

Stoke-on-Trent Local Area SEND Partnership

Reform Plan 2026



NHS
Staffordshire and
Stoke-on-Trent
Integrated Care Board

SEND
STOKE-ON-TRENT

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.

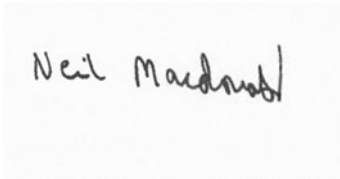
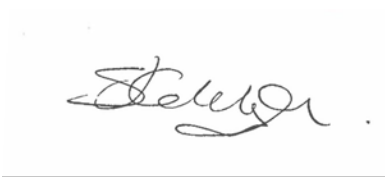
Name of Local Authority: Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Name of Integrated Care Board: NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin ICB and NHS Staffordshire and Stoke-on Trent ICB

Local SEND Reform Plan SRO: Wendy Fairman (Interim Director of Education)

Signatories

Role	Name	Signature	Email contact	Date
Chief Executive, Stoke-on-Trent City Council,	Jon Rouse		Jon.Rouse@stoke.gov.uk	17/06/2026
Chief Executive Integrated Care Board, NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin ICB and NHS	Simon Whitehouse		Simon.Whitehouse@nhs.net	16/06/2026

Staffordshire and Stoke-on Trent ICB				
Corporate Director for Children and Family Services, Stoke-on-Trent City Council	Neil Macdonald		Neil.Macdonald@stoke.gov.uk	20/06/2026
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Chief Nursing Officer, NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin ICB and NHS Staffordshire and Stoke-on Trent ICB	Vanessa Whatley		Vanessa.Whatley@nhs.net	12/06/2026
Cabinet Member for Children's Services	Sarah Jane Colclough		SarahJane.Colclough@stoke.gov.uk	16/06/2026
Chair of the SEND and Inclusion Partnership Board	Wendy Fairman		Wendy.Fairman@stoke.gov.uk	SEND and Inclusion Board Meeting 16/06/2026
Schools' Forum				Review of the plan 17/06/2026

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

Our partnership is on a clear and sustained improvement journey to build a more inclusive, confident and financially sustainable system. We have already moved into a stage of purposeful system improvement, and we are beginning to see the impact of this work in outcomes for children and young people and stabilisation of our high needs deficit.

Our reform plan starts with strengthening the ability of every education setting to meet the needs of children and young people but stretches beyond the gates of the education setting into universal services across health and social care, through parallel programmes including Best Start in Life and Families First Partnership.

We are strengthening inclusion across mainstream and alternative provisions so that more children and young people achieve and thrive in their local communities. The proportion of children with EHCPs educated in mainstream settings has increased significantly, statutory processes are timelier, and schools report growing confidence through Fair Access Protocols. The number of children facing exclusions and suspensions in the city has reduced and we have a strong approach to the use, and assurance, of alternative provision. We have a well-established and clearly articulated 'mainstream first' approach that underpins our strategic and operational decision making. Six new mainstream supported inclusion bases have launched in the past year (102 places), and a further 6 are in the immediate pipeline, meanwhile there are early examples of children successfully moving from independent specialist placements back into local provision.

We do coproduction with parents and carers differently in Stoke-on-Trent. Through a well-established Parent Carer Forum, PEGiS and extensive community-based engagement, families are routinely involved in strategic decision-making, service design and quality assurance. Trust and relationships have improved, and parents tell us their voices are influencing change through the visibility of senior leaders at community lounges and events such as

PEGIS in the Park. We feel passionately about working with the same energy to embed the voice of children and young people more consistently across the system and make feedback loops clearer and more visible.

We have already developed a locality model that will underpin reforms described in this plan. We are delivering our model in partnership with Whole Education through investment from the local authority. Through their 'evaluate my school' tool we will be able to track the impact of our reforms across key areas of the SEND system. Our next phase of reform focuses on the emerging Experts at Hand model, so specialist expertise is used to build system-wide capacity at an earlier point rather than to inform the statutory process. We will monitor the impact through settings self-evaluations, and via quantitative measures such as EHC assessment requests and transitions from mainstream settings into specialist and independent provisions.

Financial sustainability is a central driver of our reform. We have demonstrated an increased grip on our high needs' deficit in the past year, reducing our forecast deficit position by £4.2m in 2025/26. We are taking a strategic approach to place planning and capital investment, with a mainstream-first ambition and significant expansion of local provision. Despite this our deficit is high and forecast to grow further, as we remain under pressure from high demand, diagnostic pathways and reliance on independent specialist provision. We have a robust approach to financial forecasting, with strong local governance, but strengthening our use of data to link spend, demand, outcomes and value for money is a priority for the next stage of our journey.

Over the next three years, we will raise aspirations, build system confidence and see more children and young people with SEND achieve better outcomes within a financially sustainable system. We will evidence progress through a clear trajectory of improvement, including increasing the proportion of CYP with EHCPs in mainstream to above the national average, a reduction in EHCNA requests, a decrease in independent placements, and a measurable improvement in average unit cost and high needs deficit trajectory.

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

1. Every child thriving and achieving - Improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND

Children and young people with SEND achieve well in their local communities by strengthening universal and targeted support and reducing reliance on statutory pathways. Success will be demonstrated through improved attendance, reduced exclusions and suspensions.

We will

- Increase the proportion of CYP with EHCPs educated in mainstream settings to above the national average by 2029
- Reduce the number / proportion of pupils in independent specialist placements (ISP) to below the national average
- Reduce the number of SEND learners who are NEET – to in line with statistical neighbours
- Increase access to specialist support pre-statutory with a growth in the number of CYP supported by OT, SLT and EP without an EHC plan.
- Slow the growth in new EHCNA requests by 2%
- Bring attainment in line with statistical neighbours

2. Increase confidence of parents, carers and young people in the system

Families and young people will experience a system that listens, responds and acts. Success will be evidenced through improved lived-experience feedback, reduced complaints and escalation, visible “you said, together we did” feedback loops:

- By 2028–29, we will reduce the rate of tribunal appeals per 10,000 EHCP population by 1%
- Develop a baseline of parental confidence in the system and deliver yearly improvements measured through widespread surveys and engagement
- Pupil belonging: more children will feel a strong sense of belonging in school. Progress will be monitored through local surveys. By 2029, we will expect all local schools to monitor and share children’s sense of belonging and engagement.

3. Secure financial sustainability and value for money

Deliver a clear trajectory toward financial sustainability through improved place sufficiency, consistent thresholds, and reduced avoidable demand.

- Stabilise High Needs expenditure, moving toward a balanced in-year position by 2030.

We will also use the Local Area Maturity Assessment Matrix as an ongoing tool to monitor the change in the local area readiness.

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
	<i>(a short summary of where you are now including a reflection on what is working well, what needs to change and the status of the enablers that underpin your system)</i>	<i>(a short summary of the vision for your local system in the next 3 years including the system enablers, reflecting how your Experts At Hand Offer model will underpin this vision, helping you scale and enhance what is working well and change what is not working so well)</i>
Strengthening inclusion across education settings	• Emerging approach to locality-based working and shared accountability of DSG/HNB, through the Central Cluster Pilot – embedding shared accountability for funding, and peer to peer support. Provides a good foundation for further development. • Statutory processes are well embedded and mostly timely, but there is an over-reliance on EHCPs to secure support. • Variable confidence and capability across mainstream schools to meet SEND needs at SEN Support • Excellent examples of inclusion approaches but not consistently embedded across phases with a spike in EHC requests at transition points • Schools report limited access to timely specialist advice outside statutory processes • Pressure points during transitions at early years, KS2–KS3, and post-16. • Too many children and young people with SEND not in school with high rate of suspensions, exclusions, and part time timetables, plus high persistent absence. • Parental confidence in mainstream settings is variable with a high number of requests for specialist and independent specialist settings within the EHC. • A newly emerging approach to the development of high-quality inclusion bases in mainstream settings, building on a historic approach to delivering special school capacity. 6 Inclusion bases established and a pipeline of new provisions established. • A much-improved picture shows a reduction in exclusions and suspensions citywide, but pockets of challenging practice particularly affecting children with SEND remains a challenge, A developing vision around the use of AP with new provisions emerging, but an overreliance on independent AP settings	• Locality approach embedded through Our SEND Communities model across all four localities. • A coordinated front door to SEND services across the city exists through Community SENCOs • Embedded governance and structures, with mature data sharing to create a secure understanding of the needs of the community • Whole education self-evaluation and action planning completed giving a consistent and solid understanding of areas of strength and weakness across the communities and citywide. • Experts at Hand provide timely, preventative input to settings to support earlier intervention. EAHO will expand system capacity and provide earlier intervention, rather than replace existing specialist services. • Services are pivoted back towards earlier support pre-EHCP, whilst still maintaining high quality and timely service for those requiring specialist packages. • Consistent graduated response across the local area grounded in a set of co-produced local inclusion standards, building on national standards, that set out what is ordinarily available provision in the city • A clear continuum of AP will be in place with sufficient places across phases. AP settings will have high aspirations for learners with increased access to GCSE (or alternative) qualifications. • A three-tier model of AP will be embedded across the city, with a multi-agency taskforce team, complimenting our EAHO, working with settings and CYP to reintegrate them back into mainstream provisions wherever it is appropriate. • The proportion of children and young people with EHCPs educated in mainstream settings will have increased to above the national average (from 36% to at least 41%), reflecting strengthened inclusion capacity across mainstream settings.

		• EHCNA requests will reduce (target reduction of up to 15%), demonstrating that needs are increasingly being met earlier within mainstream provision through effective graduated response and access to specialist support. • Improved attendance for children and young people with SEND will indicate that inclusive practice is successfully supporting children to remain engaged and thrive within their local settings. • Children will report a greater sense of belonging in their education setting and wider community reflecting their active and visible role in local life
Access to specialist support and local placements	• Access to specialist advice (EP, SaLT, OT) is uneven and often linked to statutory processes. • High reliance on specialist and independent provision • Pressure on High Needs Block driven by demand and placement costs. • Many children attending provisions far from home due to lack of inclusive local options. • Learning already drawn from pilots in specialist outreach • A fully traded model for LA services to enable access to Educational Psychology and Specialist Advisory teaching Series. • Disparate approach from Multi-Academy Trusts with increased use of private practitioners commissioned through internal EAH type models. • Commitment from partners to redesign access to specialist advice through Experts at Hand • AP commissioned through 200 block placements with independent AP providers to discharge statutory section19 responsibilities including day 6 placements and day15 for children with additional health and medical needs.	• Clearly defined Experts at Hand offer providing earlier access to specialist advice without statutory assessment- schools will report they feel more confident to meet needs of children with SEND without statutory intervention. • Specialist input is focused on building capacity within settings as well as supporting individual children, ensuring earlier identification and intervention across the system. • There will be a measurable increase in the number of children and young people accessing specialist support (EP, SaLT and OT) without requiring an EHCP, demonstrating a shift towards earlier, needs-led support and reduced reliance on statutory processes. • Reduced reliance on independent placements, with a reduction in the number and proportion of children and young people in independent specialist provision, as local capacity and confidence improve. • Increased use of local provision and inclusion bases, with a clear citywide local offer ensuring coverage across all localities and need types, reducing the number of children educated outside of the city and associated home to school transport demand. • Increased local sufficiency will support the system to stabilise High Needs expenditure and improve value for money, with resources increasingly deployed within the local system rather than external placements.
System leadership, local partnership collaboration and co-production	• Co-production well-established in some areas • Very active Parent Carer Forum and growing engagement with children and young people • Existing improvement programme with multi-agency	• Clear shared ownership of SEND reform across education, health and local authority partners, with consistent decision-making aligned to agreed system priorities and joint accountability for

	engagement • Strong commitment to partnership working, some schools and providers engaged in governance, but variable consistency • A strong schools forum with shared ownership of the HN deficit and DSG management plan. Mature relationships allow for considered discussion around block transfers.	outcomes. • Co-production is embedded as an ongoing way of working, with parents, carers and young people routinely shaping system design, commissioning and service delivery. This will be evidenced through year-on-year improvements in parental confidence, measured through surveys and engagement activity, alongside reduced complaints and escalation. • Schools, parents and young people are confident about how their voice shapes system design, supported by visible "you said, together we did" feedback loops and increased participation in governance and co-production activity. • Strengthened partnership working and earlier resolution will contribute to a reduction in tribunal and appeal rates (target reduction of 1.9% over three years), reflecting increased trust and confidence in local arrangements. • Joint commissioning across education, health and care will be embedded, with data routinely linking need, provision, spending and outcomes to inform decision-making and ensure value for money. This will support progress towards stabilising High Needs Block expenditure and improving the overall financial trajectory.
Encouraging inclusive culture and behaviours	• Strong early years provisions and multi-agency working through early years processes enable needs to be identified early. • 8 Family Hubs operational across the city with a growing SEND specific offer in addition to strong, inclusive universal delivery models. • Cultural reliance on thresholds, labels and escalation. • Inclusion understood inconsistently across settings • Confidence varies across workforce groups • Whole education – diagnostics underway to support citywide understanding of setting readiness to meet need. • Poor academic outcomes for children with SEND • Transitions to secondary school are too often unsuccessful, leading to high numbers of requests for EHCNA for children aged 12 and 13	• Improved trust from families in local SEND arrangements, evidenced through year-on-year improvements in parental confidence and reduced complaints and escalation. • Greater confidence among professionals in identifying and meeting need, supported by Experts at Hand, communities of practice and workforce development, leading to increased early intervention and reduced reliance on statutory pathways (evidenced through reduced EHCNA requests). • A visible and felt difference in day-to-day experiences for children and young people with SEND, with stronger inclusive practice enabling more children to remain and thrive in their local settings. • Belonging Strategy embedded understood across the partnership • Improved outcomes for children and young people with SEND will be evidenced through increased attendance and reduced exclusions and suspensions, indicating that inclusive practice is supporting children to remain engaged in education.

		- Children and young people in alternative provision will achieve improved outcomes, including increased attainment (e.g. access to and achievement in GCSE or equivalent qualifications) and stronger reintegration pathways into mainstream or appropriate post-16 routes, because of, a set of clearly defined minimum standards for providers. - As inclusive culture becomes embedded across the system, there will be a reduction in the number of children and young people who are not in education or who are NEET, reflecting improved engagement, aspiration and system confidence.
Enablers: <i>Programme management and delivery.</i> <i>People, Leadership, governance, contract management.</i> <i>Quality assurance.</i> <i>Capital funding.</i> <i>Digital.</i> <i>Data.</i>	- Programme delivery capacity exists but is stretched; Reform Plan identifies need for dedicated transformation roles and stronger grip on delivery assurance. - QA activity exists across EHCP and provision but needs consolidating into a coherent system assurance model that links quality, experience and outcomes. - An agreed pipeline is in place for resourced provision / special school projects, with clear inclusion-first intent; further alignment to locality need and transition pressure points is required. - Whole Education platform has been purchased but not yet implemented leading to digital front door and structured information flows are not yet consistently experienced by settings/families. - Operational dashboards exist and are monitored. Partnership intelligence linking demand, spend, outcomes and lived experience needs strengthening.	- Dedicated programme and transformation leadership embedded and PMO integration provide routine reporting, risk/issue management, delivery assurance, and quarterly performance review aligned to DfE reporting. - A single partnership QA approach to be developed that covers: EAH (consultation/coaching focus), local inclusion standard consistency, AP/ISP quality, and place-planning impact, reported through the inclusion data dashboard. - Capital investment is demonstrably shifting provision locally (including inclusive environment adaptations), with each locality benefiting from balanced primary/secondary resourced provision growth and reduced travel - A single digital front door and shared platform support self-evaluation, practice resources, access routes to EAH, and communications across communities of practice - An inclusion dashboard reports monthly on reach/coverage, demand indicators, provision sufficiency and experience measures. - ICB SLT Advanced Practitioner role in post providing strategic leadership to the system
Success measures	Rate of EHC needs assessment requests- 998 PA, 1.12% of 0-25 population Proportion of children and young people with EHCPs supported in mainstream settings – 36% The number / proportion of pupils in independent specialist placements (ISP) – 455 (11.2%) High Needs Block in-year deficit position - £11.537m Average unit cost of SEND provision - £11,285	Rate of EHC needs assessment requests- Reduced by 15% as more needs are met outside of statutory process. Proportion of children and young people with EHCPs supported in mainstream settings – Increased to above national average (41%) as mainstream settings grow in confidence to meet needs. Attendance of children and young people with SEND – improved, acting as a key indicator of inclusion, engagement and whether children are thriving in their local settings

	Tribunal and appeal rate – 2.4% Capacity of the specialist workforce – see data template for indicative baseline assessment Proportion of referrals to health services that are inappropriate i.e. they do not meet the service criteria or have insufficient information on first submission- baseline data to be established through year 1	The number / proportion of pupils in independent specialist placements (ISP) – Reduced as sufficiency of local provision grows including support bases High Needs Block in-year deficit position – Stabilised, approaching a balanced in year position by 2030. Average unit cost of SEND provision – Reduced as less reliant on ISP Tribunal and appeal rate – Reduced to 1.9% as parental confidence grows. Capacity and reach of the specialist workforce – increased, including more children support pre-statutory Proportion of referrals to health services that are inappropriate i.e. they do not meet the service criteria or have insufficient information on first submission - Reduction
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3. What is the local area partnership's strategy for delivering on the above?

Document [3.1 SEND Reform Theory of Change.pptx](#)

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.'*

The partnership will deliver its reform through a clear, system wide theory of change that shifts the model from reactive, fragmented and high-cost provision to early, inclusive and locally delivered support. This is grounded in our Local Partnership Maturity Assessment, which identifies strengthening inclusion, partnership accountability and system integration as key priorities.

Our strategy focuses on building capacity at the earliest point of need. Through the rollout of the SEND Communities locality model and the Experts at Hand (EAH) offer, specialist expertise (EP, SaLT, OT and specialist teachers) will be deployed to coach and support mainstream settings, enabling timely intervention and reducing reliance on statutory assessment. By investing in a locality-based Experts at Hand accessed via specialist community SENCOs, Local Inclusion Standards and increased local provision, we will build mainstream capacity earlier, reducing reliance on statutory processes and high-cost placements, leading to improved outcomes and financial sustainability.

We will underpin this targeted and targeted plus support through embedding of Local Inclusion Standards across all settings, supported by whole system self-evaluation, communities of practice and a strengthened SENCO workforce. This will create a shared understanding of inclusive practice and reduce variation across the system.

Partnership maturity will be strengthened through integrated governance, co production and shared accountability, ensuring education, health and care partners jointly commission and deliver services, informed by lived experience and robust data.

A set of enabling conditions—capital investment in local provision, a single digital front door, improved data intelligence and dedicated programme management—will provide the infrastructure for sustained change.

Together, these reforms will deliver a financially sustainable system where more children and young people are supported successfully in their local communities, outcomes improve, and confidence in the SEND system is restored

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

Document [4.1 The Local Partnership Maturity Assessment Tool.xlsx](#)

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

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

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

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

Local roadmap for the next 3 years	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Strengthening inclusion across education settings:	- SEND Communities will be fully established and operating across all four localities, providing a consistent forum for shared responsibility, peer challenge and collaborative problem solving across education phases. - The first full cycle of Whole Education self-evaluation and action planning will be completed across participating settings, providing a shared baseline of inclusive practice and priority areas for improvement. - The refreshed Local Inclusion Standards will be coproduced formally launched. Embedding will begin through locality-based communities of practice, supporting consistent expectations and shared learning across education settings. - A fully co-produced review of key transition points will be completed,	- SEND Communities will demonstrate increased maturity, with stronger peer challenge, shared accountability and evidence led improvement across localities and education phases. - A second cycle of Whole Education self-evaluation will demonstrate measurable improvement against the Local Inclusion Standards, evidenced by improved self-evaluation outcomes across participating settings, a reduction in variation between localities and phases, and fewer settings identifying significant weaknesses in agreed priority areas such as inclusive practice at transition points, use of EAHO, attendance, and graduated response. Findings will be triangulated with outcome data,	Inclusive practice will be embedded and sustained across education settings through routine monitoring, peer review, and partnership accountability, with reduced variability in experiences and outcomes for children and young people. Progress will continue to be monitored through repeated Whole Education self-evaluation cycles, locality and citywide inclusion dashboards, audit activity, and regular review of key outcome measures including attendance, suspensions, exclusions, EHCNA requests and post-16 destinations. Where variation or slippage is identified, targeted support, peer challenge and improvement planning will be deployed through Communities of Practice and

	covering early years, KS2–KS3, post 16 and post 18, with agreed actions embedded across education and health systems. • Bespoke Local Inclusion Standards for KS2–KS3 transition will be co-produced with schools and Mental Health in Schools Teams and actively used to strengthen continuity, early identification and inclusive practice at transition. • Formal transition agreements will be developed between Year 11 and Year 12 providers, including a SEND September Guarantee and a Year 13 progression guarantee.	including attendance, suspensions, EHC needs assessment request rates and placement patterns, to confirm that stronger self-evaluation is translating into better experiences and outcomes for children and young people. • Learning from the transitions review will be embedded into pathways, guidance and workforce practice, improving continuity and outcomes for children and young people • A coherent post-16 SEND pathway will be established, supported by the Stoke Future e-prospectus and a single application process, enabling young people to explore and apply for appropriate education, training and employment routes from Year 9 onwards. Progress will be measured through take-up and completion of transition planning, uptake of the single application process, destination data for learners with SEND, and the proportion of young people progressing into suitable further study, supported internships, apprenticeships, traineeships, employment or other agreed preparation for adulthood pathways. • Clear pathways into further study and occupational routes will be embedded across post-16 provision, improving progression, independence and preparation for adulthood. These pathways will be measured through destination tracking at Year 12, Year 13 and post-18, reduction in NEET among young people with SEND, sustained participation in education, employment or training, and improved progression into	partnership governance arrangements. • Local Inclusion Standards will be reviewed and refreshed based on impact, learning, emerging need and feedback from children, young people, families and education providers. • Post-16 and post-18 pathways will be routinely monitored through destination and participation data, including sustained progression into further study, employment, supported internships, apprenticeships and other preparation for adulthood outcomes, with action taken where cohorts or providers show weaker outcomes.
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		qualifications, supported employment, apprenticeships and other meaningful adulthood outcomes.	
Access to specialist support and local placements:	• The Experts at Hand model will be mobilised across localities, with navigator roles in place, a clear locality operating rhythm and quarterly reporting on reach, demand and impact. • Dedicated school facing SaLT, OT, EP and Specialist Teacher capacity will be live and delivered to an agreed model aligned to locality need and inclusion priorities. • Early years and post 16/post 18 offers will be developed within the Experts at Hand model to ensure support spans the full 0–25 system and reduces escalation at transition points. • The capital delivery pipeline will bring planned new specialist and enhanced provision places on stream from September 2026 developments, increasing local capacity and reducing reliance on out of area placements. • Work will accelerate to clarify and strengthen the Alternative Provision continuum, ensuring it is aligned to inclusion principles, sufficiency planning and early intervention pathways.	• The Experts at Hand model will demonstrate sustained impact through improved timeliness, reduced escalation and clearer routes to support for families and settings. • A clearly defined early years Experts at Hand/ SEND offer will be embedded through Best Start Family Hubs, supporting early identification, inclusive practice and workforce development across PVI and maintained settings. • Community SENCOs will be embedded to ensure strong knowledge of the Local Offer. • Specialist outreach from special schools will be aligned to Experts at Hand delivery, supporting the development and sustainability of inclusion bases and strengthening mainstream confidence to meet more complex needs. • Sufficiency delivery will continue at pace, reducing reliance on independent placements and building confidence in local and mainstream capacity. Universal and targeted SEND pathways will be strengthened so needs are met earlier and escalation is reduced, aligned to Local Inclusion Standards. • Our AP continuum of provision will be developed including a new KS3/4 Challenging Mental Health Cohort 04/27 within a registered AP. • All medical/additional health needs AP will be supported by a multi-agency taskforce from health, social	• The system will demonstrate a sustained shift towards early intervention and needs-led support, with significantly reduced reliance on independent specialist provision and greater use of local mainstream, inclusion base and targeted specialist pathways. Impact will be measured through triangulation of demand, delivery, outcome and experience data, including reduced EHCNA request rates, reduced use of independent specialist placements, increased access to specialist advice without an EHCP, improved timeliness and reach of the EAHO, and stronger evidence that needs are being met earlier within local provision. • Local provision and workforce confidence will support children and young people to thrive within their communities wherever possible. This will be evidenced through improved placement stability, fewer children educated outside the city, reduced travel demand, stronger attendance for children and young people with SEND, and improved feedback from settings and families on access to support and confidence in local pathways. • Our AP continuum of provision will be refined and embedded as part of a coherent inclusive pathway. Its impact will be measured through reduced use of inappropriate or prolonged alternative provision, improved reintegration to

		care, police. To encourage attendance, to support medical needs enabling children to re-integrate back into their main school settings and to safeguard all our children and young people.	mainstream where appropriate, better attendance and attainment outcomes for children in AP, and stronger progression into post-16 education, training and vocational routes.
System leadership, local partnership collaboration and co-production:	• Governance and leadership arrangements will be refreshed to embed adult services across education, health and social care within SEND governance, strengthening oversight of the 0–25 system and transitions. • Representation will be strengthened across all education phases by building on Schools Forum, primary, secondary and special school networks, and by improving engagement from early years, post 16 and post 19 providers. Representation will be clarified as the system moves towards locality cluster arrangements, including agreement on whether cluster level representation is required within formal governance structures. • Co production will be embedded more consistently across services so that it is routine and business as usual rather than programme led, supported by co production training for the workforce. • The participation of children and young people will be strengthened through implementation of the refreshed Participation Strategy, alongside action to broaden representation from underrepresented groups such as children with sensory impairment, physical disability and those with EAL. A clear, partnership wide “You said, together we did” approach will	• Locality cluster working will be embedded and expanded to support shared responsibility for inclusion and more integrated commissioning decisions, with clear reporting routes into partnership governance and routine review of progress through agreed partnership dashboards and performance reporting. • Participation and co-production will be demonstrably embedded in governance, commissioning and service review, with routine reporting on how lived experience has shaped decisions. Feedback from parents, carers, children, young people, settings and partners will be reviewed systematically through co-production forums, mediation themes, complaints analysis, surveys and engagement activity, and will inform service improvement plans, commissioning priorities and practice development. Visible “you said, together we did” feedback loops will demonstrate how this learning has influenced change. • Engagement of adult health and adult social care partners will be strengthened to support coherent 0–25 pathways and transitions. • A recommissioned mediation service will support earlier resolution, strengthen trust with families and enable learning from dispute themes to inform service improvement and commissioning priorities. The service	• Joint accountability across education, health and social care will be firmly embedded, with mature system governance supporting continuous improvement, transparent decision-making and shared ownership of outcomes. Sustainability will be assured through formal partnership agreements, routine performance reporting, integrated commissioning arrangements, and clearly defined roles and responsibilities across governance structures. • Co-production will be fully embedded as a core system value shaping both strategy and delivery, evidenced through sustained participation of parents, carers, children, young people, education settings and partner agencies in governance, design, review and assurance activity. • Communication and engagement mechanisms will remain active and visible, with regular opportunities for stakeholders to shape priorities, test emerging proposals and review impact. • Post-16 inclusion will be strengthened through Experts at Hand, with tailored offers for FE and training providers, including support with GCSE recovery, transition planning and innovative delivery models such as hybrid and small-group provision.

	be implemented so feedback loops from families and young people are visible, timely and consistent across services. • Joint commissioning across education, health and social care will be re-established and strengthened, with explicit feedback loops ensuring co production informs commissioning priorities and service design. • The mediation service will be recommissioned, working collaboratively with families and services to resolve issues earlier and support trust, transparency and partnership working.	will have clear reportable metrics on timeliness, participation, resolution and recurring themes, with learning routinely escalated into governance and delivery groups. • Redesigned Local Area SEND governance arrangements will operate as a mature learning system, with regular cycles of reflection, audit, feedback and workforce development. Learning from lived experience, case themes and service review will inform cycles of CPD, leadership development and partner communications so that improvement is continuous.	
Encouraging inclusive culture and behaviours:	• Best start Inclusion Practitioners in every Family Hub across the city giving families access to SEND advice at the earliest opportunity. • A co-produced Belonging Strategy toolkit will be introduced across education settings, supporting shared language, expectations and practical action to promote inclusive cultures. • Workforce confidence and capability will begin to strengthen through Experts at Hand consultation, coaching approaches and emerging communities of practice. • SEND understanding will be reinforced across the wider social care workforce, not just specialist teams, with SEND priorities embedded within plans, supervision and day to day decision making.	• Best start Inclusion Practitioners embedded in every Family Hub across the city giving families access to SEND advice at the earliest opportunity. • Multi-agency case audits focused on lived experience will be embedded to identify and address system gaps and variation. Audit findings will be used to inform service improvement actions, leadership reflection, workforce development and targeted support where practice is inconsistent.	• Best start Inclusion Practitioners shaping a strong and coherent family support offer in Family Hubs across the city, aligned with the experts at hand model and embedded into SEND Communities • A strong and shared culture of belonging will be evident across leadership, workforce practice and system behaviours. • Multi-agency case audit methodology will be embedded as a core part of system assurance and learning. A regular cycle of thematic audits will review children and young people's lived experience across education, health and care pathways, drawing on case file review, practitioner reflection, family feedback and outcome data. Findings will be reported through governance, and translated into service improvement actions, updates to guidance, and cycles of CPD and leadership development.
Enablers	• Capital investment will be aligned to the SEND Sufficiency Statement and	• The capital programme will continue to prioritise expansion of local provision where there are evidenced	• SEND improvement will be sustained through business-as-usual governance, commissioning and

	wider reform priorities, ensuring that new specialist, resourced and post 16 places are delivered in a way that supports inclusive practice and long-term sustainability. • Reviewed SEND Governance Structures ensuring robust accountability and support mechanisms are in place across the partnership. • A SEND specific Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) will be developed to bring together fragmented intelligence across education, health and social care. • A shared, outcomes-based performance framework will be established to link need, provision and impact across the system. • A partnership wide SEND data dashboard will be built to support governance, prioritisation and risk-based decision making. • Programme and delivery roles will be fully in place, with clear accountability for coordination, assurance and benefits realisation. • A strengthened digital front door will support consistent access to Local Inclusion Standards, guidance and resources for education settings, families and partners. • Sustainable funding arrangements for Experts at Hand will be agreed through a joint commissioning approach with the LA and ICB, enabling ongoing workforce development, capacity building and equitable access across early years, schools and post 16 settings. We will use a section75 partnership framework to deliver this at pace.	gaps in need type or geography, while maximising the use of the existing school and FE estate and reducing reliance on independent provision. • The SEND dashboard and outcomes framework will be routinely used by partnership boards to guide prioritisation, commissioning and investment decisions. • The Stoke Future post 16 e prospectus and single application process will provide a coherent, accessible digital route for young people to explore and apply for post 16 and post 18 pathways, improving navigation and transparency. • Strong links between data, commissioning and sufficiency planning will ensure intelligence consistently informs resource allocation. • ICB SLT Advanced Practitioner role embedded within the local area partnership	assurance arrangements, reducing reliance on time limited programme structures. • Digital solutions will increasingly support smoother transitions, consistent information flow between phases and clearer handovers between children's and adult services. • Planning for future capital bids and estate development will be informed by robust sufficiency modelling, transition data and the emerging SEND specific JSNA. • ICB SLT Advanced Practitioner role embedded within the local area partnership
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	Recruit to ICB SLT Advanced Practitioner role		
Success measures <i>Drawing on metrics from the accompanying data template</i>	These indicators will be monitored throughout 2026/27 to 2028/29 and kept under review through the partnership's outcomes framework. They will be used alongside the wider measures referenced throughout this plan to assess progress, triangulate impact and refine delivery over time. EHC Needs Assessment (EHCNA) request rate <i>Tracks early intervention vs escalation</i> <i>Direct proxy for whether EAH and inclusion are working</i> <i>Initial reduction or stabilisation in EHCNA request growth</i> % of EHCPs in mainstream settings <i>Primary indicator of inclusion</i> <i>The largest challenge facing the SEND system in SoT.</i> Number / proportion of pupils in independent specialist placements (ISP) <i>Key financial pressure driver</i> <i>Strong proxy for sufficiency failure</i> High Needs Block in-year deficit / net position <i>Demonstrates sustainability</i> Unit cost per child (by placement type or overall) <i>Shows efficiency of system</i> <i>Links inclusion strategy to financial outcomes</i> Access to specialist support pre-statutory <i>Increase number of children and young people supported by Education Psychologists/SALT/OT in maintained provision:</i>	Continued use of the core proxy indicators, kept under review through the partnership dashboard and outcomes framework to test sustained impact, value for money and whether reform is delivering improved outcomes and confidence across the system.	Continued use of the core proxy indicators, kept under review through the partnership dashboard and outcomes framework to test sustained impact, value for money and whether reform is delivering improved outcomes and confidence across the system.

	Improve overall effectiveness of provision: • <i>Improve attendance of pupils in all maintained schools (mainstream and special) with SEN:</i> • <i>Reduction in the number of CYP with SEND who are NEET:</i>		
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Document [5.1 Experts at Hand Outline.docx](#)

Document [5.2 EAH Infographic.png](#)

Document [5.3 Sufficiency Statement.docx](#)

Document [5.4 SEND Communities Operating Model.docx](#)

Document [5.5 SEND Communities Local Support Model.png](#)

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	
<i>Workstream outline – mapped to building block</i> Outcome - what you want to achieve with this workstream Success measures – how you measure progress drawing on metrics from the accompanying data template	<i>Responsible lead per workstream – accountable for the delivery of the workstream and the identified outcome.</i>	<i>Milestones per workstream</i> What key milestones will enable you achieve your targeted trajectory	<i>Target trajectory per workstream</i> Where do you expect your data to be?	<i>Milestones per workstream</i> What key milestones will enable you achieve your targeted trajectory	<i>Target trajectory per workstream</i> Where do you expect your data to be?	<i>Milestones per workstream</i> What key milestones will enable you achieve your targeted trajectory	<i>Target trajectory per workstream</i> Where do you expect your data to be?
WS1: Early Support and Experts at hand Building block(s):	Designated Clinical Officer	Workshops held with MPFT (provider trust) for SLT and OT to confirm	<i>EHCNA requests stabilised at or close to Q1 baseline while the model mobilises</i>	Recruitment to 2x Community SENCO roles is completed. Citywide EAHO soft launch with single	<i>EHCNA requests remain stable overall, with early signs of reduced escalation in cohorts</i>	Recruitment of band 4/5/6 roles for SaLT and OT completed. School facing SaLT, OT, EP and	<i>EHCNA requests show early reduction in key pressure points, particularly where</i>

- Strengthening inclusion across education settings. - Access to specialist support and local placements. Desired outcomes: - Outcomes for children and young people improve through earlier identification and intervention. - Mainstream settings have clearly defined access route to specialist support. - Families can access the right support at the right time in the right place. Success measures - Requests for an EHCNA - Number of new EHC plans issued. - Number of transitions from mainstream settings to special school. - Number of transitions from mainstream school to ISP - Total planned LA and ICB spend on professionals		JD/PS for EAH roles. EP, SaLT, OT and Specialist Teaching capacity is mapped and aligned to the Experts at Hand model, with clear roles and delivery expectations. Internal restructure requirements understood and commenced. Recruitment begins focussing on band 8/7 roles for SLT and OT. Joint meeting held with neighbouring LAs with post16 provisions from across the region. Engagement meeting held with ISP and SPI settings. Workshops held with special schools to confirm scope of outreach offer – building on initial proposal to focus on support for Inclusion Bases. Pilot of SEND presence at/in Integrated Front Door (FFPP) begins. First cohort of Best Start Inclusion Practitioners to be recruited and trained. EAHO engagement plan enacted with all settings – workshops and briefings held with settings 0-19	<i>New EHC plans remain broadly stable, reflecting managed statutory demand during transition</i> <i>Transitions from mainstream to special school remain broadly stable</i> <i>Transitions from mainstream to ISP remain broadly stable, with no material shift expected until local pathways and support offers are operational.</i> <i>Total planned LA and ICB spend on professionals increases in line with recruitment, mobilisation and redeployment to the Experts at Hand model.</i>	front door and access to Eps and Advisory teachers. Fully traded Eps and advisory teaching offer ends and EAHO begins. Recruitment of band 8/7 roles for SaLT and OT completed Agile approach to delivery launched – weekly review to iterate the model.	<i>or settings accessing the Experts at Hand offer most consistently.</i> <i>New EHC plans remain broadly stable, with any change expected to lag behind earlier shifts in help-seeking and access to support.</i> <i>Transitions from mainstream to special school begin to stabilise slightly, with early evidence that some needs are being supported through strengthened local pathways.</i> <i>Transitions from mainstream to ISP begin to reduce following September transitions and the soft launch of clearer local access routes to specialist support.</i> <i>Total planned LA and ICB spend on professionals remains increased.</i>	Specialist Teacher capacity is operational. Best Start Inclusion Practitioners will be operational across all eight Family Hubs providing a consistent early year's interface. Special School outreach offer is launched as part of EAHO – focussing on delivery of Inclusion Bases.	<i>earlier identification and intervention are strongest, including the 0-5 pathway.</i> <i>New EHC plans remain broadly stable at year end.</i> <i>Transitions from mainstream to special school reduce compared with Q3, indicating that more needs are being met through strengthened mainstream and targeted support.</i> <i>Transitions from mainstream to ISP reduce compared with Q3, reflecting increased confidence in local pathways and earlier access to specialist input.</i> <i>Total planned LA and ICB spend on professionals remains increased, with greater reach into pre-statutory support and a clearer shift toward earlier intervention.</i>
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WS2: Sufficiency and place planning Building block(s): - Strengthening inclusion across education settings. - Access to specialist support and local placements. Desired outcomes: - Children and young people will feel active and visible parts of their local community. - More children in Stoke-on-Trent will have the opportunity to be successful in their local mainstream school. - Fewer children will require access to home to school travel assistance to get to their school placement. Success measure: - Percentage of children with an EHC plan in mainstream setting. - Number of places in support bases in primary, secondary and 6th - Number of places in specialist bases in primary, secondary and 6th - Number of children educated in ISP - Percentage of children educated outside of the city <i>Note the unit cost of children in ISP may increase due to a reduction in the number of lower complexity children being placed.</i>	Head of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (Local Authority)	A citywide map of school led Support Bases is developed. Inclusive environments grant funding applications opened roll settings citywide.	<i>Percentage of children with an EHC plan in mainstream setting increased on q1.</i> <i>Number of places in support bases in primary, secondary and 6th – no change</i> <i>Number of places in specialist bases in primary, secondary and 6th – no change</i> <i>Number of children educated in ISP – no change</i> <i>Percentage of children educated outside of the city – reduction on q1</i>	Specialist Inclusion Base at Alexandra Junior School opens (subject to DfE approval). Satellite Provision at Watmill School (70) opens. Capital -led expansion of Portland School (40) completed. Ks1/2 Medical Provision at The Crescent 10 Places. Also providing home tuition, outreach and a supervised on-line learning IT suite. Feasibility and planning completed for expansion of placements at City Of Stoke 6th Form College – Fenton Manor Site. 2027/208 Secondary provisions identified and engaged – feasibility commences as required. Review of Special School estate completed – summary of works compiled. Launch of EAHO to Support Bases to support development and delivery of provision	<i>Percentage of children with an EHC plan in mainstream setting increased on q2.</i> <i>Number of places in support bases in primary, secondary and 6th – increased</i> <i>Number of places in specialist bases in primary, secondary and 6th – increased</i> <i>Number of children educated in ISP – reduction (September transitions)</i> <i>Percentage of children educated outside of the city – reduction on q1</i>	Specialist Inclusion Base at Weston Infants School opens Specialist Inclusion Base at Weston Junior School opens Specialist Inclusion Base at Sneyd Academy opens (subject to DfE approval). Specialist Inclusion Base at Excel Academy opens (subject to DfE approval). Expansion of placements at Newfriars College online. Provider for Early Years Centre of Excellence Hub identified (Bentilee Nursery Site). Report to cabinet on next phase of Capital Programme. 2027/208 Primary provisions identified and engaged – feasibility commences as required. Ks3/4 EBSNA/DOBS Provision Independent School 01/2027 30 AP Places	<i>Percentage of children with an EHC plan in mainstream setting increased on q2.</i> <i>Number of places in support bases in primary, secondary and 6th – increased</i> <i>Number of places in specialist bases in primary, secondary and 6th – no change</i> <i>Number of children educated in ISP – no change</i> <i>Percentage of children educated outside of the city – reduction on q2</i>
WS3: Strengthening effective partnerships and practice Building block(s): Encouraging inclusive culture and behaviours	Head of Access & Support - Vulnerable Learners	Partnership review of local governance structures, roles and responsibilities to commence.	<i>Children and young people with SEN not in education begin to reduce in priority cohorts.</i>	Partnership review of local governance structures, roles and responsibilities completed.	<i>Children and young people with SEN not in education continue to reduce.</i>	New local governance structures, roles and responsibilities embedded.	<i>Children and young people with SEN not in education reduced compared</i>

- System leadership, local partnership collaboration and co-production Desired outcomes: - A shared approach to inclusive practice and culture is developed and tested in 2026/27, strengthening workforce confidence, embedding SEND awareness across services and improving everyday experiences for children and young people. - The partnership uses integrated data to align spend with impact, ensuring resources are targeted where they deliver the greatest benefit and support a sustainable High Needs trajectory. Success measure: - Number of all CYP with SEN in local area not in education - Number of moves to exclude for all children including those with SEN - Attendance of children with SEND and EHCP. - Number of children and young people NEET		Coproduction workshops on local inclusion standards carried out. Draft local inclusion standards developed. Local Area Inclusion Data Dashboard indicators agreed. A co production approach is agreed to develop an Belonging toolkit, involving education settings, social care, health partners, families and children and young people. All settings in central community complete self-evaluation through EMS and begin impactful action planning. Whole Education digital platform goes live for Central community. CYP Participation Event held with KIDS to relaunch participation approach and Coproduction toolkit. Coproduction pledge is developed and launched. Steering group established to deliver coproduction of belonging strategy and toolkit. Do you see me campaign launch – multi agency approach to support long term absent	<i>Moves to exclude remain broadly stable while inclusion standards and partnership responses embed.</i> <i>Attendance for children with SEND and EHCP remains broadly stable in Q2.</i> <i>NEET trends broadly stable, with transition and participation pathways beginning to strengthen.</i>	Local Inclusion standards are launched citywide. SEND Communities relaunched in Central locality (includes new governance, and Communities of Practice) Re-commissioning of local area mediation and dispute resolution service begins. Coproduced review of SENDIASS Delivery model completed with PCF – focus on earlier support aligned to FFP. Coproduction training programme is developed and launched. A refreshed CYP Participation Plan is finalised, including actions to widen representation from underrepresented groups such as children with sensory impairments, physical disabilities and EAL. Testing single application process for post16 provisions Minimum curriculum entitlement in AP launched. Engagement across the ICB cluster to begin recruitment to the ICB SLT Advanced Practitioner Role – giving due consideration to national guidance	<i>Moves to exclude remain broadly stable overall, with early signs of improved practice in engaged settings.</i> <i>Attendance for children with SEND and EHCP begins to stabilise more consistently.</i> <i>NEET risk is better identified and managed through stronger transition planning.</i>	SEND Communities launched in North, South East and South West Localities (includes new governance, and Communities of Practice). Rollout of self-evaluation through EMS and impactful action planning rolled out across remaining communities. Initial work begins with post 16 providers to develop more formal transition pathways, including testing approaches to Year 11–12 transition planning. Bespoke Local Inclusion Standards for KS2–KS3 transition are co-produced and trialled within pilot/settings, with initial in one community. Recommissioned mediation service is mobilised, with a clear focus on early resolution, collaboration and learning from themes arising. Launch single application process for post16 provisions. ICB SLT Advanced Practitioner Role – in post	<i>with earlier in the year.</i> <i>Moves to exclude reduced by Q4.</i> <i>Attendance for children with SEND and EHCP improved by year end.</i> <i>NEET levels begin to reduce or stabilise more positively by year end.</i>
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		children return to school.					
WS4: A financially sustainable system Building block(s): <i>Encouraging inclusive culture and behaviours</i> Desired outcomes: <i>Commissioning decisions are consistently driven by data on need, cost and outcomes</i> <i>The partnership uses integrated data to align spend with impact, ensuring resources are targeted where they deliver the greatest benefit and support a sustainable High Needs trajectory.</i> Success measure: <i>Forecast in year deficit growth</i> <i>Total unit cost for children and young people</i>	Head of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (Local Authority)	Coproduction of enhanced transition protocol from Special School to Mainstream completed and launched. Review of approach to deployment of AI in EHC drafting process.	<i>Forecast in year deficit growth –no change</i> <i>Total unit cost for children and young people – no change</i>	Redesign of local area SEND decision making panels completed. New model launched.	<i>Forecast in year deficit growth – positive movement</i> <i>Total unit cost for children and young people - reduction</i>		
Enabling activity	All system practitioners and stakeholders	Programme governance, delivery and assurance arrangements are confirmed. Reviewed Local Area Governance structure goes live – with newly developed SEND and AP Partnership Board Key Performance Indicators and system measures are agreed to inform Local Area Inclusion Dashboard Design.		Recruitment to SEND Transformation Lead role is completed. Recruitment to Local Area Partnership Manager role is completed. Local Area Inclusion Dashboard Goes Live. Quality Assurance Framework amended and re-launched to include approach to Support Bases in mainstream. Ongoing use of AI in EHC processes agreed to enable		Governance arrangements are reviewed in practice, with adjustments made to improve clarity of roles, effectiveness of meetings and strength of partner engagement.	

		Review of programme plan with Whole Education – specific focus on the		resources to be freed to support delivery of reform plan – and underpinning consistent high quality plans for those requiring specialist packages in the future. The SEND specific JSNA is developed, The refreshed High Needs Capital Plan is completed			
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	NA	NA		Programme oversight/additional leadership capacity Transformation lead – £13,623 (LV14) Partnership Manager - £9,966 (LV10) Workforce Community SENCO - £32,454k SLT/OT - £350k Eps - £100k (offset 50% reduction in traded work from existing staff) Specialist advisory teachers - £75k (offset 50% reduction in traded work from existing staff) Workforce training and development £25k Equipment £25k	Note – indicative gradings used subject to JDs being developed and formally evaluated	Programme oversight/additional leadership capacity Transformation lead – £13,623 (LV14) Partnership Manager - £9,966 (LV10) Workforce Community SENCO - £32,454k SLT/OT - £350k Eps - £100k (offset 50% reduction in traded work from existing staff) Specialist advisory teachers - £75k (offset 50% reduction in traded work from existing staff) Workforce training and development £25k Equipment £15k Special School outreach TBC ICB SLT Advanced Practitioner Role – £30k (SoT Proportion of shared cost across the ICB Cluster)	Note – indicative gradings used subject to JDs being developed and formally evaluated

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

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

We will deliver through strengthened programme capacity, clear accountability and enhanced system capability across data, workforce and culture.

Programme management and delivery capacity will be established through a dedicated transformation function working alongside the LA Programme Management Office (PMO). This will include a Local Area SEND Transformation Lead to oversee delivery and benefits realisation; an Early Intervention and Inclusion Lead to drive implementation of the Experts at Hand model; a re-purposed SEND Partnership Manager to coordinate multi-agency delivery and governance. Together, these roles will provide grip through structured programme governance, risk management and alignment to partnership priorities, addressing current capacity gaps identified in our maturity assessment.

We will strengthen data and analytics capacity by developing a partnership-wide SEND dashboard and outcomes framework, linking demand, spend, provision and impact. This will be supported by improved data integration across education, health and care, enabling timely performance reporting and informed commissioning decisions. We have an internal data transformation programme to support the delivery of improved recording, reporting and analytics.

Through Experts at Hand and communities of practice, we will build capability across mainstream settings, ensuring specialist expertise is used to coach and upskill the wider workforce, improving early identification and reducing escalation to statutory processes.

Finally, we will drive cultural change across the partnership, embedding shared accountability, co-production and a 'mainstream-first' approach. This will be reinforced through leadership behaviours, the Belonging Strategy and consistent Local Inclusion Standards.

Together, these actions ensure the partnership has the capacity, capability and infrastructure required to deliver sustainable SEND reform at pace, creating a direct causal pathway from investment in early support to reduced demand for statutory plans and high-cost placements

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.

For 2026–27, we have agreed a 0.5% transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block, equivalent to £1.3m, following consultation with schools and agreement at Schools Forum. This transfer is a targeted and proportionate measure to support delivery aligned to the activities set out in this reform plan, particularly our focus on inclusion, local capacity building and reduced reliance on high-cost independent provision.

The block transfer will be used to support two core strands of reform activity:

1. Scaling inclusive, locality-based delivery models

Funding will support the rollout of the SEND Cluster Model beyond the Central Locality. This model strengthens mainstream schools' ability to meet a wider range of needs through shared responsibility, peer support and earlier intervention, reducing escalation to EHCPs and specialist placements. This directly aligns with our Ordinarily Available Provision and inclusion workstreams.

2. Expanding inclusion bases and resourced provision in mainstream schools

The transfer will provide revenue support to enable the creation of additional resourced provision and SEND units in mainstream settings, complementing the capital programme. This will increase local capacity for children with complex but manageable needs, particularly where inclusion bases are the most appropriate form of provision. As new places come online, funding will follow the child within the local system rather than to external providers.

Together, these uses support the core reform outcomes by:

- Increasing the proportion of children with EHCPs supported in mainstream settings.
- Reducing growth in independent specialist provision through cost avoidance.
- Ensuring funding is redirected back into Stoke-on-Trent schools and settings.
- Supporting a sustainable trajectory for the High Needs Block while improving outcomes.

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.

Document [5.3 Sufficiency Statement.docx](#)

Document [8.1 AP Continuum Infographic.png](#)

Document [8.2 SEND Provision Pipeline.png](#)

Capital investment is being used deliberately to shift the system away from overreliance on specialist and independent provision and towards strong, mainstream first, locally accessible inclusive provision across the full 0–25 age range.

Inclusion at the core of our sufficiency strategy

We are expanding specialist inclusion bases (enhanced and resourced provision) as the primary mechanism for meeting growing need for children with Communication and Interaction, Speech, Language and Communication Needs and SEMH – 102 places created in 205/26 and a further 64 already identified for 2026/27. Our ambition is for each locality to have a balanced mix of primary resourced provision and a secondary inclusion base, with a longer-term goal for every secondary school to host a base supporting transition and inclusion. This enables children to access specialist input while remaining part of their local mainstream community, strengthening outcomes and reducing escalation. In year 1 we will have a secondary supported inclusion base in each of the four localities.

We have an agreed capital pipeline delivering significant growth in resourced provision between 2026 and 2030, including new and expanded inclusion bases in mainstream primary and secondary schools across central, north and south localities. We are working proactively with multi-academy trusts through joint sufficiency planning to identify suitable sites, maximise existing estate capacity and co-design inclusion bases – this has initially focussed on working with MATs experiencing falling school rolls to look at strategic planning around SEND, Early Years and Wraparound provision.

Reducing travel and keeping children local

Our place-planning strategy prioritises local provision close to home, reducing both travel distances and home-to-school transport costs. Expanding mainstream inclusion bases and specialist satellite provision enables children to remain within their communities and supports stronger parental confidence in the local offer.

Improving the suitability of the mainstream estate

Capital funding is already being used to improve the inclusivity and accessibility of mainstream environments through Inclusive Environment Grants, including sensory rooms, adaptable teaching spaces and therapy-ready accommodation. This will be rolled out citywide as part of our plan.

Specialist provision – targeted and justified growth

While inclusion is our default, we are also investing capital in specialist provision where need cannot be met elsewhere. Capacity assessments show some special schools are operating beyond physical capacity due to the complexity of need. We have existing developments in progress to expand special schools (creating additional capacity (Watermill Portland, Manor Abbey), creating satellite provision and developing a three-tier specialist model (outreach, satellites and hubs). We do not have plans to expand specialist provision further in pre-16.

We will review the suitability of our specialist provision in year 1 to ensure the suitability of their environments to meet the needs of an increasingly complex cohort of children and young people – to sustain the current level of places, whilst delivering excellent outcomes, not to increase numbers further.

Together, these investments ensure capital funding demonstrably delivers inclusive capacity, equitable access, reduced travel and improved mainstream environments for children and young people with SEND in Stoke-on-Trent. This investment will reduce reliance on independent placements in line with our best-case scenario forecasting and ensure that at least 41% of EHC need can be met within local mainstream provision.

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.

Document [9.1 SEND Reform Stakeholder Engagement Plan.docx](#)

We recognise that a system which works for children and families must be designed with them, not for them and have a well-established approach to coproduction evidenced in our maturity assessment. Parents and carers are seen as genuine partners in Stoke-on-Trent, and we will continue to work hard to embed the principles of asset-based community development to ensure that we coproduce solutions with communities and give power back where appropriate.

We will continue our coproduction of a partnership-wide universal offer agreement with schools, MATs, early years settings and post-16 providers, underpinned by up-to-date needs-based data and signed off by the local authority, ICB, MAT and school representatives and our Parent Carer Forum. We will brand this as our Local Inclusion Standards to align with national standards when they are released.

We have already piloted a locality model in the city, and we will take the learning from this to roll out a revised SEND Communities approach, bringing together schools within their localities to make decisions around the commissioning of support to meet their needs. Alongside this we will establish Communities of Practice bringing together SENCOs, headteachers and MAT SEND leads on a termly basis to share practice, identify emerging pressures and co-design responses.

Schools and settings will have an increased formal representation on our Local Area Partnership Board.

We recognise that many young people with SEND access further education in settings outside our local area. We will work with neighbouring local area partnerships and with FE representatives to ensure that our Experts at Hand Offer and broader support arrangements extend to out-of-area settings attended by our young people.

Our Parent Carer Forum is a well-established consortia arrangement including several parent groups.

The voice of children and young people will be captured directly and distinctly from parent voice through our CYP participation plan with clear evidence of how their views influence decisions. We will adopt the NHSE minimum co-production benchmark and self-assess against it in year one.

We have well established mechanisms for service leaders to engage with parents through initiatives such as our monthly SEND Community Lounge. We will look to expand these opportunities, when parents feel comfortable to do so, into each of the 4 areas of the city to ensure all parents can access them

Our SENDIASS service provides valued impartial information and guidance to parents and carers – and continues to see increasing demand. We are cognisant of minimum SENDIASS service standards, and we will review the delivery model against these in year 1, with an ambition to pivot the approach to supporting more families through earlier intervention and greater alignment with Best Start Family Hubs and Families First Partnership Family Help teams. We have no evidence of local parental concerns about the perceived independence of SENDIASS.

Our local mediation arrangements have been reviewed and are considered to be inconsistent. We will recommission services to align to our vision of the future system, building in metrics for timeliness, resolution rates and effectiveness.

Impact will be measured through annual parent confidence surveys, reduction in complaints and tribunal rates, and increased participation of CYP in decision-making forums. We will reduce tribunal rates by 1% over three years and have regular surveys with parents to understand their lived experience of accessing the local area partnership.

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
Insufficient specialist workforce capacity to deliver the Experts at Hand offer at scale, resulting in limited reach, delays to support, and reduced impact on early intervention and demand for statutory assessment	5	5	25	Phased implementation, use of alternatively qualified roles including trainees and assistants – supported by more senior positions, alignment with national workforce programmes. Fortnightly EAHO Steering Group convened to monitor and track issues with recruitment. Consider joint approach with Staffordshire for pan-ICB roles. Redeployment of existing traded capacity will reduce limitations around EP/Advisory teaching capacity.	15
Schools and early years settings capacity for change stretched by multiple system wide reforms operating concurrently	4	3	12	Single partnership group for leadership model, co-design across SEND Community (locality) model, consistent thresholds, co-located staff working under identical supervision and leadership, school feedback actively sought regularly. Measured approach to roll out.	9
ICB restructuring or NHS reform disrupts joint commissioning arrangements	5	3	15	Clear governance and decision-making frameworks, documented reform roadmap and agreed priorities, strong SRO oversight.	6
Limited programme management, delivery capacity or analytical capability reduces grip on delivery and impacts achievement of Year 1 milestones	4	2	8	Investment in dedicated programme management and transformation capacity through the EAH Transformation Fund; integration with PMO, routine reporting and delivery assurance.	2

Data quality or availability limits the ability to evidence progress, demonstrate impact, and inform decision-making	3	3	9	Development of partnership data dashboard to be prioritised, investment in partnership intelligence lead.	6
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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

Our Local SEND Reform Plan sits within a complex landscape of national and local reform. We have identified the following key dependencies and set out how we will manage them.

NHS reforms: The restructuring of Integrated Care Boards and the development of Neighbourhood Health Services will directly affect the commissioning and delivery of health services for children and young people with SEND. We are mitigating this through early and sustained engagement with our ICB partners, ensuring that SEND is embedded within NHS planning at Place level. Our joint governance arrangements and the requirement for ICB Chief Executive sign-off on this plan provide a structural mechanism for maintaining alignment through transition.

Local Government Reorganisation: Whilst our plan focusses on addressing the opportunities we have now, design has been future proofed through engagement with neighbouring authorities and an understanding of their proposed operating models to align wherever possible. Shared ICB footprints have supported this endeavour. Whilst LGR represents an opportunity for the city to redefine our local offer, our sufficiency planning will need to adapt to the changing needs of a potentially larger population of children and more dispersed geography of settings.

Reforms to Children's Social Care: The development of Multi-disciplinary Family Help Teams and the broader reforms to children's social care will intersect with our SEND system, particularly for children with complex needs who are known to both services. We will ensure alignment between our SEND reform plan and our family help implementation, with shared governance where appropriate. We are exploring the role of SEND as part of our

new integrated front door through the families first partnership

Best Start in Life, including Family Hubs: Our Local SEND Reform Plan is aligned with our Best Start local plan. Both sit within the government's ambition to improve child development and health outcomes. Our Best Start Family Hubs will include children and family services professionals specifically trained in supporting inclusion for children with additional needs, and the Experts at Hand Offer will be designed to integrate with Family Hub provision, particularly for early years identification and intervention through Best Start Inclusion Practitioners.

Curriculum and Assessment Review: The outcomes of the Curriculum and Assessment Review may affect how schools identify and respond to SEND needs within the universal offer. We will ensure that our universal offer agreement with schools is reviewed and refreshed in light of any changes to curriculum expectations, and that our Experts at Hand Offer is responsive to evolving practice requirements. We are working with schools through the local Futures Forum to look at innovative approaches to curriculum development and vocational pathways that will engage SEND learners in meaningful education leading to employment opportunities in the city.

Managing across dependencies: Our named SRO will be responsible for tracking cross-cutting dependencies and reporting to the Partnership Board on any risks to delivery. We have built flexibility into our year 1 delivery plan to allow for adjustment as national guidance is published, including the Experts at Hand Guidance, inclusion bases guidance, and Local Inclusion Partnership Grant methodology, all expected in Spring 2026.

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.

We will develop a Local Area SEND and Inclusion Dashboard that will inform our risk and governance frameworks. The dashboard will be linked to our Pots of Positivity outcomes framework, coproduced with children and young people. In the meantime, we will use the following monitoring tools and processes:

- Live, daily operational statutory dashboard through PowerBi monitored to review the demand on statutory EHC processes. This data feeds from our case management system.
- Develop bespoke reporting
- Monthly financial forecasting and reporting through our High Needs Board, including updates to the Data Template

Alongside the key 6 success metrics identified in this document, we will:

- We will monitor EHCP requests, conversion rates, timeliness of statutory processes, tribunal activity and diagnostic pathway demand. This will allow us to understand pressure points, predict future need and assess whether earlier intervention is reducing escalation.
- We will monitor attendance, suspensions and exclusions, placement stability, educational progress and post-16 destinations for children and young people with SEND. Service quality will be monitored through parental satisfaction, SENDIASS themes, complaints, tribunal trends and audit findings.

Tracking service delivery:

- We will track capacity and deployment across the system, including therapy input, Experts at Hand activity, specialist and resourced mainstream places creative AP usage and transitions support. This will be used to assess whether services are being delivered as planned and aligned to need.

Feedback and adaptation:

- Progress will be reviewed routinely through the SEND Board and Delivery Groups, using data alongside lived-experience intelligence. Co-production forums, SEND Community Lounges, PEGiS feedback, youth participation activity and frontline audits will provide qualitative insight.
- We are adopting a “you said, together we did” feedback loop to support transparency and enable us to adapt delivery where impact is not yet strong enough. This will be shared through the Local Offer.
- We will trial the use of a ‘your 60second say’ service using voice notes and WhatsApp to gather parental feedback on thematic priorities.
- We will use the Mind of My Own App to gather YP voice

- We are commissioning a joint piece of work with Keele University and the YMCA to survey and engage directly with 300 children and young people with SEND
- We will use our Local Offer website
- We will use SEND Community Lounges to gather parental voice

The SEND Reform SRO holds overall accountability for delivery, benefits realisation and risk management, supported by the SEND Delivery Group and reporting to the SEND & Inclusion Partnership Board.

Together, this approach ensures we maintain grip on delivery while remaining responsive to children, young people and families.

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.

Document [13.1 SEND Reform Plan Data Template.xlsx](#)

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 <i>This may be a governance group, or an individual (e.g. SRO).</i>	Purpose/ Responsibilities <i>What is the function of this governance mechanism? What are they accountable for overseeing? What information is reported to this governance mechanism?</i>	Membership <i>Who does this governance mechanism comprise of? [should include health and PCF representation] What stakeholders are represented at this governance mechanism? Please indicate who chairs this. (Include n/a if an individual).</i>	Cadence <i>How regularly does this governance mechanism meet?</i>	Decision Rights <i>What decisions can this governance mechanism make?</i>	Escalation Route <i>Where can this governance mechanism escalate issues or decision to?</i>
Children's Improvement Board (CIB)	Independent scrutiny and challenge on improvement across children's services, including SEND; ensures progress against inspection findings and system improvement is robust, sustained and outcomes focused.	Independent Chair; LA senior leaders; health, police, education, voluntary sector partners; DfE / LGA advisers.	Bi-monthly (thematic).	Challenge, scrutiny and recommendations; escalation of systemic risks requiring senior intervention.	Chief Executive; Cabinet; relevant statutory boards.
SEND & Inclusion Partnership Board	Strategic system leadership for SEND reform and inclusion, accountable for overseeing implementation of the Local SEND Reform Plan and SEND Strategy; maintains system-wide assurance, performance oversight and shared accountability across partners. Ownership of the SEND workstreams within the Education Improvement Strategy	Independent Chair; senior LA, ICB and NHS leaders; DfE observers; education leaders; Parent Carer Forum; SENDIASS.	6 weekly (with ad-hoc sessions by exception). <i>(Subject to review as part of governance review – launch q4)</i>	Endorses reform priorities and delivery plans; agrees collective actions; resolves cross-system barriers; commissions corrective action.	CYPF Strategic Partnership Board; Health & Wellbeing Board (where required).

SEND Delivery Group	Oversees operational delivery of the SEND Reform Plan and SEND Delivery Plan; tracks milestones, risks and impact; ensures delivery activity remains on track and escalates issues where progress is at risk.	Jointly chaired by LA (Head of SEND) and ICB (Designated Clinical Officer); LA leads, ICB, NHS providers, education reps, DSCO.	Monthly (additional meetings by exception). <i>(Subject to review as part of governance review – launch q4)</i>	Operational decisions within partner remits; agreement of mitigations; escalation of risks and blockages.	SEND & Inclusion Partnership Board.
High Needs Programme Board	Oversees transformation activity linked to high needs improvement and DSG sustainability; monitors demand, provision, financial controls and agreed reform activity where it intersects with SEND reform delivery.	LA senior leaders, finance, commissioning, education, health partners.	Fortnightly / Monthly (varies by phase). <i>(Subject to review as part of governance review – launch q4)</i>	Programme-level decisions within agreed tolerances; approval of business cases and change requests.	SEND & Inclusion Partnership Board; Corporate / Transformation governance.
Project Workstreams	Delivery of specific elements of the SEND Reform Plan; translating strategy into practice; monitoring day-to-day progress and impact; feeding intelligence and risks into main delivery governance.	Multi-agency operational leads; education, health, LA officers; PCF involvement where appropriate.	Monthly / aligned to delivery rhythm.	Operational delivery decisions; recommendations into SEND Delivery Group.	SEND Delivery Group.
Schools Forum	Provides strategic oversight and assurance on the use of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), including the High Needs Block, ensuring alignment with SEND reform	Chaired by a school representative (as per statutory requirements); membership includes representatives from primary, secondary and special schools, academies and	Meets at least termly, with additional meetings scheduled as required to support financial planning	Advisory body with statutory responsibilities to provide views on funding arrangements, including High	Escalates key risks, concerns or funding-related recommendations to the SEND & Inclusion Partnership Board

	priorities and financial sustainability. Advises on funding decisions, including block transfers, and supports the shift toward inclusive, mainstream-first provision by ensuring resources are deployed effectively to meet need and deliver value for money.	maintained schools, early years providers, the local authority (including finance and SEND leads), with observers from the ICB and Parent Carer Forum where appropriate	cycles and key decision points.	Needs Block spending, block transfers and de-delegation. Influences strategic investment decisions and provides challenge and support to ensure alignment with SEND reform and DSG sustainability plans.	and Local Authority corporate governance (including Cabinet where required)
Experts at Hand Steering Group	Support, monitor and unblock the operational delivery of the EAHO model.	Multi-agency operational leads; education sector partners from each community governance board, health, LA officers; PCF involvement where appropriate.	Fortnightly	Operational delivery decisions; recommendations into SEND Delivery Group.	SEND Delivery Group.

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



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

We would welcome the following practical support from central government to strengthen our delivery.

- Support with workforce development, particularly for Educational Psychologists and Speech and Language Therapists. The national shortage of these specialists is a significant constraint on our ability to deliver the Experts at Hand Offer at scale and to reduce assessment waiting times. We would value access to regional workforce planning support and any national recruitment initiatives.
- Guidance on the use of AI-enabled tools within statutory SEND processes. This would support wider sector confidence and reduce barriers to adoption.
- The continuation of regional peer networks through the RIIA.
- Tools or templates to support consistent data collection and reporting to avoid duplication and enable regional and national benchmarking, particularly for the quarterly data returns. Standardised dashboards and benchmarking tools would reduce the burden on local teams and support more meaningful comparison across areas.
- Support with system-level coordination across education, health and care, particularly where ICB restructuring or NHS reforms create uncertainty about commissioning responsibilities and governance arrangements for SEND.
- DfE capacity to promptly, but safely, process significant change applications to enable rapid deployment of new Specialist Inclusion bases where they have been identified at a local level. National standards around Inclusion bases would allow Las to deploy these quickly with reduced risk and increased parental confidence.
- A national communications campaign, that can be tailored locally, to ensure that the benefits of a mainstream first system are shared with all stakeholders across the partnership, building parental confidence in the benefits of a mainstream education.