand for statutory assessment and eased pressure on diagnostic pathways. Specialist capacity is now used more effectively, supporting children and young people earlier and at a system-wide level. Increased availability and quality of local provision has significantly reduced reliance on high-cost independent placements and associated home-to-school transport costs. A locality-based delivery model has enabled closer alignment between education, health and care commissioning, reducing duplication and improving efficiency. As a result, financial pressures within the High Needs Block have stabilised, demonstrating improved value for money while delivering better outcomes for children and young people.

• Inclusion Funding • Capital Investment • EaH Funding		
Success Measures	**Baseline**	**Target Metrics**
Strengthening Inclusion across educational settings • 20% reduction in requests for EHCNA with more needs met effectively at SEN Support • 10% Increase in the number of CYP attending local provision • 10% reduction number of CYP EOTAS • 20% reduction number CYP with EHCP placed in high-cost INMSS • Increased attendance rates for pupils with SEND • Improved attainment, progress and & Outcomes for CYP with SEND • Increase Number of settings recognised as "Communication Friendly Spaces" • Increased Number of settings received PATHs Programme **Access to specialist support and local placements.** • Increase in early years identification rates of emerging SEND need. • Increase in capacity of maintained specialist and resourced provision. • Increase in referrals from Family Hubs into the EaH model. • Increase number of CYP without EHCP supported by EP • Reduction in EHCNA for children aged 0-5 • Increase number of CYP without EHCP supported by SaLT • Increase number of CYP at SEN Support supported by OT. • Increased number of settings accessing specialist outreach and in-reach support	**Strengthening Inclusion across educational settings** • Number requests for EHCNA - 806 • % of CYP with EHCP in Mainstream – 58.8% • Number of CYP EOTAS - 23 • Number CYP with EHCP in INMSS - 300 • Attendance of pupils with SEN - • Attainment & Outcomes for CYP with SEN - • Number of settings recognised as "Communication Friendly Spaces" - 20 • Number of settings received PATHs Programme - 16 **Access to specialist support and local placements.** • Capacity of maintained specialist provision. - 554 • Number of CYP without EHCP supported by EP - 8 • Number of CYP without EHCP supported by SaLT - 1692 • Number of CYP without EHCP supported by OT - 220 • Number of schools accessing specialist outreach - 15 • Number of schools accessing EaH / TESSA for specialist support and advice - 71 • Capital spend on provision - £4,335 **System leadership, local partnership collaboration and co-production.** • Number of parents, carers and CYP engaging with annual SEND survey. - 302 • Feedback from annual survey published on local offer - • Number of Tribunal appeals. - 107 • Attendance at wider stakeholder engagement events - • Overall satisfaction score given by service users. – 2.11 / 5 **Encouraging inclusive culture and behaviours.** • Number of settings accessing EaH for specialist support and advice. - N/A	**Strengthening Inclusion across educational settings** • Reduction in requests for EHCNA (with more needs met at SEN Support) • Increase in % of CYP with EHCPs educated in mainstream settings • Reduction in number of CYP accessing EOTAS • 20% reduction in number of CYP with EHCPs in INMSS placements • Improved attendance rates for pupils with SEND • Improved attainment, progress and outcomes for CYP with SEND • Increase in the proportion of settings demonstrating strong inclusive practice e.g. "Communication Friendly Spaces" - • Number of settings received PATHs Programme. **Access to specialist support and local placements.** • Increase in capacity of maintained specialist and resourced provision (minimum 6%) • Number of CYP without EHCP supported by EP • Number of CYP without EHCP supported by SaLT • Number of CYP without EHCP supported by OT. • Number of schools accessing specialist outreach • Number of schools accessing EaH / TESSA for specialist support and advice • waiting times for access specialist advice and MDT support • sufficiency of local provision through increased targeted, capital investment **Local partnership collaboration and co-production.** • Number of parents, carers and CYP engaging with annual SEND survey and co-production activity. • Regular publication of feedback and system performance eon the local offer • Number of Tribunal appeals and disputes

• Number of schools accessing EaH / TESSA for specialist support and advice • Overall increase in capital investment in local provision, aligned to sufficiency and need rather than reactive demand **System leadership, local partnership collaboration and co-production.** • Increased engagement of children, young people and families in system design and feedback (e.g. SEND survey participation) • Transparent publication of feedback and system performance through the Local Offer, including the annual survey outcomes. • Reduction in the number of tribunal appeals and disputes • Increased participation in partnership engagement and co-production activity • Improved overall satisfaction scores from children, young people and families **Encouraging inclusive culture and behaviours.** • Increase in number of children identified with emerging needs through Family Hubs and supported without escalation to statutory processes. • Increased proportion of settings regularly accessing EaH for specialist advice and support • Increased use of specialist in-reach and outreach to support mainstream inclusion • Increased levels of early help and early intervention activity across the system • Improved workforce confidence and competence in meeting SEND needs (measured through surveys/feedback)	• Number of settings accessing specialist in-reach/outreach. – 15 • Level of Early Help Activity	• Attendance at wider stakeholder engagement events. • Overall satisfaction score given by service users. **Encouraging inclusive culture and behaviours.** • Number of settings accessing EaH for specialist support and advice. • Number of settings accessing specialist in-reach/outreach. • Increase in Level of Early Help activity

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.'*

Delivery Strategy

The St Helens Local Area Partnership will deliver SEND reform through a clearly articulated theory of change that explains how investment, system redesign and workforce development will lead to improved outcomes, reduced demand for statutory processes and a more financially sustainable system.

The current system is characterised by:

- increasing reliance on Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) to secure support
- delayed access to specialist advice due to thresholds and diagnostic pathways
- variation in the quality and consistency of inclusive practice across settings
- increasing use of high-cost and out-of-area specialist provision

This reflects a system where support is often accessed late and at crisis point.

We will shift from this model to one that is early, needs-led and delivered through inclusive mainstream provision, by making four fundamental system changes:

1. Strengthening the universal and targeted offer (early identification and prevention)

We will:

- establish a consistent, system-wide graduated response across all settings
- embed evidence-based approaches (SLCN, ASD, SEMH) into everyday practice
- introduce early identification pathways through schools, early years and Family Hubs
- explore the use of digital and AI-enabled tools, where appropriate, to support earlier identification of need, including screening, pattern recognition and decision-support for practitioners.

How this will work in practice:

- needs are identified earlier through consistent screening and practitioner confidence
- more children are supported effectively at SEN Support
- reliance on escalation to statutory assessment is reduced

Expected outcome:

- a reduction in requests for EHCP assessments
- improved outcomes through earlier intervention
- increased confidence of families in the universal offer

2. Establishing Experts at Hand (EaH) as core system infrastructure

We will:

- transition the existing TESSA model into a locality-based “Experts at Hand” model
- provide all settings with a single, consistent route to multidisciplinary support (EP, SaLT, OT, etc.)
- shift specialist input from referral-based to consultative, group and system-level support

As part of this mode, we will test the feasibility of using digital and AI-supported tools to enhance triage, streamline access to advice, and support practitioners in identifying appropriate interventions at the earliest stage.

How this will work in practice:

- specialist expertise is deployed earlier and at scale, rather than through individual referrals
- practitioners are supported to meet needs directly within mainstream settings
- thresholds and diagnostic pathways are no longer the primary access point to support

Expected outcome:

- increased number of children supported without EHCPs
- reduced waiting times for specialist advice
- more efficient use of specialist workforce capacity

3. Reconfiguring workforce capacity and capability

We will:

- implement a system-wide workforce development programme linked to EaH
- deploy multidisciplinary professionals through locality clusters and Family Hub networks
- build practitioner confidence through coaching, modelling and supervision

How this will work in practice:

- mainstream practitioners gain the confidence and skills to meet common needs
- fewer cases require escalation to specialist or statutory pathways
- specialist staff spend less time on assessments and more time supporting schools and practitioners directly, including exploring the use of AI-supported tools to support the drafting of high-quality EHCP documentation and improve consistency and timeliness.

Expected outcome:

- increased workforce capability across all settings
- reduced dependence on individualised specialist intervention
- improved consistency of inclusive practice across the borough

4. Aligning system resources to early intervention and local provision

We will:

- invest in mainstream inclusion through capital and revenue funding
- expand local specialist and resourced provision where required
- align SEND reform with Best Start in Life, Family Hubs and Families First programmes

How this will work in practice:

- more children can access appropriate support locally
- demand for high-cost independent placements and transport is reduced
- resources are redirected from reactive provision to early intervention

Expected outcome:

- reduction in high-cost placements
- improved value for money
- stabilisation of High Needs Block pressures

Taken together, these changes will deliver a whole-system shift:

Current System	**Future System**
Late identification	Early identification
Referral-based support	Consultative support
Diagnosis-led access	Needs-led access
Specialist dependency	Mainstream capability
Escalation to EHCP	Needs met at SEN support

Use of data and feedback to drive improvement

This theory of change will be supported by a strong approach to monitoring and review. Progress will be tracked through an integrated LA-ICB data dashboard, alongside regular review of key indicators such as EHCP demand, SEN Support numbers, waiting times and placement trends. This insight will be complemented by ongoing feedback from children, young people and families to ensure the system remains responsive to lived experienced.

This approach will enable the partnership to identify emerging pressures at an early stage, continuously refine delivery in response to what is working, and make informed, evidence-based commissioning decisions that support long-term system sustainability.

This approach is informed by the findings of the Local Partnership Maturity Assessment, which highlighted both strengths and areas for development within the current system. It identified strong foundations in existing services, such as TESSA, alongside gaps in early intervention and inconsistencies in practice across settings. It also highlighted growing pressures in specialist capacity and the wider workforce.

In response, the local reform programme focuses in building what is already working well, whilst systemically addressing these gaps and pressures. This includes scaling effective approaches across the system and strengthening sustainable workforce capability to support long-term improvement and resilience.

Delivery Model and Workstreams

The delivery of this reform programme will be coordinated through three multi-agency workstreams:

1. Finance and Resource
2. Performance and Data
3. Universal Offer and Experts at Hand

These workstreams are interdependent and collectively ensure that workforce capability, system oversight and resource allocation are aligned to deliver sustained system change. Their delivery is reliant on strong engagement across all partners, with leaders in education, health and social care demonstrating a shared commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

Governance and Accountability

Governance is provided through the SEND Partnership Board, which maintains oversight of delivery and ensures collective accountability across the local area. Workstream leads report regularly to the Board, enabling:

- strategic alignment of priorities
- collaborative and evidence-informed decision-making
- clear accountability for delivery and outcomes

A standing agenda item on data, performance and impact ensures that progress is continuously reviewed and that reform remains focused on improving outcomes, experiences and value for money.

Children, young people and parent carers are equal partners within governance arrangements. Representation from Listen for Change (L4C) and the SEND Young People's Forum (SYP) ensures that co-production is embedded in decision-making at the highest level.

The local governance arrangements also ensure that the SEND Partnership Board and the Best Start in Life programme board are aligned, providing shared oversight of early intervention priorities and outcomes.

Data, Performance and Continuous Improvement

System reform is underpinned by a strong focus on data-driven improvement.

An integrated Local Authority and ICB SEND data dashboard brings together quantitative and qualitative data, enabling:

- real-time monitoring of progress and impact
- identification of areas for development and emerging system pressures
- triangulation of insight to inform commissioning decisions and service redesign

Over time, we will explore opportunities to enhance this through advanced analytics and AI-supported insights to better predict demand, identify emerging needs and target early intervention.

This ensures that delivery is responsive and adaptive, creating a system of continuous improvement. The Performance and Data workstream will further refine these arrangements to strengthen oversight, accountability and impact.

Workforce Development and System Delivery

The success of this reform programme is dependent on a skilled, confident and organised workforce, capable of delivering high-quality support across universal, targeted and specialist levels.

The Universal Offer and Experts at Hand workstream will:

- strengthen inclusive practice across all settings through the consistent application of the graduated response
- embed evidence-based, whole-setting approaches to address the most prevalent needs (SLCN, ASD, SEMH)
- scale the existing TESSA service into a locality-based "Experts at Hand" model, providing consultative, multidisciplinary support at the point of need

This approach will shift the system from:

- a referral-based, individualised model to
- a proactive, consultative model that builds capacity at scale

As a result, more needs will be met earlier within mainstream provision, reducing reliance on specialist and statutory interventions.

Financial Sustainability and Resources

The Finance and Resource workstream will ensure that resources are used strategically and sustainably to support system reform.

Investment will prioritise:

- strengthening inclusive mainstream provision
- improving local sufficiency
- removing barriers to participation for children and young people

Capital funding will support the development of inclusive environments across settings, ensuring that children and young people can access education and support close to home. The partnership has identified a particular need to strengthen provision within secondary settings, particularly in relation to ASD and SEMH, to ensure consistency across phases and reduce reliance on high-cost independent placements.

Improved access to specialist support through the Experts at Hand model will reduce pressure on diagnostic pathways and ensure more effective use of specialist capacity.

A locality-based delivery model will enable alignment across key strategic agendas (including Families First, Cradle to Career and Best Start in Life), reducing duplication and improving efficiency. This will support a transition to a more sustainable High Needs system, delivering improved value for money. This delivery model will integrate SEND reform with the Best Start in Life programme, ensuring Family Hubs and BSIPs form a core component of early intervention pathways and workforce development across the system.

Co-production and Stakeholder Engagement

Co-production is central to the delivery of reform in St Helens and is underpinned by a formal Partnership Co-Production Agreement.

The partnership works closely with:

- Listen for Change (L4C)
- SEND Young People's Forum (SYP)

These groups are representative of the local SEND population and play an active role in shaping system design, delivery and evaluation. Their involvement in governance ensures that lived experience directly informs decision-making.

Building on strong co-productive practice established through initiatives such as PINS and AIS, co-production will be further embedded across the system.

Progress and impact will be communicated through:

- regular stakeholder engagement events
- ongoing dialogue with families and professionals
- clear and accessible information via the Local Offer (SEND Information Hub)

This will ensure transparency, build confidence in the system and provide continuous feedback to inform improvement.

Sustaining System Reform

The partnership recognises that reform funding must deliver long-term system change, not additional layers of provision.

All elements of delivery are therefore designed to:

- replace fragmented and reactive approaches
- embed consistent, system-wide practice
- build lasting workforce capability and capacity

This ensures that improvements in early intervention, inclusive practice and access to specialist support are sustained beyond the life of the programme.

4. **Please upload a completed copy of the Local Partnership Maturity Assessment Tool.**
   Local Partnership Maturity Assessment Tool (V7)

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.

St Helens Partnership 3-Year Roadmap:

	2026/27 *Year 1: Design & Develop*	2027/28 *Year 2: Deliver and Build*	2028/29 *Year 3: Embed and Sustain*
Building Blocks of an Inclusive System:	*Designing, scoping and building delivery infrastructure:*	*Wider implementation and establishment of scale:*	*Evaluation, consolidation and refinement:*

Strengthening Inclusion Across Educational Settings	• Agreement of system-wide core expectations for inclusive practice, including communication-friendly environments, sensory-aware classrooms, and trauma-informed approaches
	• Establish a borough-wide baseline of workforce capability, through jointly delivered introductory training from EP, SaLT, OT and inclusion services to support consistent inclusive practice
	• Implement a shared approach to early identification, including universally applied screening and tracking tools to monitor progress and identify need at the earliest stage
	• Establish a consistent, system-wide framework for evidence-based practice, embedding approaches to address key areas of need (SLCN, ASD, SEMH) as part of the strengthened universal offer. This will include established approaches such as:
	  ◦ ELSA/MELSA
	  ◦ EKLAN
	  ◦ PATHS
	  ◦ Attention Autsim
	  ◦ WARMTH/barriers to inclusion
	  ◦ Sensory-based approaches
	• Co-produce and begin embedding a strengthened universal offer, focused on early intervention, inclusive practice and prevention
		• Scale and embed a strengthened universal offer across all settings, ensuring consistent, high-quality inclusive practice is established as the standard
		• Achieve a system-wide, consistent application of the graduated response, with needs identified and addressed earlier and more effectively within mainstream provision
		• Embed a fully operational “Experts at Hand” model at locality level, providing all settings with timely, consultative access to multidisciplinary support without reliance on referral or diagnosis
		• Implement a consistent, system-wide framework of evidence-based practice, with approaches aligned to key areas of need (SLCN, ASD, SEMH) applied across all settings as part of everyday provision
		• Use locality-level intelligence and data to target early intervention and support where it is most needed, reducing variation and addressing emerging patterns of need
		• Embed the proactive use of screening tools and digital resources, enabling more effective early identification, monitoring of progress and self-directed support through the SEND Information Hub
		• Strengthen workforce confidence and capability at scale, with practitioners routinely accessing specialist advice and applying inclusive strategies within mainstream settings
		• Demonstrate early system impact through:
		  ◦ increased numbers of children supported effectively at SEN Support
		  ◦ reduced reliance on individualised specialist interventions
		  ◦ improved consistency of practice across settings
			• A consistent, high-quality graduated response is fully embedded across all settings, enabling needs to be met earlier and resulting in a sustained reduction in requests for statutory assessment and intervention
			• The locality/cluster model is fully embedded and operating effectively, with schools and settings acting as hubs for collaboration, peer support and the sharing of effective inclusive practice
			• The “Experts at Hand” model is established as core system infrastructure, with specialist expertise routinely accessed through consultative approaches, reducing reliance on referral-based pathways
			• Previous fragmented or reactive processes are phased out, with the new model formally adopted as standard system practice across education, health and care
			• There is clear and demonstrable evidence of sustained changes in practice across settings, including widespread use of inclusive approaches and high uptake of digital tools and resources within the universal offer
			• The system demonstrates a sustained reduction in escalation, including:
			  ◦ fewer inappropriate or premature referrals

	• Deliver an initial workforce development programme to support consistent application of the graduated response across all settings
	• Develop a 3-year capital investment strategy to support inclusive environments and improve local sufficiency.
	• Transition TESSA toward a locality-based "Experts at Hand" model, including:
	  • embedding consultative approaches
	  • integrating digital tools and guidance
	  • enabling settings to meet need through in-house capability before escalation
			• increased confidence in meeting need at SEN Support
			• improved consistency in decision-making across settings
			• Continuous evaluation and refinement are embedded, with data and stakeholder feedback used to further strengthen system performance, inclusion and outcomes

Access to Specialist Support and Local Placements	• Establish an Experts at Hand (EaH) governance structure, with clear terms of reference, multi-agency leadership and defined workstreams to drive delivery • Redesign the existing TESSA model into a locality-based "Experts at Hand" model, expanding multidisciplinary input (including therapeutic services) and embedding a consultative, needs-led approach to specialist support • Undertake workforce planning and recruitment, ensuring the capacity and skill mix required to deliver multidisciplinary support at scale • Complete a system-wide mapping of specialist services and provision, including education, educational psychology, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and inclusion services, to establish a clear baseline of capacity and demand • Develop a digital front door for EaH, providing a single, accessible route to multidisciplinary advice and support, reducing barriers to access and enabling earlier intervention • Design and pilot the locality/cluster delivery model, testing integrated working	• Embed and scale locality-based "Experts at Hand" delivery, with regular cluster-based consultation bringing together education, inclusion, EP, SaLT and OT to provide coordinated, multidisciplinary support at the point of need • Transition from referral-led support to consultative, team-around-the-setting approaches, ensuring that specialist expertise is routinely accessible without escalation • Deploy specialist-supported practitioners and assistants within localities to model inclusive strategies in classrooms, building workforce capability and reducing reliance on individualised interventions • Align and integrate digital resources, training and face-to-face support, ensuring consistent access to guidance and reinforcing inclusive practice across all settings • Establish a coordinated specialist provision network, enabling consistent in-reach and outreach across the borough and maximising the impact of specialist expertise within mainstream settings • Continue to expand and strengthen the in-reach/outreach offer, ensuring that specialist provision actively supports mainstream inclusion and earlier intervention • Progress the capital investment programme to improve local sufficiency, increasing availability of appropriate placements	• Timely and equitable access to multidisciplinary specialist support is fully embedded through the Experts at Hand (EaH) model, with all settings able to access advice at the point of need without reliance on referral or diagnosis • Specialist support, including in-reach and outreach, is systematically integrated into mainstream provision, enabling more children and young people to sustain and succeed in local mainstream placements • Specialist expertise is deployed efficiently at scale through locality-based, consultative delivery, maximising impact and reducing reliance on individualised and reactive interventions • The system demonstrates a sustained reduction in escalation to specialist and statutory provision, with more needs being met earlier within universal and targeted support • Local specialist and resourced provision is sufficient, accessible and

	arrangements and refining delivery based on feedback from education settings and partners • Establish a shared EaH data dashboard, enabling real-time monitoring of access, timeliness, reach and impact of specialist support • Undertake a comprehensive sufficiency assessment, identifying gaps in specialist support and placement capacity, including pressures relating to high-cost and out-of-area provision • Begin to strengthen in-reach and outreach from specialist provision, ensuring that expertise is increasingly deployed into mainstream settings to support inclusion and reduce escalation	within the borough and reducing reliance on high-cost and out-of-area provision. • Demonstrate increased reach and timeliness of access to specialist support, with more children and young people supported effectively without the need for statutory processes	responsive, resulting in reduced reliance on high-cost Independent Non-Maintained Special School (INMSS) placements • Improved local sufficiency and placement stability have contributed to a reduction in home-to-school transport demand and associated costs • Continuous evaluation and data-driven refinement ensure that access to specialist support remains timely, effective and aligned to local need
System Leadership, local partnership collaboration and co-production	• Establish clear system leadership and accountability arrangements, including Senior Responsible Officer (SRO), multi-agency workstream leadership and shared partnership ownership of outcomes • Secure formal commitment from Local Authority and ICB leadership, ensuring system-wide alignment and accountability for delivery of SEND reform • Embed a robust governance and reporting framework, with all workstreams reporting into the SEND Partnership Board to enable coordinated, strategic decision-making • Agree baseline measures, success trajectories and risk controls, ensuring progress towards system reform can be effectively monitored and managed • Develop and implement an integrated LA/ICB SEND data dashboard, aligning with agreed success measures and enabling real-time monitoring of performance, impact and system pressures • Strengthen partnership collaboration through alignment of key strategic programmes and priorities, ensuring a coherent and joined-up approach across education, health and care • Establish a structured programme of co-production and stakeholder engagement,	• System leadership is fully established and driving delivery, with the SRO and workstream leads demonstrating measurable impact through regular, outcome-focused reporting to the SEND Partnership Board • The integrated SEND data dashboard is actively informing strategic decision-making, performance management and commissioning, enabling timely identification of pressures and ongoing system refinement • Shared accountability across partners is embedded, with education, health and care leaders working collaboratively to deliver consistent system-wide improvement • Co-production is embedded as standard practice, with children, young people and families actively shaping service development, delivery and evaluation • A structured programme of stakeholder engagement and communication is in place, including a mid-point engagement event, ensuring transparency of progress, impact and system change • Evidence from data and stakeholder feedback is used to refine delivery and strengthen system performance, supporting continuous improvement	• System leadership is fully embedded and consistently articulates a shared vision, driving inclusive practice and improved outcomes across all partners • Mature governance arrangements are operating effectively, with shared accountability across education, health and care for delivering high-quality, evidence-informed practice • Co-production is embedded as the standard way of working, with children, young people and families actively shaping system design, delivery and continuous improvement • Data and performance insight are routinely used to drive decision-making, commissioning and system refinement, ensuring a responsive and self-improving system • Clear, consistent and transparent communication of progress and impact is embedded, strengthening stakeholder confidence and trust in the local SEND system • The system demonstrates sustained partnership effectiveness, with aligned priorities, integrated delivery and collective ownership of outcomes

	aligned to key delivery milestones, ensuring that children, young people and families actively shape system design and delivery		
Encouraging Inclusive Culture and Behaviours	• Undertake a system-wide SEND audit to establish a clear baseline of workforce capacity, confidence and competence, identifying variation in inclusive practice across settings • Develop and begin delivering a coherent, system-wide workforce development offer, focused on embedding inclusive practice and addressing key areas of need (SLCN, ASD, SEMH) as part of everyday provision • Establish a shared understanding of inclusive practice, ensuring that all partners adopt consistent expectations around early intervention, the graduated response and needs-led support • Define localities and clusters and establish networks that support collaboration, peer learning and the sharing of effective inclusive practice across settings • Use insights from the SEND audit and integrated data dashboard to shape locality-level priorities, ensuring that workforce development and support are targeted to areas of greatest need • Begin to embed a culture of shared responsibility for SEND across all partners, with inclusion recognised as a core expectation within mainstream provision	• A shared understanding of core expectations for inclusive practice is embedded across all settings, including communication-friendly environments, sensory-aware classrooms and trauma-informed approaches • Workforce capability is strengthened at scale through consistent access to multidisciplinary expertise, with practitioners applying inclusive strategies as part of everyday teaching and support • Inclusive practice is reinforced through locality-based collaboration and peer learning, with clusters operating as key forums for sharing effective practice and building collective responsibility • Regular, structured consultation within clusters enables practitioners to explore themes and challenges (e.g. EBSNA, autism, neurodiversity), moving away from individual case escalation towards shared problem-solving • A consultative, group-based approach to support is embedded, with settings working collaboratively with inclusion officers, EPs and health professionals to develop practical strategies • Data from the Experts at Hand model and SEND dashboard is used to identify emerging themes, informing targeted workforce development and strengthening the universal offer • Systems and approaches are refined based on stakeholder feedback and performance data, ensuring delivery remains responsive and effective	• Sustainable system delivery is fully established, with all core elements of reform embedded within mainstream funding and operational arrangements
Enablers	• A targeted capital investment strategy to strengthen inclusive learning environments and improve local sufficiency across the system • Experts at Hand (EaH) funding to support the development of multidisciplinary capacity, including recruitment to key specialist roles required for delivery at scale • An integrated Local Authority and ICB SEND data dashboard, enabling real-time monitoring of performance, impact and system pressures • A reviewed workforce development strategy, aligned to embedding inclusive practice and supporting system-wide consistency in meeting need	• Robust, integrated data systems are fully operational, with the SEND dashboard (including EaH metrics) actively informing performance management, commissioning decisions and system refinement • Increased specialist workforce capacity is in place and operational, enabling improved access to multidisciplinary support and delivery of the Experts at Hand model at scale • The joint commissioning framework is embedded and driving delivery, ensuring resources are aligned to early intervention, local sufficiency and evidence-based practice	• Sustainable system delivery is fully established, with all core elements of reform embedded within mainstream funding and operational arrangements • A clear transition from grant-funded activity to business-as-usual delivery is achieved, with resources rebalanced to support early intervention, inclusive practice and local provision • The workforce model is fully aligned to local need, ensuring the right capacity, skills and multidisciplinary

	• A revised joint commissioning framework, ensuring resources are aligned to reform priorities, early intervention and evidence-based practice • A formalised co-production framework, including a Co-production Charter and SEND Young People (SYP) Engagement Agreement, embedding participation in system design and delivery • Clear governance and accountability arrangements, with defined reporting structures to support coordinated, partnership-led delivery • Engagement with regional support networks, enabling access to shared learning, best practice and external challenge • Ongoing support from central government, ensuring alignment to national policy, delivery expectations and reform guidance	• Ongoing capital investment is targeted and responsive to need, strengthening inclusive environments and increasing local provision capacity	expertise are in place to sustain delivery at scale • A mature cycle of evaluation and continuous improvement is embedded, with data, performance insight and stakeholder feedback routinely informing commissioning, service design and system refinement • Residual risks are identified and actively managed, with mitigating actions in place to ensure continued system stability and performance
Success Measures	**Strengthening Inclusion across educational settings** • Number requests for EHCNA - 806 • % of CYP with EHCP in Mainstream – 58.8% • Number of CYP EOTAS - 23 • Number CYP with EHCP in INMSS - 300 • Attendance of pupils with SEN - • Attainment & Outcomes for CYP with SEN - • Number of settings recognised as “Communication Friendly Spaces” - 20 • Number of settings received PATHs Programme - 16 **Access to specialist support and local placements.** • Capacity of maintained specialist provision. - 554 • Number of CYP without EHCP supported by EP - 8 • Number of CYP without EHCP supported by SaLT - 1692		**Strengthening Inclusion across educational settings** • 20% reduction in requests for EHCNA • 10% increase CYP with EHCP in Mainstream • 10% reduction number of CYP EOTAS • 20% reduction number CYP with EHCP in INMSS • Increased attendance of pupils with SEN • Increased Attainment & Outcomes for CYP with SEN • Increase Number of settings recognised as “Communication Friendly Spaces” • Increased Number of settings received PATHs Programme **Access to specialist support and local placements.** • 6% Increase in capacity of maintained specialist provision.

	• Number of CYP without EHCP supported by OT - 220 • Number of schools accessing specialist outreach - 15 • Number of schools accessing EaH / TESSA for specialist support and advice - 71 • Capital spend on provision - £4,335 **System leadership, local partnership collaboration and co-production.** • Number of parents, carers and CYP engaging with annual SEND survey. - 302 • Feedback from annual survey published on local offer - • Number of Tribunal appeals. - 107 • Attendance at wider stakeholder engagement events - • Overall satisfaction score given by service users. – 2.11 / 5 **Encouraging inclusive culture and behaviours.** • Number of settings accessing EaH for specialist support and advice. - N/A • Number of settings accessing specialist in-reach/outreach. – 15 • Level of Early Help Activity		• Increase number of CYP without EHCP supported by EP • Increase number of CYP without EHCP supported by SaLT • Increase number of CYP without EHCP supported by OT. • Increase number of schools accessing specialist outreach • Number of schools accessing EaH / TESSA for specialist support and advice • Overall increase in Capital spend on provision **System leadership, local partnership collaboration and co-production.** • • Increase in number of parents, carers and CYP engaging with annual SEND survey. • Feedback from annual survey published on local offer. • Decrease in number of Tribunal appeals. • Increase attendance at wider stakeholder engagement events. • Increase Overall satisfaction score, (from 5) given by service users. **Encouraging inclusive culture and behaviours.** • Increase in number of settings accessing EaH for specialist support and advice. • Increase number of settings accessing specialist in-reach/outreach. • Increase Levels of Early Help Activity

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**	
Workstream outline – mapped to building block ***Outcome - what you want to achieve with this workstream*** ***Success measures – how you measure progress drawing on metrics from the accompanying data template***	***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?*
Workstream 1: Finance and Resource **Building Block:** **"Access to Specialist Support and Local Placements"** **Outcomes:** ***Mapping of current provision across inclusion and therapy services including EP, SaLT, and OT.***	**Designated Clinical Officer / Assistant Director Education and Learning.**	*Working group of key partners established and reporting format cycle to SEND PB agreed.* *Audit of current service provision undertaken, with DCO leading therapeutic service element.* *Sufficiency data used to support capital investment programme to consider expansion of specialist provisions.* *Q2 Progress report made by lead officer to SEND PB*	1.Capacity of maintained specialist provision. - 554 2.Number of schools accessing specialist outreach - 15 3.Number of schools accessing EaH / TESSA for specialist support and advice - 71	*Initial group of settings to benefit from capital investment identified and feasibility work begins.* *Joint Commissioning opportunities identified and workforce planning initiated.* *Q3 Progress report made by lead officer to SEND PB*	1.Capacity of maintained specialist provision. - 554 2.Number of schools accessing specialist outreach - 15 3.Number of schools accessing EaH / TESSA for specialist support and advice - 71	*Capital investment programme agreed and approved. Date set for commencement of works.* *Review / audit of services complete and recommendations for workforce deployment made.* *Joint commissioning plan agreed and approved.* *Q4 progress report made by lead officer to SEND PB.*	1.Capacity of maintained specialist provision. - 554 2.Number of schools accessing specialist outreach - 15 3.Number of schools accessing EaH / TESSA for specialist support and advice - 71

Indentify potential service gaps/areas for join commissioning. ***Capital investment programme informed by SEND data facilitates expansion of specialist provision.*** **Success measures:** ***Service and provision map completed.*** ***3 – year joint commissioning programme agreed*** ***LA capital investment programme approved and in place.***							
Workstream 2: Performance and Data **Building Block:** **"System Leadership, Local Partnership Collaboration and Co-production"** **Outcomes:** ***Define baseline measures and risk controls*** ***Introduce shared partnership data dashboard to monitor impact of strategy.*** ***Oversee SEND improvement plan*** ***Organise and co-ordinate service user evaluation and engagement.***	**Chair, SEND Partnership Board, (Currently Director of Place).**	*Working group of key partners established and reporting format cycle to SEND PB agreed.* *Baseline set and future impact measures agreed.* *Data dashboard co-production begins – impact measures agreed and dashboard structured accordingly.* *Ofsted findings consolidated and added to reform plans to produce comprehensive SEND development plan.* *Structure and frequency of engagement events agreed.* *Q2 Progress report made by lead officer to SEND PB*	1. Number of parents, carers and CYP engaging with annual SEND survey. - 302 2. Feedback from annual survey published on local offer 3. Number of Tribunal appeals. - 107 4. Attendance at wider stakeholder engagement events - N/A 5. Overall satisfaction score given by service users. – 2.11 / 5	*SEND Improvement plan agreed and implementation commences.* *Initial Integrated data dashboard to be considered by SEND partnership, with comment and feedback shaping further refinements.* *Engagement event delivered for stakeholders and service users.* *Q3 Progress report made by lead officer to SEND PB.*	1. Number of parents, carers and CYP engaging with annual SEND survey. - 302 2. Feedback from annual survey published on local offer - 3. Number of Tribunal appeals. - 107 4. Attendance at wider stakeholder engagement events - 500 5. EHCP Timeliness: 40% 6. EHCNA Requests: 191 this quarter (5% reduction)	*Data Dashboard complete and data monitoring added as a standing item to bi-monthly SEND PB meetings.* *SEND PB consider progress of SEND improvement plan.* *Preparation meetings for Ofsted re-visit commence.* *Engagement event delivered for stakeholders and service users.* *Q4 progress report made by lead officer to SEND PB.*	1. Number of parents, carers and CYP engaging with annual SEND survey. - 350 2. Feedback from annual survey published on local offer - 3. Number of Tribunal appeals. – (10% reduction) 4. Attendance at wider stakeholder engagement events - 500 5. Overall satisfaction score given by service users. – 2.5 / 5 6. EHCP Timeliness 50%

Success measures: ***Impact measures agreed and tracked.*** ***Data Dashboard embedded into SEND PB reporting cycle.*** ***Calendar of engagement events planned for life of reform programme.***			6. EHCP timeliness: 30% 7. EHCNA Requests Baseline: 806				7. EHCNA Requests 766 (5% Reduction).
Workstream 3: Universal Offer / EAH **Building Block:** **"Strengthening Inclusion across Education Settings"** **"Encouraging inclusive culture and behaviours and strengthening inclusion across education settings"** **Outcomes:** ***Identify and cost core evidence-based programmes that will form basis of revised universal offer.*** ***Design the future model for TESSA/EAH so it becomes more consultative and school-facing.*** ***Develop pre-referral tools, digital resources and a stronger local offer for professionals.***	**Assistant Director, Education and Learning.**	*Working group of key partners established and reporting format cycle to SEND PB agreed.* *Data on current evidenced based programmes, e.g. PATHS, PINS considered and shaping of new offer commences.* *Services contribute resources to online resource bank.* *Partners agree revisions required to professionals secti on of Local Offer.* *Digital Front end for TESSA/EAH scoping exercise.* *Q2 Progress report made by lead officer to SEND PB* *Required additional professionals, (including EP, Salt, OT) identified and recruitment cycle initiated.* *Deployment of BSIPs across Family Hubs linked to locality clusters.*	1.Number of schools accessing specialist outreach – 15 2. EP FTE - 7 3. SALT FTE- 17.36 4. OT FTE – 4.4 5.Number of schools accessing EaH / TESSA for specialist support and advice – 71 6. % of CYP with EHCP in Mainstream – 58.8% 8. Number of CYP EOTAS - 23 9. Number CYP with EHCP in INMSS - 300 10. Number of settings recognised as "Communication	*Online Resource bank established and launched.* *Evidence-based programmes identified and commissioning /contract discussions commence.* *Scoping of digital front end continues and potential platforms explored.* *Targeted revisions of professionals section of local offer underway.* *First Professionals recruited to new EaH model* *Clusters agreed for pilot EAH work.* *Q3 Progress report made by lead officer to SEND PB.* *Increase in early years/early help/intervention activity through Family Hub pathways.*	1.Number of schools accessing specialist outreach – 18 (5% increase) 2. EP FTE - 8 3. SALT FTE- 18.36 4. OT FTE – 5.4 5.Number of schools accessing EaH / TESSA for specialist support and advice – 89 6. % of CYP with EHCP in Mainstream – 60 % 8. Number of CYP EOTAS - 23 9. Number CYP with EHCP in INMSS - 371 10. Number of settings recognised as "Communication	*Relevant agreements and contracts in place with providers of evidence-based programmes and schedule of delivery agreed.* *New professionals secti on of local offer ready for go live in new academic year.* *Additional professionals recruited to EaH* *Platform for digital front end identified and ready for pilot new academic year.* *Pilot of EAH model tested in agreed clusters.* *Q4 progress report made by lead officer to SEND PB.*	1.Number of schools accessing specialist outreach – 21 (further 5% increase) 2. EP FTE - 9 3. SALT FTE- 19.36 4. OT FTE – 6.4 5.Number of schools accessing EaH / TESSA for specialist support and advice – 107 6. % of CYP with EHCP in Mainstream – 65 % 8. Number of CYP EOTAS - 20 9. Number CYP with EHCP in INMSS - 442 10. Number of settings recognised as "Communication

Start pilot cluster-based or locality-based working in a limited way. ***Begin workforce planning and recruitment for any additional roles needed to support delivery.*** **Success measures:** ***Suite of programmes to support universal offer identified and ready for roll-out.*** ***New TESSA / EAH model identified and planned.*** ***Digital resource bank developed.*** ***Pilot of new model underway.*** ***Digital front end for TESSA/EAH under development.***		Friendly Spaces" - 20 11. Number of settings received PATHs Programme - 16 12. Number of settings accessing specialist in-reach/outreach. – 15	Friendly Spaces" - 22 11. Number of settings received PATHs Programme - 19 12. Number of settings accessing specialist in-reach/outreach. – 20	Friendly Spaces" - 26 11. Number of settings received PATHs Programme - 22 12. Number of settings accessing specialist in-reach/outreach. – 20
Projected Investment Spend per quarter ***Please specify funding source for each category*** ***Example categories*:** **Programme oversight/additional leadership capacity.** **Workforce** **Recruitment** **Workforce training and development** **Data/Digital** **Total Spend**	**Experts at Hand:** *Increase Workforce, Recruitment and Direct Delivery: £1,146,047.20* *Transformation/Scale of TESSA to cluster model: £143,255.90* *Development of Digital Resource bank: £30,000* *Development of Digital front End: £41,612.95* *Area-wide evidence-based approaches to manage prevalent local needs: £23,871 (x3)* **Anticipated spend per quarter: £477,509.68** **Total: £1,432,529** **Capital Programme:** *Oversight / planning: £50,000* *Feasibility Work: £50,000* *Delivery of Capital works – 2 additionally resourced provisions: £400,000* **Anticipated Spend per quarter: £166,666** **Total: £500,000**			

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.

The first year of delivery will focus on design, development and the establishment of system capacity, ensuring that the partnership has the infrastructure, capability and governance required to deliver sustainable SEND reform.

The partnership will establish the core delivery mechanisms required to enable system-wide change, including the implementation of a locality-based model and the transition of the existing TESSA service into the “Experts at Hand” (EaH) model. Alongside this, a programme of area-wide screening, audit and workforce development will be undertaken to assess and strengthen workforce capability. This will inform the development of a strengthened universal offer, including the identification and embedding of evidence-based approaches to address the key drivers of demand (ASD, SLCN and SEMH), ensuring that support is delivered earlier and more consistently within mainstream provision.

Programme Delivery and Corporate Capacity

The local area partnership has established the organisational and corporate infrastructure required to deliver this reform programme effectively.

Delivery is coordinated through three multi-agency workstreams, aligned to the four building blocks of the reform programme. These workstreams are supported by clear leadership, defined roles and responsibilities, and a structured reporting framework.

The SEND Partnership Board provides strategic oversight and accountability, with bi-monthly meetings enabling:

- review of progress against milestones and outcomes
- identification and management of risks
- alignment of priorities and resources across partners

Each workstream lead is accountable for delivery and provides regular, outcome-focused reporting to the Board. An agreed escalation process ensures that risks and delivery issues are addressed in a timely and coordinated way.

This structure is supported by programme management capacity, enabling effective coordination of activity, prioritisation of resources and alignment across workstreams.

Data, Analytics and Performance Management

A core enabler of Year 1 delivery is the development of robust data and analytics capability.

The partnership is aligning its integrated Local Authority and ICB SEND data dashboard with the agreed success measures, enabling:

- real-time tracking of progress and impact
- identification of emerging system pressures
- evidence-based decision-making and commissioning

The dashboard will bring together both quantitative and qualitative data, including performance against key indicators such as EHCP timeliness and waiting times, alongside service user feedback.

In addition, partners are held to account through a suite of agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), providing a clear line of sight between operational performance and system outcomes.

This approach ensures that data is used not only to monitor delivery, but to inform continuous improvement, service redesign and resource allocation.

Workforce Capacity and Capability

Building workforce capacity and capability is central to delivery in Year 1.

The partnership will:

- undertake system-wide audit and screening activity to understand baseline capability
- deliver a coherent workforce development programme, aligned to inclusive practice and early intervention
- support practitioners to access specialist advice through the EaH model, reducing reliance on referral-based pathways

This will ensure that the workforce is equipped to meet need earlier and more effectively within mainstream provision.

Co-production and Stakeholder Engagement

Co-production is embedded as a core delivery principle.

The partnership will build on established mechanisms for engagement, including regular service-user surveys and feedback processes, ensuring that the experiences of children, young people and families inform ongoing delivery.

Workstream 2 (Performance and Data) will coordinate a programme of regular stakeholder engagement events, aligned to key milestones, to:

- communicate progress and impact
- gather feedback and insight
- strengthen confidence in the system

Feedback will be incorporated into ongoing delivery, ensuring that the reform programme remains responsive and grounded in lived experience.

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.

N/A

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.

The local area partnership will use capital investment as a key enabler of system reform, ensuring that children and young people with SEND can access the right support, in the right place, at the right time. Our approach aligns directly with the core principles of the SEND reforms, with a strong emphasis on mainstream inclusion, early intervention and local sufficiency.

The existing sufficiency and capital strategy has focused on increasing local capacity within mainstream and specialist provision, informed by analysis of demand, patterns of need and system pressures.

Delivery has been undertaken in close partnership with schools and settings, with providers invited to express interest in developing specialist provision, ensuring that expansion is both locally responsive and collaboratively delivered.

This approach has resulted in:

- The development of new specialist inclusion bases within mainstream primary schools, focused on the most prevalent areas of need (ASD, SLCN and SEMH)
- The creation of 32 additional specialist places within mainstream settings from September 2026

- Targeted expansion of maintained special school provision, where needs cannot be met within mainstream inclusion bases

This has contributed to:

- increased local access to suitable provision
- reduced reliance on out-of-borough and high-cost independent placements
- reduced pressures on home to school transport

In addition, investment in maintained provision has enabled the expansion of specialist in-reach and outreach support, strengthening the capacity of mainstream settings and aligning with the Experts at Hand model.

Capital investment will continue to be used to drive system reform, rather than simply increase capacity.

Our approach is based on the principle that:

the majority of children and young people with SEND should have their needs met within inclusive mainstream settings, supported by access to specialist advice and targeted provision where required.

Capital funding will therefore be prioritised to:

1. Strengthen mainstream inclusion

- Develop and expand inclusion bases within mainstream schools, early years and post-16 settings
- Ensure that all children who require access to an inclusion base can do so within their local area
- Improve access to specialist-informed support without requiring placement in specialist settings

2. Improve local sufficiency and reduce travel

- Increase availability of local placements across all phases, including secondary and post-16
- Reduce the number of children requiring out-of-area placements and long-distance travel
- Align provision geographically to ensure equity of access across the borough

3. Enhance the mainstream estate

- Deliver adaptations to existing settings to improve accessibility and inclusivity (e.g. sensory environments, flexible learning spaces)
- Support the use of assistive technology and inclusive design to enable more children to remain in mainstream provision

4. Ensure targeted specialist capacity

- Expand maintained specialist provision only where need cannot be met through mainstream inclusion bases
- Ensure that children and young people with the most complex needs can access high-quality provision within their local area

Next Steps (Year 1 and Beyond)

- Review and refresh the local sufficiency strategy, ensuring full alignment with SEND reform priorities and core minimum requirements
- Resume the capital programme with a strategic focus on the secondary phase, addressing identified gaps in provision for ASD and SEMH and ensuring consistency across phases
- Continue to work with schools, trusts, early years and post-16 providers to identify opportunities to expand inclusion bases, ensuring decisions are based on:
    - local need and demand
    - equity of access
    - value for money
    - impact on transport and system pressures
- Use system-wide provision mapping and professional advice (including OT and SaLT) to inform investment priorities and ensure that environments are designed to meet need effectively
- Align capital investment with wider funding streams (e.g. High Needs Capital, Inclusive Early Years funding), ensuring maximum value and impact

This capital strategy directly supports delivery of the core minimum requirements by:

- enabling early intervention and support within mainstream provision
- ensuring consistent access to appropriate provision across all age phases (0–25)

- supporting the delivery of the Experts at Hand model, through expansion of local provision and outreach capacity
- reducing reliance on statutory processes and high-cost placements

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), Parents and 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.

Stakeholder engagement and co-production are well established in St Helens and form a core component of how the local area partnership designs, delivers and evaluates services. The partnership is committed to ensuring that children, young people and families directly influence system reform, with their feedback actively shaping strategic priorities, commissioning decisions and service design.

The local area benefits from a mature and integrated leadership structure, with strong representation from across the education, health and care system. Established networks, including the Associations of Primary and Secondary Headteachers, special school and alternative provision leaders, and the Post-16 Steering Group, ensure that a wide range of providers contribute to system leadership. This includes further education providers attended by St Helens young people, including those based outside the borough. Representation from the early years sector ensures that engagement reflects a full 0–25 perspective. These partners are embedded within the SEND Partnership Board, providing a clear mechanism for co-design, shared decision-making and collective ownership of reform delivery. In line with the Schools White Paper, this approach supports a strengthening of the role of mainstream settings in meeting SEND need, with consistent expectations and access to specialist support through the Experts at Hand model.

Co-production with children, young people and families is embedded at all levels of the partnership’s work. The partnership works closely with Listen for Change, the parent carer forum, and the SEND Young People’s Forum, both of which are active partners in governance and

are represented on the SEND Partnership Board. This is supported by a formalised Co-production Charter and SEND Young People's Engagement Agreement, ensuring that participation is meaningful, inclusive and accessible. Engagement is further supported through regular forum meetings, community sessions and an annual SEND survey, alongside a programme of wider stakeholder engagement events aligned to key reform milestones. These mechanisms ensure that lived experience informs both the design and implementation of services, and that stakeholders are able to evaluate progress and influence ongoing delivery.

The partnership recognises that SEND reform requires a shift in roles and responsibilities across the system, and is actively supporting this transition. Education, health and care partners are working together to embed a shared understanding of inclusive practice and early intervention, with a clear expectation that mainstream settings will take greater responsibility for meeting need. The introduction of the Experts at Hand model provides a consistent and accessible route to specialist advice, enabling practitioners to address needs earlier and reducing reliance on referral-based systems. Regular communication and engagement ensure that all partners understand these changes, are supported in adopting new ways of working, and are able to contribute to continuous improvement.

Data and feedback play a central role in supporting engagement and accountability. The integrated SEND data dashboard provides a shared evidence base across all partners, enabling transparency in performance, monitoring of outcomes and identification of areas for improvement. Alongside this, feedback gathered through engagement activity is systematically used to inform service design, refine delivery and assess the impact of reform, ensuring that the system remains responsive to the needs of children, young people and families.

The partnership would welcome continued support from the Department for Education to further strengthen engagement and shared learning. In particular, opportunities for peer-to-peer learning with similar local areas, the development of communities of practice and engagement with senior DfE officials at key stakeholder events would support the ongoing development and delivery of the reform programme.

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.

Risk	Impact	Likelihood	RAG	Mitigation	Residual RAG
Workforce: ***Capacity, capability and recruitment pressures.*** Current capacity pressures linked to increases in demand and volume mean that workforce capability and capacity is insufficient to implement the new processes identified in the reform plan	Critical	Possible		• New processes designed to target and alleviate capacity pressures, (e.g. new EaH model will tilt specialist capacity to group/area-based support and advice, unlocking capacity). • A 'SEND Audit' will identify key areas that can be targeted for support and training. • Additional funding will be available to increase the capacity of some key services. • A co-ordinated, cross-agency workforce development plan will build capacity in the system.	
Co-Production: ***Levels of engagement and confidence from service users.*** A loss of service-user "buy-in" and engagement with the reform programme due to general low levels of confidence and mistrust following consultation on national reforms.	Critical	Possible		• Plan for reform has been co-produced with L4C and SYP. • L4C and SYP established as active members of the SEND partnership Board, leading to increased levels of transparency/accountability. • Regular stakeholder engagement sessions built into reform plan to ensure that progress and impact is clearly communicated to wider stakeholders. • Feedback collected via L4C forums and KIT meetings, the SEND information hub and the annual SEND survey will ensure concerns can be identified and	

				addressed early and general levels of confidence can be monitored.	
Collaboration: ***Inconsistent engagement from and collaboration from multi-agency system partners.*** Due to the volume of public sector reform activity, wider system partners have conflicting or unaligned priorities. This could result in fragmented delivery, sustained disruption and budget overrun.	Moderate	Possible		• Clear governance and accountability arrangements through SEND Partnership Board. • Clearly defined roles, (e.g. SRO and Workstream leads) and multiagency workstreams increase visibility and accountability for delivery. • Regular reviews of key performance data through the integrated Data Dashboard. • Support and guidance available from centre and regional learning networks will inform effective interactions with all system partners.	
Data Quality: ***Challenges in accessing/sharing high-quality, accurate data between system partners.*** Inaccuracies, gaps or delays in obtaining high quality data lead to missed opportunities for early identification, effective joint commissioning and performance and impact monitoring.	Critical	Possible		• "Data and Digital" identified as one of the key reform workstreams required. • Integrated LA/ICB SEND data dashboard made available to all partners on bi-monthly basis as part of SEND Partnership Board. • Data-sharing agreements in place with key partners to ensure appropriate levels of access.	
Governance and Oversight: ***Re-organisation and restructure and organisational 'churn'.*** Organisational restructures of both the local authority and ICB lead to a reduction in governance and oversight of the reform plan. This compromises delivery targets and introduces delays and overrun.	Moderate	Possible		• Structures of governance and oversight are well-established and mature. • Partner accountability is clear and agreed in the reform plan. • Planning accounts for a named SRO, with overall responsibility for delivery as well as named multiagency leads for each workstream. • Corporate performance management systems, e.g. oversight and scrutiny panel are sighted on plans for reform.	

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

The delivery of SEND reform in St Helens is taking place within the context of a wider programme of significant national and local reform. The partnership recognises the interdependencies between these agendas and has established arrangements to ensure alignment, mitigate risk and maintain delivery momentum.

The Best Start in Life programme, including deployment of BISPS within Family Hubs, is a critical dependency for delivering early identification, prevention and workforce development within the local SEND reform programme. This dependency is being actively managed through the integration of BSIPs within locality-based delivery models and the EaH approach, ensuring that Family Hubs act as a key success point for early identification and intervention. BSIPs will contribute to early screening, targeted support and workforce development, while also strengthening pathways into SEND services through coordinated triage and multi-agency working.

Joint governance arrangements and shared strategic priorities across SEND and Best Start in Life programmes ensure alignment of delivery, enabling a cohesive early intervention system.

A key dependency relates to ongoing NHS reform and the reorganisation of the Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board (ICB). Given the central role of therapeutic services in delivering early intervention and the Experts at Hand model, any disruption to capacity or commissioning arrangements presents a potential risk. This will be mitigated through strengthened joint governance with the ICB, shared accountability for delivery, and the continued alignment of pathways and commissioning intentions. The integrated SEND data dashboard will provide real-time oversight of service performance and capacity, enabling early identification of risk and timely intervention.

Changes in political leadership and any associated Local Government Reorganisation may lead to adjustments in organisational structures, leadership arrangements and reporting lines, which could present a potential risk to continuity of delivery. The partnership has mitigated this through the establishment of clear, multi-agency governance arrangements that are resilient to organisational change. This includes a well-established SEND Partnership Board, a named Senior Responsible Officer (SRO), and defined leadership across workstreams, ensuring shared accountability for delivery. Agreed escalation processes and regular oversight provide further assurance that continuity, strategic alignment and delivery momentum will be maintained throughout any transition.

The local delivery of reforms to Children's Social Care and the Best Start in Life programme, including Family Hubs, are seen as critical enablers of the partnership's ambition to strengthen early identification and intervention. These programmes are being actively aligned with the SEND reform agenda, particularly through the locality model, ensuring that support for children and families is coordinated, accessible and focused on prevention. Integrated governance and shared strategic priorities will enable these agendas to reinforce one another and maximise impact.

The partnership also recognises the potential implications of the Curriculum and Assessment Review and other evolving national policy developments. A flexible and responsive approach has therefore been adopted, ensuring that emerging policy changes can be incorporated without disrupting the overall trajectory of the reform programme. Established systems of multi-agency oversight, data-driven decision-making and shared accountability will enable the partnership to respond quickly to change while maintaining strategic direction.

Overall, the partnership is confident that these interdependencies are well understood and actively managed. Through strong governance, integrated planning and a shared commitment across partners, the local area will continue to deliver SEND reform in a way that is aligned with wider system change and resilient to external pressures.

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.

The local area partnership has a data-driven approach to monitoring and evaluating delivery of the SEND reform plan. A shared case management system (EYES), combined with ICB performance data, feeds into an integrated SEND dashboard (Power BI), providing real-time visibility of system performance aligned to agreed success measures.

The dashboard enables partners to track:

- Demand (e.g. EHCNA requests and emerging need)
- Service delivery (e.g. access to specialist services and Experts at Hand)
- Service quality (e.g. parent and CYP satisfaction)
- Outcomes (e.g. attendance, exclusions and mainstream inclusion)

SEND performance is a standing item at the SEND Partnership Board, with data reviewed bi-monthly to monitor progress, inform commissioning and prioritise resources. Workstream leads also use this data operationally to track delivery and report progress against milestones.

A suite of shared KPIs, including EHCP timeliness and waiting times, provides additional system oversight and accountability.

Alongside performance data, the partnership uses strong feedback and evaluation mechanisms, including:

- regular stakeholder engagement events
- ongoing input from L4C and SYP
- an annual SEND survey

Feedback is used to refine delivery, inform service design and assess impact, with findings published through the SEND Information Hub to ensure transparency.

Together, this approach ensures that delivery is continuously monitored, informed by data and shaped by lived experience, enabling timely adaptation and sustained focus on outcomes.

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.

SEND Reform Plan Data Template

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.

Governance Mechanism *This may be a governance group, or an individual (e.g. SRO).*	**Purpose/ Responsibilities** *What is the function of this governance mechanism? What are they accountable for overseeing? What information is reported to this governance mechanism?*	**Membership** *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).*	**Cadence** *How regularly does this governance mechanism meet?*	**Decision Rights** *What decisions can this governance mechanism make?*	**Escalation Route** *Where can this governance mechanism escalate issues or decision to?*
SEND Partnership Board	**Function:** Oversee delivery of SEND Strategy, SEND reform plan and SEND improvement plan. **Accountable for:** Children and Families Act 2014 and adherence to SEND Code of Practice (2015) Ensuring the local area meets its statutory SEND duties, delivers improved outcomes, and secures effective, joined-up improvement across education, health, and care. **Reported into the group:** Statutory SEND performance, SEND strategy progress and impact. SEND reform plan progress and impact. SEND improvement plan progress and impact.	**Chair:** **Exec. Director Peoples Services & NHS place lead.** Portfolio Holder DCS Ass. Director Education & Learning L4C, (PCF) SYP, (CYP Forum) ICB Lead for SEND Head of SEND Head of Access and Sufficiency Head of School Effectiveness Head of Early Years and AP Designated Clinical Officer Commissioners (LA & ICB) Designated Clinical Officer Designated Social Care Officer Special School Heads Rep. Secondary School Heads Rep. Primary School Heads Rep. Eys Providers Rep. AP Rep. Head of VS	Bi - Monthly	Delegated authority to carry out actions in the SEND Strategy, Reform and improvement plans. Require corrective action where progress is insufficient or statutory compliance is at risk . Escalate significant risks, concerns, or non-compliance to senior leaders, DfE, or partners. Commission deep dives, audits, or additional reviews into areas of requiring development. Make recommendations to statutory partners (Cabinet, ICB) on required actions and system changes.	Cabinet Chief Executive S151 Officer ICB Integrated Care Board ICB Director of Place Corporate Leadership

				Agree areas of focus and scrutiny based on performance and risk	
Task and Finish Groups: **Finance and Resources** **Performance and Data** **Universal Offer and Experts at Hand**	**Function:** Manage workstream delivery and report progress, risks, and impact to the SEND Partnership Board on Bi-Monthly basis. **Accountable for:** Managing the delivery of each of the three identified workstreams within agreed timescales. This includes implementing change, identifying and mitigating risks, and producing a regular report, demonstrating impact and escalating any system issues where required from their priority area for presentation at SEND Partnership Board. **Reported into the group:** Workstream progress, risks, performance, impact, and issues requiring escalation.	**SRO:** **Exec. Director Peoples Services & NHS Place lead.** **Workstream leads:** **Finance and Resources:** Assistant Director, Education and Learning **Universal Offer and Experts at Hand:** Designated Clinical Officer/ Principle Educational Psychologist. **Performance and Data:** Head of SEND Inclusion and Intervention.	Monthly (with weekly data refresh cycles)	Decide how workstreams are delivered, resolve operational issues, and escalate significant risks or decisions beyond their remit.	SEND Partnership Board.

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

Annex D Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
AI (Artificial Intelligence)	Technology used to support tasks such as data analysis, pattern recognition, decision-support and drafting documentation. Within this plan, AI may be explored to support early identification, triage and EHCP quality, with professional oversight retained.
AP (Alternative Provision)	Education for children who cannot attend mainstream or special school, often due to exclusion, illness or complex needs.
ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder)	A neurodevelopmental condition affecting communication, interaction and behaviour.
BSIP (Best Start Inclusion Practitioner)	Practitioner within Family Hubs supporting early identification, intervention and links into SEND pathways.
Best Start in Life (BSiL)	Programme focused on improving early childhood outcomes through integrated support, including Family Hubs.
CYP (Children and Young People)	Individuals aged 0–25 within the SEND system.
DfE (Department for Education)	Government department responsible for SEND policy, guidance and oversight.
EAH (Experts at Hand)	Locality-based model providing a single access point to multidisciplinary SEND support for education settings.
EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan)	A statutory plan outlining SEND needs and the provision required across education, health and care.
EHCNA (Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment)	The statutory assessment process to determine whether an EHCP is required.
EKLAN (Elklan)	A nationally recognised training programme that develops practitioners' skills in supporting speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) in education settings.
ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant)	A trained school-based practitioner who supports children with emotional, social and mental health needs through targeted interventions.
MELSA (Managing Emotional Literacy Support Assistants)	A framework or enhanced model supporting ELSA delivery, supervision and quality assurance within schools. *(Often locally defined)*

EP (Educational Psychologist)	Specialist who supports learning, behaviour and development through assessment, consultation and intervention planning.
Graduated Response	The cyclical process of assess–plan–do–review used by schools to support children with SEND before escalation to statutory processes.
ICB (Integrated Care Board)	NHS organisation responsible for planning and commissioning local health services.
INMSS (Independent Non-Maintained Special School)	Specialist independent schools often used when needs cannot be met locally; typically higher cost placements.
In-reach / Outreach	Deployment of specialist expertise into mainstream settings to build capacity and support inclusion.
Local Offer	The published information about SEND services and support available to families in the local area.
Local Area Partnership	The collective group of organisations (LA, ICB, schools, partners) responsible for SEND delivery.
MDT (Multi-Disciplinary Team)	Group of professionals from different disciplines working together to support a child or young person.
OT (Occupational Therapist)	Specialist supporting children's development of functional, sensory and motor skills.
PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies)	An evidence-based programme that supports emotional regulation, social skills and behaviour in children.
PCF (Parent Carer Forum)	Representative group of parents/carers who co-produce SEND services and contribute to system design.
SaLT (Speech and Language Therapy)	Health service supporting children with communication and language needs.
SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)	Refers to children and young people requiring additional support due to learning difficulties or disabilities.
SEND Partnership Board	Strategic governance group overseeing SEND reform, performance and delivery.
SENDIASS (SEND Information, Advice and Support Service)	Independent service providing advice and support to families about SEND.
SEN Support	Support provided within mainstream settings through the graduated response without an EHCP.
SLCN (Speech, Language and Communication Needs)	Difficulties with understanding or using language.
SEMH (Social, Emotional and Mental Health)	Needs relating to emotional regulation, behaviour and mental health.

SRO (Senior Responsible Officer)	Senior leader accountable for SEND reform delivery.
TESSA (Education Specialist Support and Advice Service)	Local service providing specialist SEND advice to settings; foundation for the EaH model.
Universal Offer	High-quality teaching and inclusive practice available to all children in mainstream settings.
Targeted Support	Additional support for children needing more than universal provision but not requiring an EHCP.
Attention Autism	An evidence-based intervention model designed to support attention, communication and interaction, often used with autistic children.
Communication Friendly Environments	Approaches to adapting settings to support communication development (e.g. visual supports, simplified language, structured interactions).
Trauma-Informed Practice	An approach recognising the impact of trauma on children's behaviour and development, and adapting responses accordingly.
Sensory-Based Approaches	Strategies designed to support children with sensory processing differences (e.g. movement breaks, sensory equipment).

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

The partnership would welcome further clarity, guidance and practical advice regarding changes to statutory frameworks and any regulatory/policy changes as these are introduced. These will continue to inform, refine and shape the delivery of our reform strategy as well as ensuring that partners can maintain compliance with the requirements of the current system, while introducing the new.

Of particular interest would be any examples of good or innovative practice regarding overcoming the stubbornly persistent workforce pressures and shortages relating to Educational Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists and the other professionals that will be crucial to the successful delivery of the Experts at Hand Model.

Guidance regarding the statutory role of local authority in the establishment of the proposed local groups of providers, particularly its role in directing and supporting the wider pooling of funding and resources within these groups would also be welcome when available.

Annex B - Supporting Documents

Document	Link
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
Local Partnership Maturity Assessment Guidance and Tool	Included in commission pack
Local SEND Reform Plan – Data template	Included in commission pack
Local SEND Reform Plan Quality Assessment Framework	Included in commission pack
Local Inclusion Partnership Grant 2026-27	To be published Spring 2026
Experts at Hand Guidance	To be published Spring 2026
High Needs Capital Allocations 2026-27	To be published Spring 2026
Guidance on Inclusion bases	To be published Spring 2026

Annex C – Risk Matrix

IMPACT DESCRIPTION	IMPACT LEVEL	PROBABILITY/LIKELIHOOD				
		< 10%	>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**					