

Preparation and Support- SEND Reforms

In December, the DfE and NHSE issued a joint letter outlining the intention to ask all local area partnerships to develop a Local **SEND Reform Plan** in the new year.

The letter included **interim actions** that local area partnerships can take to prepare for change, along with details of support.

We recognise the **challenging context** including high pressures on BAU delivery alongside the backdrop of conversations around system reform.

These **SEND reforms sit alongside wider government programmes** such as Families First and Best Start in Life, aiming to:

- Break down barriers to opportunity
- Create a more coherent system of support for families
- Combine universal and targeted services
- Strengthen collaboration across education, health and social care

Work is underway to coordinate commissioning timelines and align key performance indicators, while reducing duplication and improving integration.

We know there is also the added **complexity of LGR and ICB changes** in progress, and there is work going on in the department to consider how these elements fit together as reform work develops.

In advance of wider announcements on system reform, we will focus on supporting areas to:



Review existing data and agree a baseline for current system performance



Use the Local Partnership Maturity Assessment Tool to assess the maturity of current practice across education, health and care



Convene across their local partnership to review baseline data and partnership maturity, identifying priority areas for strengthened practice



Reflect and take steps to action the focus areas set out in the letter to strengthen local systems and performance



Engage with learnings from inspection outcomes, emerging departmental learnings and best practice already within the sector to drive continuous improvements that are underpinned by the five principles for SEND reform



Identify further actions they can take to improve the management of their high needs budget, within the arrangements set out by the current SEND system

SEND Local Partnership Maturity Assessment Tool

Tested with the Change Programme, the Maturity Assessment Tool has been designed to support local area partnerships to understand and evaluate the capability and maturity of their current practice, and to plan for the necessary changes and improvements.

SEND & AP PARTNERSHIP SELF-ASSESSMENT							
ASSESSMENT CONTEXT - please add any relevant information about how you have completed the tool, including any limiting factors in arriving at a shared assessment.				STATUS - use this box for version control (e.g. DATE, v1.0) and to record any formal decisions/agreements about the assessment.			
Pillar 1: Co-production with parent carers, children and young people							
1 - EMERGING	2 - DEVELOPING	3 - MATURING	ASSESSMENT	DATE	STRENGTHS/SUCCESSES IN PROGRESS	GAPS/ISSUES TO ADDRESS	FOCUS AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT
The area has a parent carer forum (PCF) that has a formalised structure but is not always supported to actively engage with local partners or is a recent newly formed forum. The PCF strategic leads of the local PCF do not regularly attend partnership board meetings and there is limited engagement. There is an awareness of the principles of co-production and parents, carers and children and young people are beginning to be involved in discussions about services. Schools are beginning to engage with parents but a clear approach of co-production has not yet been fully embedded as best practice. Relations with families/PCF are not entirely positive and key groups of parents are vocal in their concerns.	The area has an active, effective, and sustainable PCF. Local SEND and AP youth forums or user groups are engaged with throughout planning and delivery. Schools are developing practice to co-produce with parents and children and young people. Some aspects of service planning and review cycles actively seek input, but participation is not yet universal or embedded.	The area has an active PCF which meets regularly with the system partners. Strong feedback mechanisms ensure that children, young people and families know how their views influence decisions. There is strong evidence that their views shape services and outcomes. Co-production is a core feature of planning, delivery and review. Parents, carers and children and young people are equal partners, with clear and regular opportunities to influence strategic priorities, service design and quality assurance. Schools have embedded practices to co-produce with parents and children and young people.					
Pillar 2: Effective system leadership and governance							
1 - EMERGING	2 - DEVELOPING	3 - MATURING	ASSESSMENT	DATE	STRENGTHS/SUCCESSES IN PROGRESS	GAPS/ISSUES TO ADDRESS	PRIORITIES & SUPPORT NEEDS
Partners are working with initial governance structures and developing clarity on where strategic decisions are made. Opportunities exist to further engage stakeholders in operational and strategic planning. Communication is identified as an area for improvement. Accountability is supported by existing processes and compliance measures. The partnership is focused on strengthening outcome measures and building shared understanding of system performance.	Structures and forums for decision-making are established and increasingly understood, with partners contributing meaningfully to discussions. Feedback pathways between operational and strategic levels are being implemented. Communication channels exist but need strengthening in parts of the system. An outcomes-based approach is developing, with agreed shared outcomes and initial steps to use data for evaluation. Partners are starting to communicate openly about progress, and feedback is more routinely discussed.	Well-defined and embedded governance ensures decisions are collectively made at appropriate levels. All partners have clarity on their roles and can easily influence both operational and strategic planning. Processes are continually reviewed for improvement. Commissioning is well understood and integrated across the partnership. Robust, transparent systems for measuring and reporting outcomes are fully embedded. Success is judged by the impact on children, young people and families, and services are continually improved in response to honest evaluations involving all partners. Decision-making is both aspirational and innovative.					
Pillar 3: Accurate understanding of needs through effective use of data							
1 - EMERGING	2 - DEVELOPING	3 - MATURING	ASSESSMENT	DATE	STRENGTHS/SUCCESSES IN PROGRESS	GAPS/ISSUES TO ADDRESS	PRIORITIES & SUPPORT NEEDS
Data gathering methods are being established or updated and provide an initial understanding of needs and gaps. Planning is supported by available quantitative data, with opportunities to develop more comprehensive use of family and CYP perspectives. Commissioning is underway within each sector, with some early cross-agency conversations. Providers are	Partners collaborate to gather both quantitative and qualitative evidence of needs. There is a growing sophistication in analysing current provision against future demand, and plans are underway to address identified weaknesses and gaps. Partners are working together more actively, consulting providers and starting to coordinate commissioning.	A robust and comprehensive evidence base underpins strategic planning. Rich quantitative and qualitative data is routinely collected, shared, and used to monitor trends and inform sufficiency planning. Joint commissioning across the partnership ensures that services are in place to meet the range of needs.					



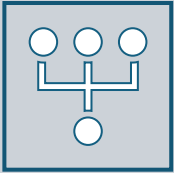
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Local partnership maturity assessment guidance



Preparation and Support



Preparation and Support Meetings

- * Over the next month we will be facilitating Preparation and Support Meetings. 15 meetings have taken place to date.
- * The meetings reflect on the content of the letter issued in early December.
- * Introduce Financial and SEND Advisers to LA officials, and agree a regular meeting schedule/working pattern between LA officials and the Advisers (where adviser availability allows)
- * Agree priority support areas



Support

All LAs will receive a comprehensive 'universal offer' of support from the DfE throughout the SEND reform journey. This offer includes dedicated support from VCUs, Financial Advisers and SEND Advisers for every LA



Adviser Involvement

- * **Pre-Commissioning:** Advisers help LAs to assess and evaluate their current systems, reviewing baseline data and supporting areas to effectively embed best practice
- * **Plan Development:** Advisers work collaboratively with LA leadership teams and system partners to support strategic planning and effective practice which underpins the creation of robust reform plans.
- * **Implementation:** Advisers work with LAs to support plan