Welcome to

SE19 SEND Leaders and Managers Meeting

Friday 9th October 2026

SESLIP
South East Sector Led Improvement Programme

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Welcome



Updates from DfE

Paul Schofield, Deputy Director
Jasmine Hussain, Regional Lead for SEND Improvement and Intervention

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Department for Education

SE19 Leaders and Managers in SEND Meeting



Friday 9th October 2026

Common Themes across SEND Reform Plans

Following the review of Local SEND Reform Plans some common themes emerged across the region:

What went well

- A focus on **inclusion** and improving support within mainstream settings.
- An emphasis on **early intervention and prevention** to identify and respond to need as early as possible.
- **Partnership working** across education, health and care to support delivery of reform.
- **Co-production** with children, young people, families and Parent Carer Forums.
- Consideration of **governance, leadership, data and evidence** to support implementation and improvement.

Areas for improvement

- Strengthen **measures of outcomes and impact** for children and young people with SEND.
- Develop **clearer implementation plans,** including milestones, timelines and progress tracking.
- Improve **use of data and performance information** to monitor delivery and evaluate impact.
- **Strengthen partnership accountability**, roles and responsibilities across education, health and care.
- **Embed co-production** throughout implementation.

Looking Ahead

Working with local partnerships to monitor progress, identify barriers and support delivery.

Engagement & Monitoring Arrangements

- Quarterly reviews of SEND Reform Plans from January 2027
- Review milestones and delivery progress
- Identify risks and agree next steps

Data Returns

- Quarterly data submissions
- Use existing evidence where possible
- Minimise reporting burden

Support Available

- DfE Regional Teams
- NHS England Regional SEND Leads
- SEND Advisers and Financial Advisers

Discussion
Including opportunities for local areas to share information and experience

SE19 Network Chairs
Deborah, Jamie and David

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Refreshment break

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Overview of the SE19 RIIA grant activity

Sheelagh Sullivan and Chris Owen

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SESLIP Projects 2026-27

Brief descriptions of the projects in the Regional Improvement Plan

SESLIP Regional Improvement Plan 2026-27

SESLIP 2026-27 PROJECT PORTFOLIO

DATA & DIAGNOSTICS

Data Capacity & Capability

1 Data Benchmarking for CSC & SEND
50 ICB Partnership Data Dashboards

Regional Diagnostics

2 DCS Self-assessment & Peer Challenge
3 SEND Courageous Conversations

UNIVERSAL IMPROVEMENT

Future Leaders & Workforce

4 SEND Workforce Development - Residential
5 Take Your Place: CSC & SEND Future Leaders
6 CSC Workforce Agency & MoC
7 SEND Workforce

Universal SEND

8 Leaders in SEND
10 PfA & Post-16 Network
11 DCO/DMO Network
12 SEND Forum
13 CYP Regional Network
15 AP Networking & Cross-Border Oversight
18 Technology for SEND Decision-Making
19 Co-production with Partners
20 Mainstream Inclusion
21 SENDAP & Inclusion / Alternative Education
22 Youth Justice/SEND PRRE Part 2
51 Regional Analysis: Maturity Indicators & Reform Plans
52 Cluster Funding Models

Universal CSC

16 Transformation Network
27 Kinship Connected Deployment

PROGRAMME SUPPORT

Project Management

29 SEND Programme Manager & Support
30 SESLIP Programme Manager & Support
31 SESLIP Website
32 KCC Overhead Contribution

Targeted Support

33 Targeted Support (carried forward)

Includes:

- SEND support and partnership work
- CSC Safe Uncertainty partnership work
- Fostering partnership work
- Coaching, Lean Academy & project management

SESLIP OWN FUNDS

SESLIP Own Funds Schemes

28 Piloting Kinship Reach
34 Regional Adoption Leadership Board
35 Commissioners Network
36 Early Help Network
37 Fostering Network
38 Kinship Care Network
39 Principal Social Workers Network
40 Quality Assurance Network
41 AD Safeguarding Network
42 Education Directors' Network
43 Lead Members' Network
44 Foster Carer Wellbeing
46 Children & Young People and Continuing Care
47 QA Research Project - Phase 3
48 BGM Workforce Survey - Phase 2
49 SE ADCS Room Bookings

SESLIP Regional Improvement Plan 2026-27

SESLIP 2026-27 PROJECT PORTFOLIO

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UNIVERSAL IMPROVEMENT

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SESLIP OWN FUNDS

SESLIP Own Funds Schemes

46 Children & Young People and Continuing Care

Project	Brief description
Universal Projects - SEND	
Regional Analysis of Maturity Indicators and Reform Plans Gleb Popov and Sylvain Poncet	Collects and **analyses SEND reform plans** and **maturity indicators** to identify regional strengths and priorities. The findings will shape regional projects, targeted support and peer-review activity.
SEND Workforce Jo McSherrie Sonia Dayal Claire Woodcock	Strengthens the SEND workforce through **legal training**, further development of the **SEND apprenticeship**, a **repeat workforce survey** and possible additional training linked to the Experts at Hand model.
Preparing for Adulthood and Post-16 Network Julie Pointer	Supports the **Preparing for Adulthood community of practice**, with a focus on post-16 transition and access to employment for young people with SEND. The network will meet termly, develop regional guidance and report on impact.
DCO/DMO Network Caroline Tozzi and Adeline Gibbs	Supports the **regional network for DCO/DMO health roles** during changes to Integrated Care Board structures. It will address shared capacity and organisational issues and strengthen health and local authority partnership working for SEND reform.
SEND Forum Sheelagh Sullivan Sonia Dayal	Runs termly **SEND Forums** open to professionals, settings, parents, carers, children and young people. The forums provide national updates, regional good practice and additional **SEND Forum Plus** deep-dive sessions.
Children and Young People Regional Network Adeline Gibbs Julie Pointer	Builds a **regional community of practice** so children and young people can influence, challenge and celebrate how their voices are heard in SEND. It will widen participation, develop shared resources and involve young people in SEND reform.
Using Technology to Improve Decision-making in SEND Nick King	Moves the **SEND Banding Tool** from a tested prototype to a supported product for wider use. The project will secure technical support, fix and improve the software, establish a user group and coordinate rollout with the cluster funding work.
Working with Partners to Improve Co-production Caroline Tozzi	Uses the **regional co-production survey** to produce a report and agree shared principles for working with families. It will make recommendations on how Parent Carer Forums can participate fully in local SEND development.

Mainstream Inclusion Project Jude MacDonald	Supports stronger **inclusion in mainstream settings** through a regional community of practice. Work will include quality-assurance guidance, support for the **Experts at Hand** model, webinars, case studies, practical resources and shared learning.
Cluster Funding Models Peter Gray/Sheelagh Sullivan	Helps local areas test **cluster funding models** so SEND resources are distributed through shared local decision-making. The project will support mainstream schools to take collective responsibility for demand and resources, with expert and consultancy support.
Targeted Support	
Targeted Support Chris Baird and Claire Woodcock	Provides **tailored support to local authorities** in areas such as SEND improvement, SEND partnerships, children's social care practice and fostering. It also includes senior **leadership coaching** and **Lean Academy training.**
Children and Young People and Continuing Care Sonia Dayal	Supports a **community of practice** for managers responsible for children and young people's continuing care. It will share good practice and legal learning, influence the continuing care framework, and strengthen sub-regional work across ICB areas.
Regional Diagnostics	
SEND Courageous Conversations Chris Baird	Provides structured **peer-review conversations** that help local areas examine a chosen SEND priority, learn from other authorities and identify practical improvements. Parent Carer Forum representatives and staff from other local authorities take part, with further conversations planned during 2026-27.
Data Capacity and Capability	
Data Benchmarking for both CSC and SEND Sheelagh Sullivan to comment on national update	Improves the **quality and consistency of regional SEND and children's social care data**. The project will refresh benchmarking dashboards, increase data collection and workshops to quarterly, develop leadership insight tools, strengthen SEND and alternative provision data capacity, and work with national partners on shared measures and learning.
ICB Partnership Data Dashboards Caroline Tozzi	Creates a **shared SEND data dashboard across the Thames Valley Integrated Care Board area** while retaining local authority-level analysis. Learning will be used to support equivalent dashboards across the other South East ICB areas.
Leaders in SEND (Strategic and Operational Leads' Networks) Sheelagh Sullivan	Provides a **flexible peer network for strategic and operational SEND leaders**. Half-termly meetings and joint conferences will help leaders discuss challenges, share practice and shape regional projects.

Regional analysis of Maturity Indicators

Sylvain Poncet, Public Alchemy

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SEND Reform Plans share major commonalities, matching regional projects developed for this year.

Summary of the Maturity Assessment Matrix

	SEND Reform Pillars								
	1	2	3	4	5.1	5.2	5.3	6	7
LA 1									
LA 2									
LA 3									
LA 4									
LA 5									
LA 6									
LA 7									
LA 8									
LA 9									
LA 10									
LA 11									
LA 12									
LA 13									
LA 14									
LA 15									
LA 16									
LA 17									
LA 18									
LA 19									

Legend

- Maturing
- Developing
- Emerging
- Not Emerging

SEND Reform pillars

- **Pillar 1**: Co-production with parent carers, children and young people
- **Pillar 2:** Effective system leadership and governance
- **Pillar 3:** Accurate understanding of needs through effective use of data
- **Pillar 4:** High-Quality Service Delivery at universal, targeted and specialist levels to promote inclusion
- **Pillar 5.1:** Effective Partnership working across education providers
- **Pillar 5.2:** Effective Partnership working across Health Services
- **Pillar 5.3:** Effective Partnership working across education Social Care/LA
- **Pillar 6:** Skilled and organised workforce
- **Pillar 7:** Targeted, judicious and sustainable use of resources

5 common priorities emerge: Workforce, Data Intelligence, School Inclusion, Governance and Health.

Themes identified as priorities in your SEND Reform Plan	LAs with matching priorities
SEND Workforce: Mainstream Inclusion & Workforce Capability	**15**
School Inclusion: Early Intervention & Experts at Hand	**7**
Data Intelligence: Predictive Demand & Sufficiency Planning	**11**
Data Intelligence: Data-led Governance & Outcomes	**10**
Governance: Co-production & Partnership Engagement	**9**
Governance: Health – Integrated SEND Partnership & Accountability	**8**

Those themes strongly align with regional projects already in place for the year

SEND Workforce
- Jo McSherrie
- Sonia Dayal
- Claire Woodcock

Mainstream Inclusion Project
- Jude MacDonald
- Marian Cullen

DCO / DMO Network
- Adeline Gibbs
- Caroline Tozzi

Preparing for adulthood
- Julie Pointer
- Sonia Dayal

Working with partners to improve coproduction
- Caroline Tozzi

Cluster funding models
- Peter Gray
- Sheelagh Sullivan

Thematic Analysis: AI supported Analysis using Microsoft Office software.

1

Data extraction from plans

Power Automate

Excel
Maturity Matrix Content

Extraction of strengths, gaps and priorities

Creation of an Excel database of comments

2

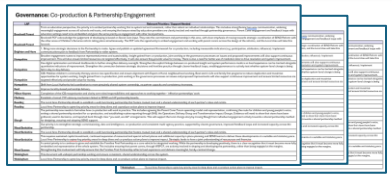
AI review of each comment

Power Automate

An AI agent reviewed each comment to identify matches against 42 defined themes.

3

Human Analysis



- Theme Frequency Analysis
- Review of comments for the most frequent themes

Other Use Case: EHCP AI Quality Review

Goal: Provide officers live quality assurance on their EHCP so they can improve before submitting.

Upload working draft in Teams

AI review based on your own assessment criteria

Summary and details provided in Teams



Gaps identified by LAP : **Workforce, Data Intelligence and Health** are the most frequently identified gaps.

Local Area Partnerships are converging around a relatively small number of common system challenges.
The top 10 themes are covering more than 75% of the gaps identified by LAs.

	Rank per theme importance		
Top 10 Regional Themes by frequency	**More Mature**	**Average maturity**	**Less mature**
Workforce	**2**	**1**	**1**
Data Intelligence & Dashboard	**3**	**3**	**2**
Health	**1**	**2**	**3**
Governance	**5**	**4**	**4**
School Inclusion	**4**	**9**	**6**
Sufficiency Planning	**14**	**19**	**5**
Early Intervention	**6**	**5**	**9**
CYP Voice	**7**	**10**	**7**
Co-production	**10**	**8**	**12**
Timeliness	**12**	**12**	**8**

Each maturity group shows a distinct pattern of gaps, reflecting different priorities at different maturity stages.

Maturing LAs – Specific priorities (top 10)
- Social Care – Rank 8
- Communication & Engagement – Rank 9

Developing LAs – Specific priorities (top 10)
- Parental Voice – Rank 6
- Finance – Rank 7

Emerging LAs – Specific priorities (top 10)
- Commissioning – Rank 10

Key insights
- **Workforce, Data intelligence** and **Health** are the most common gaps.
- **School inclusion and governance** are two linked themes central to the SEND reform.

Regional Theme: Governance

Theme	Shared ambition	Priorities	LAs mentioning actions as part of their SEND plans
Governance Co-production & Partnership Engagement	Make CYP, families, schools and partners genuine participants in SEND decision-making and improvement	Develop a consistent approach on: • Co-production • Representation and two-way engagement with clear routes into governance, feedback loops and evidence of how stakeholder insight has influenced decisions and improvement	**10 LAs**
Governance Health – Integrated SEND Partnership & Accountability	Strengthen health's role as an equal and accountable partner within the SEND system	• Clarify health roles, accountability and governance • Strengthen ICB/provider participation and escalation routes • Improve joint working across education, health and care • Address barriers to shared delivery and information	**9 LAs**

Any questions?

Discussion

Mainstream Inclusion Community of Practice

Marian Cullen and Jude Macdonald, SESLIP

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Schools unsure, families further behind

WHAT PEOPLE TOLD US

- Schools do not all understand what is on offer or how to ask for it.
- Confidence in talking to parents and carers is the lowest score in the survey.
- Not one area felt confident about talking with parents and carers.
- People want plain, shared wording: what the help is, how to get it, how it fits with EHCPs and what to expect.

WHAT THE SCORES SHOW

- Some schools understand the offer: 2.94 out of 5
- Talking with parents and carers: 2.50 out of 5
- ***Talk about***: what is the one thing schools and families keep hearing differently?

What are the concerns?

THERE IS CONSISTENCY IN THE CONCERNS

- Losing enforceable rights.
- A narrower EHCP threshold.
- 'Standardised' provision does not suit all pupils.
- Loss of parental choice in schooling.
- Inclusion becoming 'everyone must stay in mainstream.'
- Mainstream schools do not have capacity to meet all needs.
- Funding will not reach the child directly.
- Accountability: what is the escalation route when the school is not / cannot deliver.
- Reduced access to tribunal.
- Harder to access (full) special schools.
- Implementation capacity.
- More fighting.

On the other hand

PARENTS RECOGNISE CURRENT ISSUES

- The current EHCP system is:
  - Beaurocractic.
  - Difficult to navigate.
  - Slow.
  - Inconsistent between LAs.
  - Dependant on parents knowing how to advocate.
  - Overly reliant on EHCPs to access funding.
  - Poor at providing funded, early intervention,

YES, BUT

- Yes: give children support earlier.
- Yes: improve mainstream inclusion,
- Yes: get specialists into schools.
- Yes: reduce the beauocracy.
- Yes: stop parents having to fight.
- But: in doing that, do not take away the rights and protections for children who still need them.

Six core areas

LEGAL RIGHT TO SUPPORT

- The proposed system would intrduce legal protection for support through an Individual Support Plan (ISP).
- Your child's school will complete the ISP, in co-production with you.
- It must record the child's needs, provision and intended outcomes.
- For children with the most complex needs, an EHCP would remain, underpinned by a Specialist Provision Package, with legal entitlements.

PARENT SUMMARY

The proposed reforms would not remove statutory SEND support. They would change how that support is recorded and, for children with the most complex needs, how it is secured.

The detail of how these new duties will work in practice will depend on the final legislation and guidance.

Six core areas

WHAT HAPPENS TO CURRENT SUPPORT?

- EHCPs would remain for children and young people with complex needs requiring specialist provision.
- The new Specialist Provision Packages would define the specialist support required, with the EHCP providing the statutory framework around that support.
- For children who already have an EHCP, the Government has said they will not have to reapply. Instead, existing plans would be reassessed at natural phase transitions, with the first transitions beginning from 2030.

PARENT SUMMARY

If your child already has an EHCP, you will not be asked to start again from scratch.

Existing EHCPs will be protected during transition, with reassessment taking place at specified points as the new system is introduced.

Six core areas

WILL I STILL GET TO CHOOSE THE SCHOOL?

- The DfE's current proposals say that children moving from an EHCP to an ISP would retain the right to request a mainstream placement.
- No child will move from a special school or college unless they choose to do so.

PARENT SUMMARY

Children with the most complex needs will continue to have an EHCP and specialist provision where this is what they require.

Children with existing EHCPs will not simply be moved into mainstream settings as a result of the reforms.

Six core areas

HOW WILL MAINSTREAM CHANGE?

- National Inclusion Standards
- Stronger universal provision
- Earlier identification
- Targeted and targeted-plus support
- **Experts at Hand**
- Greater access to specialist expertise such as educational psychology and speech and language therapy
- Additional funding/investment to build capacity.

PARENT SUMMARY

The reforms depend on mainstream settings having greater access to expertise, resources and support.

This means developing staff expertise, improving universal provision and making specialist advice available earlier — rather than waiting until a child reaches crisis point.

Six core areas

HOW WILL I BE INVOLVED?

- The DfE proposes that ISPs are developed with parents and young people, rather than being simply imposed by the school.
- For EHCP decisions, the SEND Tribunal remains a legal backstop. The Government has said families would be able to appeal key decisions including eligibility for specialist provision, the type of package, placement, outcomes of an EHCP review and ceasing an EHCP.
- But for concerns about the provision recorded in an ISP, the proposed route is more local: raise it with the setting, with strengthened complaints arrangements proposed.

PARENT SUMMARY

Parents and carers will continue to play an important role in decisions about their child's support, with different routes for raising concerns depending on the type of support their child receives.

Six core areas

WHAT IF MY CHILD ISN'T QUITE SPECIALIST?

- The DfE explicitly describes the proposed system as a continuum of provision, rather than a binary mainstream/specialist model.
- Universal – targeted – targeted+ - specialist, with different support available throughout the levels.
- ISPs are intended to provide a consistent record of support for children receiving targeted and targeted-plus provision.

PARENT SUMMARY

The aim is that children can access the right level of support as their needs change, without having to reach crisis point before help is available.

What does this mean for families now?

RIGHT NOW

Your child's current support continues.

Existing EHCPs remain in place.

You do **not** need to apply for a new plan because of the proposed reforms.

Schools continue to have their existing statutory responsibilities.

Further detail will follow as legislation, regulations and guidance are developed.

AS THE REFORMS ARE INTRODUCED

Families will be given information about what the changes mean for their child.

Existing EHCPs will be subject to the proposed transition arrangements over time.

Children moving from an EHCP to an ISP will have an ISP in place before their support changes.

The Government has proposed transitional safeguards designed to prevent a break in effective support

Next steps





Reflections on the communications shared

Lunch

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Cluster Model overview

Peter Gray, SESLIP

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South East Sector Led Improvement Programme

Strategic approaches to managing SEND and inclusion:

Where do clusters fit in?

Peter Gray (SSCYP)

Broad strategic approaches

- **'Procurement'**
  - INMSS commissioning approaches
  - Creating more local capacity (as an alternative to higher cost placements)
    - Increasing places in existing provision
    - New provision (special free schools; new resource bases)
  - Impact on overall costs? on use of INMSS?

Broad strategic approaches

- **‘Matching needs and services’**
  - Clearer thresholds
  - Banding
  - Ordinarily available provision
  - Graduated approach
  - Issues: robust definitions? criteria or hurdles?

Broad strategic approaches

- **'Increasing capacity for inclusion'**
  - Experts at hand
  - Inclusion bases
  - Broader messaging
  - Issues: EAH role and expected outcomes; focus and funding of inclusion bases; continuing disincentives for schools

Broad strategic approaches

- **'Cluster model'**
  - Collective responsibility for meeting needs within available budget
    - Operational processes vs broad strategic intent
    - Funding defined/not open-ended
  - Focus on funding and support for mainstream schools and settings

Cluster model for mainstream HN funding

- Core features
  - Local groups of mainstream schools working together in partnership with LA to deploy funding in a more equitable/flexible way
  - Short-term or longer-term allocations
  - Individual pupils, groups and schools
  - Not dependent on EHCPs to access

Cluster model for mainstream HN funding

- LA participation
  - Around 30 LAs already engaged or actively pursuing
  - Distributed across a number of regions
    - London
    - Yorkshire & Humberside
    - NE
    - Eastern
    - SE19
  - Increasing national, regional and local interest
  - Regional communities of practice

Cluster model for mainstream HN funding

- Evidence of impact
  - Significant culture change
  - Positively received by SENDCos/Heads
  - Constructive peer support and challenge
  - Parents happy with the system (as long as children's needs are being met)
  - EHCPs starting to plateau
  - Team around the cluster

- Questions/discussion

Risks if no shift in culture

- Continuing/increasing demand for funding and provision (pre statutory changes)
- Increased call on school budgets for ‘first £6k’ of provision with only marginal increase (IMF is short-term and intended as developmental). Leads to increased budget pressures at school level and/or pressure to segregate
- Further increases in HN deficits arising from increasing demand
- Increased pressure on LA SEND casework capacity leading to greater parental dissatisfaction and lower performance (quality and timescales). No extra staffing built into core LA budgets despite Government expectation of further EHCP increase (to 7.5%)
- Further demands on external services for statutory activity jeopardising new focus on early intervention (Experts at Hand)
- More limited capacity for new investment at local level/increased devolution of HNB to schools as increasingly tied down by EHCP requirements

Southampton SEND Mainstream Funding Cluster Model

SE19 Input – Oct 2026



SEND Mainstream Funding Cluster Model - Overview of Aims of Approach



- The aim of this approach is to **improve support and outcomes** for pupils with SEND.

- The approach will allow education settings to access some of the Higher Needs funding in a **more efficient** ways and to be utilised in a **more flexible manner**, supporting ***individual pupils, groups of students and wider project work.***

- The Cluster model will lend itself to greater co-operation between professionals and more frequent opportunities for peer mentoring and solution focused discussion.

Roles and Structure

Cluster groups of around 7-11 schools.

Initially to start with school age (Primary and Secondary) and then consider EYs and Further Education

Role	Outline
Locality Leads	The Locality Leads will provide support to all Clusters.
SEND Administrator	Assigned Admin Support for all Clusters.

Meetings	Locality Cluster Meeting	Steering Group
Frequency	Half termly – ½ day	Termly
Attendees	- SENCos/Inclusion Leads - Locality Leads - SEND Team - Professionals/ Practitioners	Representatives from a range of stakeholders, including Education, Voluntary Sector, Parent/Carer groups
Purpose	- Solution Focused discussions - Allocation of Cluster Funding - Sharing of best practice - Wellbeing check - 10 min Masterclass	- Governance - Strategic overview - Monitoring of funding - Quality assurance

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Referral Types and funding arrangements

Type of referral	Referral paperwork	Funding arrangements
Solution focused discussion	Completed Southampton City Council Profile of Need (PON) and additional supporting paperwork, for example, individual plans, provision maps, and any additional reports, if necessary	Not applicable
Individual funding request	Completed Southampton City Council PON and additional supporting paperwork for example individual plans, provision maps, and any additional reports, if necessary Completed Southampton City Council Costed Provision Map (CPM)	Funding divided in equal amounts over the number of terms requested
Group funding request	Partially completed Southampton City Council PON detailing individual pupils details, diagnosis, summary of support request, and parental permission for each pupil. The PON needs section does not need to be completed Completed Southampton City Council CPM	Funding divided in equal amounts over the number of terms requested
Project based funding request	Completed Southampton City Council CPM. Complete only the relevant sections, detailing the outline of the project, the funding needed, and so on	Project funding given in total as one sum If this is a collaborative bid, project funding will be given to the lead school

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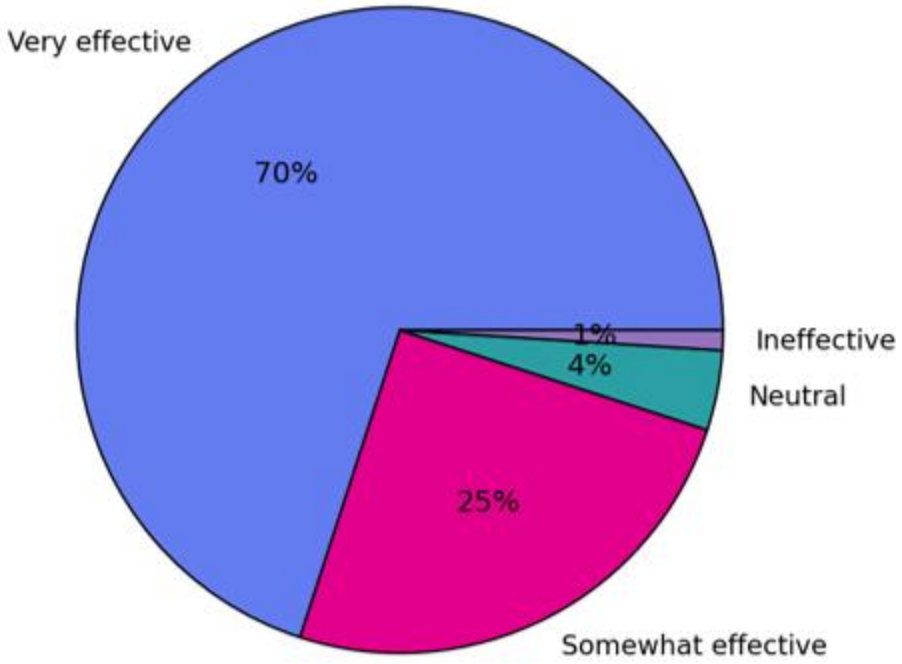
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Impact on EHCP pressures

Year	EHCP Final Active Plan Number	Year on Year percentage increase
2025 (as of 31st Dec 2025)	2950	5.74%
2024 (as of 31st Dec 2024)	2790	15.24%
2023 (as of 31st Dec 2023)	2421	10.85%
2022 (as of 31st Dec 2022)	2184	

Feedback from SENCos, HT, Governors

Overall Effectiveness





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Feedback from SENCos, HT, Governors

“What you have set up and created is extraordinary… enabling all learners to thrive.”

“It is the best thing we have had from the LA in a long time.”

“I enjoy the opportunity to network with other SENCos.”

“Thank you - coming to the cluster has built my confidence and it’s great to network with us SENCos and professionals.”

“This has been a fantastic process and a great opportunity to create links and relationships with local schools.”



Understanding the SEND Reforms

Building a better future, together.



The SEND reforms are all about making sure children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) get the right support, at the right time, in the right way.

Over the next three years, the local area partnership will focus on three overarching goals:

1 Improve long-term life opportunities for children and young people with SEND

- **Identify needs early**
  More children get the right support early through strong SEN Support.
- **Stabilise EHCP growth**
  EHCP growth slows and is stabilised at no more than 8% by 2027/28.
- **Fair access to support**
  Experts at Hand supports all settings fairly, using data and feedback.
- **Use resources well**
  Fewer escalations mean children get the right support sooner and spend is sustainable.



2 Increase confidence and trust in the SEND system

- **Listen and involve**
  Families feel listened to and involved, with clear communication.
- **Timely, joined-up advice**
  High-quality advice from education, health and care at key moments.
- **Clear information**
  A simple local offer and clear pathways so families know what to expect.
- **Stronger relationships**
  Work together as one system so families have confidence help will be there.



3 Build a SEND system that is sustainable and reliable

- **Strengthen services**
  Use local resources wisely so support is there now and for the future.
- **Reduce reliance on high-cost placements**
  Invest in local provision and inclusive mainstream support.
- **Develop our workforce**
  Skilled, confident staff with the right training and support.
- **Strong leadership and governance**
  Decisions based on data and learning, with clear accountability.



8 key workstreams to deliver the reforms

1. Experts at Hand Model
Local experts support early help in every setting.

2. SEND Mainstream Funding Cluster Model
Fair funding for mainstream to strengthen inclusion.

3. Specialist inclusion base capita program
More specialist bases in schools to increase local support.

4. Co-production, Lived Experience & Local Offer Development
Work with families and young people to shape services and the local offer.

5. EHCP Quality & Dispute Reduction
Better quality EHCPs and fewer delays, with clearer plans.

6. Workforce Development Program
Build skills and confidence across education, health and care.

7. High-cost Placement Reduction
Reduce out-of-area placements by investing early and locally.

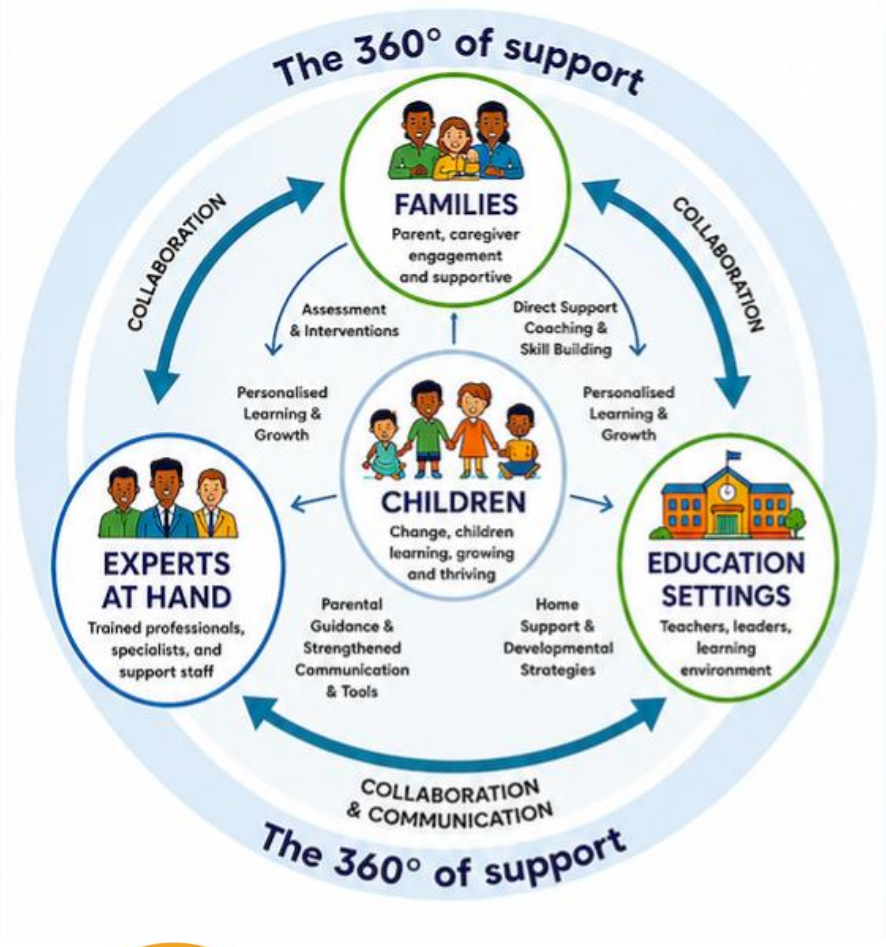
8. Integrated Programme Governance & Commissioning
Joined-up leadership and commissioning for best outcomes and value.

These goals and workstreams will only be achieved together.

Families, children and young people, schools, health services, local services and the community – working together for a SEND system that works for everyone.



Southampton 360 Model



Supporting professionals with the identification and understanding of needs	***Building on capacity through expert and specialist training to education settings and wider professionals***	***Targeted expert and specialist advice and guidance to education settings and wider professionals***	***Expert and Specialist direct support to education settings and wider professionals to support to Children and Young People (with and without EHCPs)***
Collaborative working unpinning all aspects			

Six Key Delivery Routes – 2026-2027					
Targeted Cluster Model Support	City Wide Training	Emotional Based School/ College Absence	Targeted Support/Outreach	SEND Workforce Development Program	QA and Support for Specialist and Inclusion Bases

Child Friendly Southampton

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SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL



Kaleidoscope Pilot offers schools the online inclusion auditing, action planning and targeted training opportunities

Educational Psychology Service
Making a difference

Education Services
Making a difference

SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL

3 hours of Group Supervision for all SENCos, delivered by EP service through Cluster model

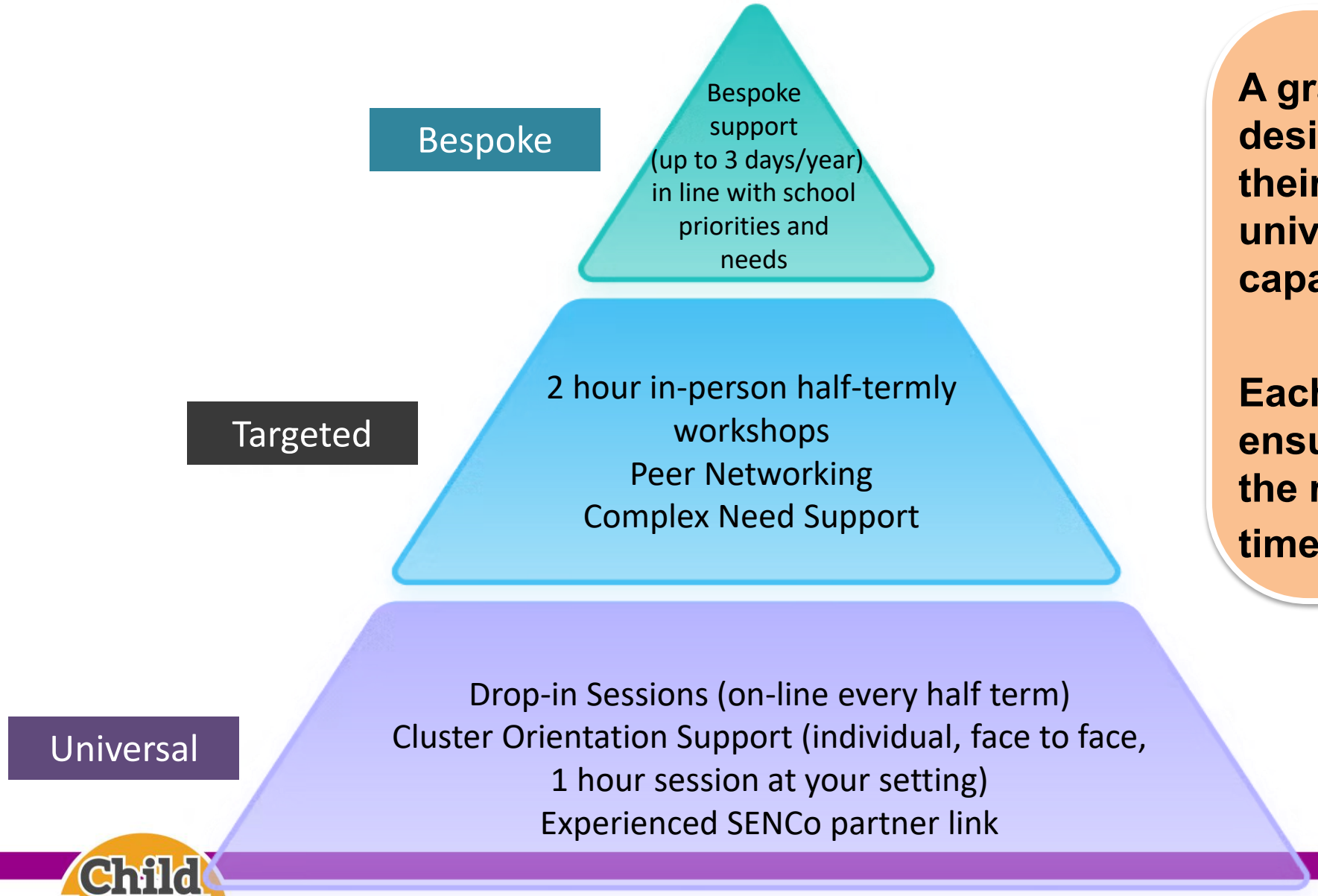
Child Friendly SOUTHAMPTON

Children & Learning
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SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL

12 hours of bespoke training from Special School Trust, for each cluster. Menu of support with variety of opportunities to meet different needs across clusters

10-week Small group and city-wide SEMH interventions, commissioned and provided to each cluster



A graduated support offer designed for new SENCos in their first year — from universal access to bespoke capacity building.

Each tier builds on the last, ensuring every SENCo gets the right support at the right time.

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SEND legal update including tribunals

Callum Scott, Solicitor, Bevan Brittan LLP

SESLIP
South East Sector Led Improvement Programme

SEND legal update

SE19 Leaders and Managers in SEND Meeting

Friday 9th October 2026

Broadway House, Tothill Street, London, SW1H 9NQ

Callum Scott | Solicitor

Bevan Brittan

Please note that the content contained within this presentation does not constitute legal advice and it is provided for general information purposes only. Legal content is based on the law as at 03 October 2026.

What is the SEND Tribunal?

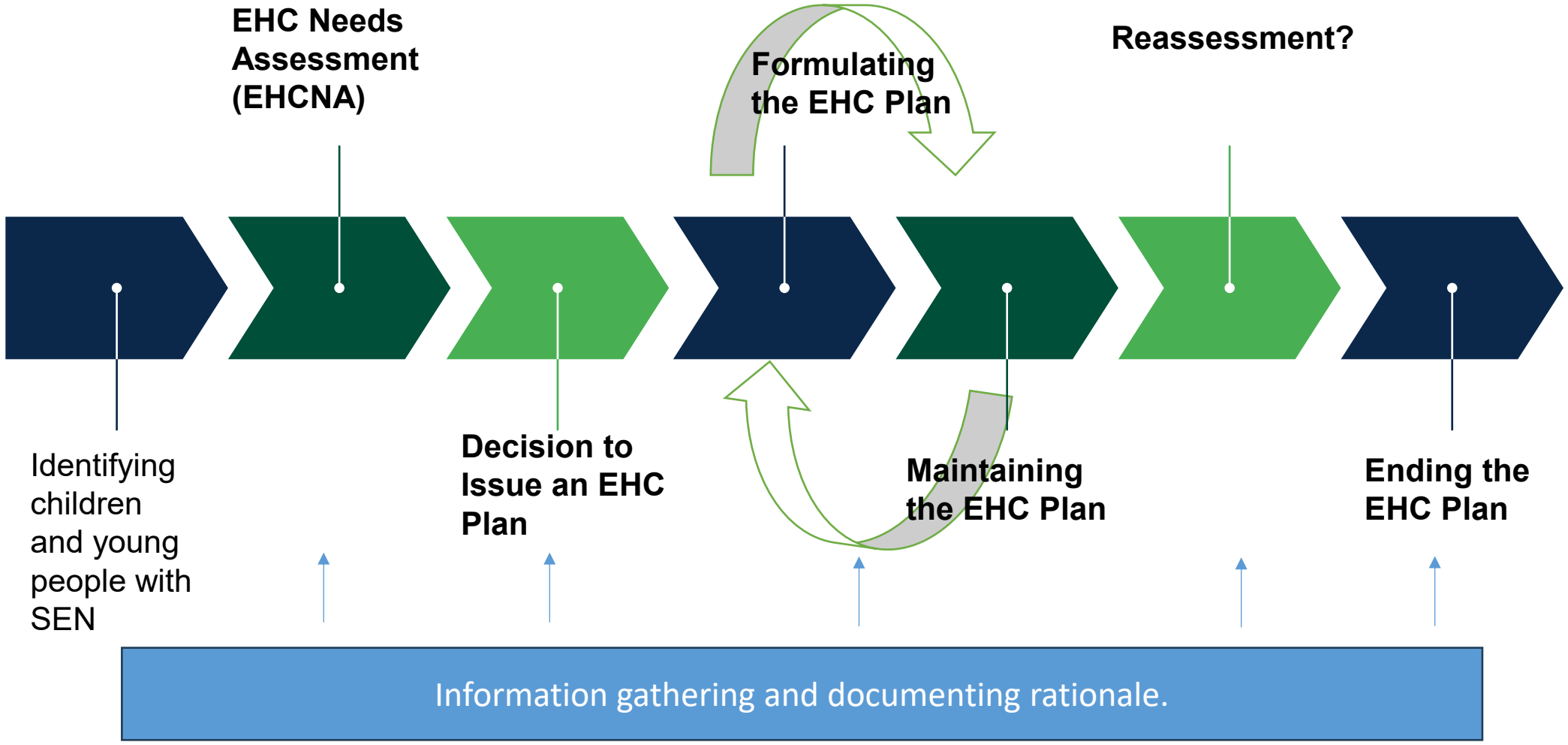
- The First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability) a.k.a the SEND Tribunal
- Independent judicial body - hears legal disputes about special educational needs and disability.
- Role is to resolve disagreements between:
  - Parents and local authorities
  - Young people (aged 16*-25) and local authorities
  - Parents or young people and schools (in disability discrimination cases)
- The Tribunal sits within the Health, Education and Social Care Chamber; designed to provide an accessible and relatively informal alternative to court proceedings.
- Appeals regarding EHC Plans fall into two broad categories:
  - Section B, F, and/or I appeals
  - 'Extended appeals' – extended jurisdiction; differing legal effects to determinations made re: education vs health & S.C.
- Panel composition – who decides?

Context

- Around **29,000 SEND appeals were registered** in year ending March 2026.
- Around **20,000 appeals were disposed** of.
- The rise in appeals has been attributed to:
  - The continuing impact of the **2014 SEND reforms** and the introduction of EHCPs.
  - The Tribunal's **extended powers** to make recommendations on health and social care.
  - Growth in **EHC needs assessment requests** and the number of children and young people with EHCPs.
  - The most common appeal types were:
    - **61%** relating to the contents of an EHCP.
    - **24%** challenging a refusal to carry out an EHC needs assessment.

Tribunal Statistics Quarterly: January to March 2026 - GOV.UK

When can an EHC Plan appeal arise?



Primary grounds of appeal summarised in HM Courts & Tribunals Service Guidance Note (SEND37);
Statutory rights are contained within S.51 Children and Families Act 2014

Considerations upon an appeal being registered (1)

- The SEND Tribunal will confirm registration and the final hearing date.
- On registration, the Tribunal issues directions, an attendance form, and a case management questionnaire.
- Directions set deadlines for actions and evidence submissions.
- Extended appeals should be shared with health services from the outset.
- Effective liaison between the DCO and local authority tribunal officer is essential.
- Significant hearing delays can result in clinical evidence becoming outdated.
- Delays are also leading to more late evidence being submitted.
- Parties must notify the Tribunal and each other of any witnesses and attendees by the specified deadline.
- The local authority receives the appeal and accompanying directions.
- The local authority should promptly identify health involvement and obtain the necessary health evidence

Considerations upon an appeal being registered (2)

- LA must respond within 30 working days and provide its evidence to the family and Tribunal.
- The LA may apply to strike out an appeal; families must have an opportunity to respond. Watch for repeat appeals on similar issues.
- Appeals may be resolved by agreement, consent order, or, in some cases, automatically conclude where the LA agrees to take the requested action.
- The LA must complete any agreed actions within the required timescales.
- LAs cannot agree health provision on behalf of health services; clear DCO, tribunal officer, and ICB/budget-holder involvement may be required.

Considerations for LA upon an appeal being registered (3)

- If the LA does not send a response by the end of the time in which they have to reply, the SEND Tribunal can do a number of things, including barring the LA and by association health from taking further part in the appeal.

- **We are seeing more no response situations as LA are at times overwhelmed with appeal volume or some appeals are missed.**

- Before deciding what to do, the SEND Tribunal will write to the LA asking for an explanation for their failure to respond, or failure to respond in time.

- A tribunal judge will consider any reply the LA gives and will decide what should happen.

- If the LA is barred from further involvement, the SEND Tribunal will decide whether a family's case can be dealt with on the papers or whether there should be a hearing, to which the LA would not attend.

- **If LA is barred then this impacts upon health and social careaspect.**

Evidential considerations

Strong Evidence

✓ Recent assessments

✓ Clear recommendations

✓ Quantified provision

✓ Objective observations

✓ Consistent reporting

Weak Evidence

✗ General assertions

✗ Outdated reports

✗ Unexplained conclusions

✗ Contradictory information

Expert Witnesses and Expectations

Common Experts

- Educational psychologists
- Speech and language therapists
- Occupational therapists
- Specialist teachers
- Medical professionals

Tribunal expectations

Experts should:

- Remain independent
- Explain methodology
- Justify recommendations

=> Confirmation of understanding of requirements included in reports and/or witness statements.

=> *R&RK v Hertfordshire County Council* [2025] UKUT 381 (AAC)

Interface with Health

- As a matter of process, it is unusual for a responsible commissioning body (ICB) or a provider to be joined as a party in its own right.
- So health professionals attending as witness does so under the umbrella of the LA.
- Tribunal judge will make case management decisions around who attends as witnesses and why.
- The ICB can through the LA seek directions if required
- We see an increase in health witnesses attending because of volume of extended appeals increasing and more complex cases
- We see health professionals attending in education tribunals e.g. therapists to appeal against B and F such as SaLT, OT. These areas are accepted as education provision. Wider health provision in schools is a moveable feast and evolving.
- Then we have health professional providing evidence and being a witness on C and G relating to extended appeals.
- Some ICBs send the DCO to explain around commissioning /ICB decisions.

Why do Local Authorities lose appeals?

Recurring Themes

- Delayed assessments
- Poor quality evidence
- Vague provision
- Failure to explain decisions/Ignoring professional recommendations

Consider

- Timeliness
- Testing the evidence
- Tightening up wording – who/what/when/where/for how long?
- Transparency

Appeals relating to Section I - Practical considerations

- Strong Section F evidence is critical as placement decisions often turn on ability to make provision.
- Tribunals compare the suitability of competing placements.
- Detailed evidence from school/college professionals critical including witness attendance.
- Costs are relevant but cannot override parental/young person preference unless the legal tests are met.
- ‘Efficient education of others’ exception =/= school is ‘full’.

Education Otherwise Than In School ("EOTIS")

- Test remains: Section 61 Children and Families Act 2014 amplified by the case of NN v Cheshire East Council (SEN) [2021] UKUT 220 (AAC).
- Is it inappropriate for some or all the special educational provision in section F of an EHC plan to be made in a nursery, school or college?
- But what about AM & Anor v Wokingham Borough Council [2026] UKUT 327 (AAC)?
- Whilst there is a presumption of school-based provision, Local Authorities should carefully consider representations for EOTIS where made by parents.
- Importance of robust and thorough consultations with a range of settings.
- Our experience: often a lack of firm/robust evidence – adduced in a timely manner – results in EOTIS being decided by Tribunal as 'there is no viable alternative'.
- Consultations around phase-transfer years/over summer holidays can be particularly tricky.

Recent Case Law

Case	Key Issue	Principle Established	Practical Lesson
PS v London Borough of Wandsworth [2025] UKUT 239 (AAC)	Does Section I have to name a particular placement?	• The Tribunal may lawfully name a **type of school** where a parent's preferred placement is unsuitable and no alternative specific school is advanced. • An amended EHCP that no longer names the current school does **not automatically permit off-rolling** of the child.	Local authorities must still follow the statutory processes before changing arrangements and cannot simply treat a Tribunal decision as authority to remove a child from roll.
Hampshire CC v GC [2024] UKUT 128 (AAC)	Cease to maintain (procedural aspects)	Procedural requirements remain critical when deciding whether to cease maintaining an EHCP.	Follow statutory processes meticulously.
EM v Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead [2024] UKUT 317 (AAC)	Cease to maintain (Necessity of an EHCP)	Limited educational progress does not necessarily mean an EHCP is no longer required.	Focus on whether the Plan remains necessary, not academic attainment alone.
London Borough of Islington v A Parent [2024] UKUT 252 (AAC)	Efficient use of resources	Clarified the Tribunal's approach to parental preference and comparative cost evidence.	Robust cost evidence is essential where resources arguments are advanced.
London Borough of Hillingdon v AP & SP [2024] UKUT 388 (AAC)	Residential placements	Correct approach is needs → provision → placement.	Establish need first before debating placement or cost.

Any **questions?**

✆: 0370 194 5055
M: 07901 207 555
✉: callum.scott@bevanbrittan.com
Callum Scott | LinkedIn

Bevan Brittan

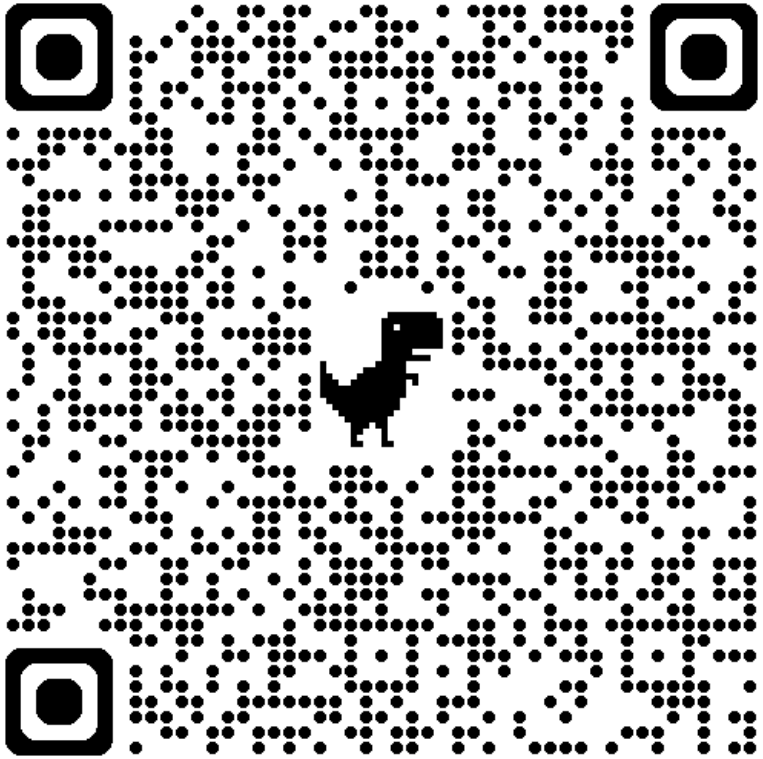
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Feedback and evaluation

Deborah Smit, Jamie Conran and David Griffiths

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Evaluation and thank you



Thank you

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