

Bath & North East
Somerset Council

Improving People's Lives

Local
SEND
Reform
Plan



Our Plan for SEND



Introduction

Since the publication of [Our plan for SEND](#) earlier this year, partners across B&NES have been working hard to deliver better outcomes for children and young people.

This was then followed by the government's new commitment to improving the education experience for all children who come from disadvantaged backgrounds, as well as children and young people with special educational needs and disability (SEND). The government have called this commitment to reform '[Every Child Achieving and Thriving](#)', and it was published in February.

The commitment creates some exciting new opportunities that add to our already expanding offer for SEND. Here, you'll find out more about what we'll be doing in B&NES to support the government's reform to improve the lives of children and young people with SEND.



What's new in SEND?

1. Experts at Hand

The government are investing over £40 million to grow the educational psychology (EP), occupational therapy (OT) and speech and language therapy (SALT) workforce. The funding will be shared across local authorities over a three-year period.

With this funding, local authorities and Integrated Care Boards will establish an Experts at Hand Offer. The Offer will allow EP, OT and SALT professionals to work directly with mainstream education settings, improving early support without requiring an assessment or referral.

The funding aims to address long-standing shortages and reduce waiting times. Part of the investment will also go towards building the capacity of mainstream education settings through expanding outreach from specialist and Alternative Provision (AP) settings.

What this means in B&NES

The Local Authority has been allocated £6.1m to deliver Experts at Hand over three years, in partnership with health colleagues and education providers.

Here's a very quick look at our plans to make the most of this funding:

Year 1 (Now-March 2027):

- Recruitment drive for Educational Psychologists, Occupational Therapists and Speech & Language Therapists
- New 'Test and Learn' pilots in AP settings to focus on children and young people on reduced timetables who are struggling to attend school due to personal and family circumstances - for example, emotionally-based school avoidance (EBSA)
- Enhanced 'Team Around the School' offer – with access to Experts at Hand – provided to a number of settings that are struggling most with inclusion

Year 2:

- Create a new Locality model – where all education settings are streamed into three local clusters. These Locality Groups will likely be based in and around: (1) Bath; (2) Midsomer Norton; and (3) Keynsham and Chew
- Join-up the Experts at Hand with the new Locality Groups
- Children and young people have fair access to support local to them

Year 3:

- Build on good practice locally
- Share knowledge between Locality Groups
- Focus on making this a sustainable local model that works for our families

2. Inclusion Bases

The government have already committed to creating 10,000 more accessible mainstream school and college places for children and young people with SEND by investing £740 million in 2025-26.

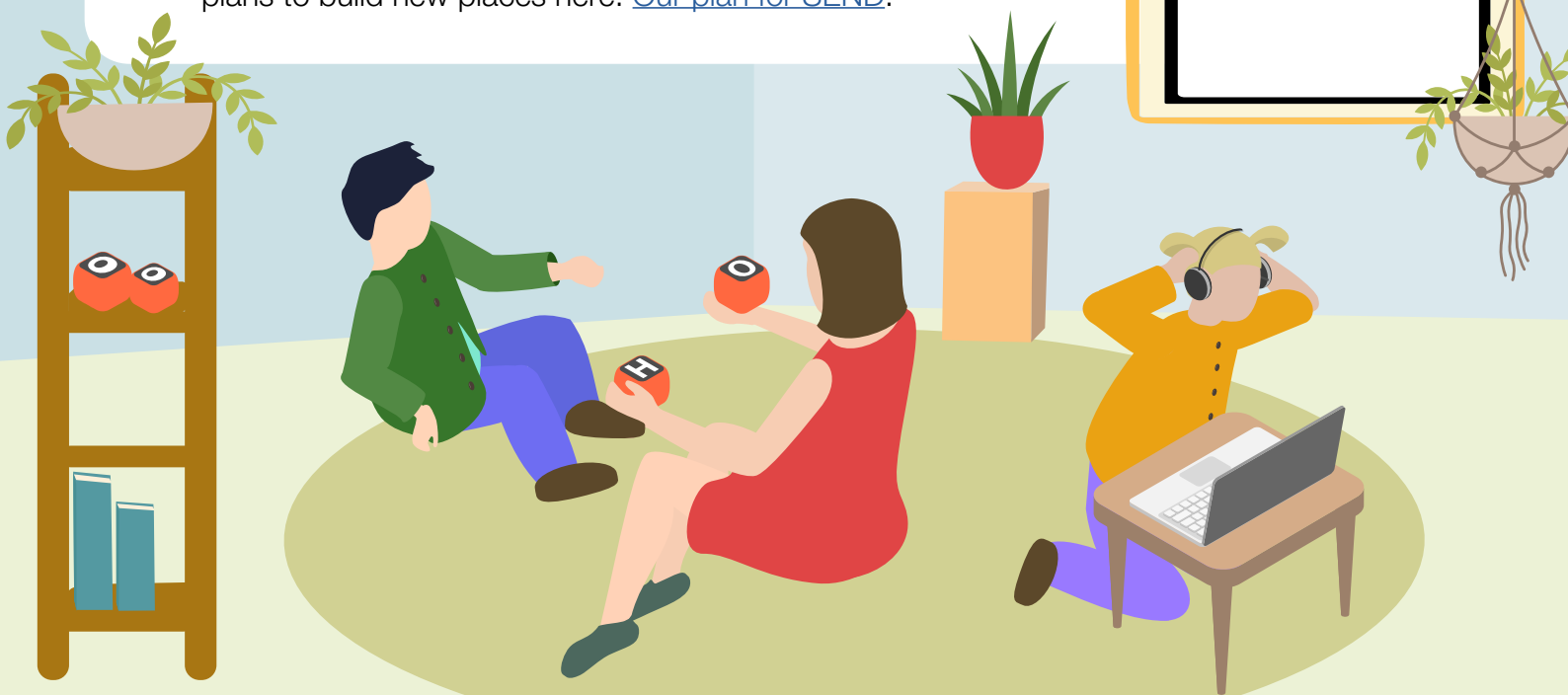
In the new plans for SEND reform, the government have committed to creating a further 50,000 new specialist places, including in inclusion bases. Inclusion bases will offer specialist support in mainstream schools and colleges so that more children get the opportunity to be educated in a local mainstream setting.

For some children, this support will enable them to gradually transition to full participation in mainstream classes. For others, ongoing support from the base will help them access mainstream learning, education and their wider community in a way that works for them.

What this means in B&NES

As part of the SEND reform, the Local Authority has been given an additional £1.2m to deliver new Inclusion Bases. This is on top of the projects already underway that will create new places for our young people with SEND.

- With the new funding, we have now kicked off several feasibility studies around the local area to create new Inclusion Bases. We are prioritising schools where it may be possible to adapt existing accommodation or make refurbishments. We will tell you more as soon as we've had the feasibilities confirmed!
- In March, the Local Authority was delighted to have its Special Free School request accepted and funding confirmed. This is long-awaited and much needed, as it will give our most vulnerable learners a dedicated school from ages 4-19. The school will be built on the old Culverhay school site in Bath. This is separate funding and does not form part of the £1.2m received for SEND reform.
- Other plans include: a new special school at Charlton House in Keynsham, new Resource Bases at Mulberry Park and IKB Academy, as well as an AP school at Abbott Alphege school (Lansdown, Bath). You can find out more about our existing plans to build new places here: [Our plan for SEND](#).



3. Partnership working

A big focus of '[Every Child Achieving and Thriving](#)' is on local area partners working together better.

In B&NES, this means our healthcare providers (including our new Integrated Care Board), settings (schools, colleges – and all early years through to post-16 provision) and the Local Authority coming together.

We believe our relationship is already good – and we welcome the government's clear call to work even better together.

What this means in B&NES

As a partnership, we're thinking collectively about how we can do things like:

- Involve families and young people in decision-making, so that everyone feels we're pulling in the same direction
- Pool funding in our new Locality Groups (once they're up and running) so that local schools and settings can share resources better
- Share information safely – so that families don't need to keep repeating their stories to every professional they meet – whilst ensuring confidentiality and privacy

What next?

As you can tell, there's lots going on and we want you to be a part of it. We will keep you posted on how you can get involved over the coming months.

We are holding a **Family Support & Inclusion Day** for parents, carers and professionals on 14 October 2026.

Scan the QR code or visit the [BANES Parent Carer Forum, Family Support & Inclusion Day](#) for more information and to find updates on the event.

