

White Paper Round Table

For Headteachers and CEOs

Friday 17th March

Sarah Court, SEND Transformation Lead

John Rowe, Head of Education Quality & Safeguarding



Agenda

- Welcome and housekeeping
- Background to the SEND Reforms
- Links to other reforms and Children's Transformation as a whole
- The Local Area SEND Reform Plan
- Inclusive Mainstream Funding
- Experts at hand
- Inclusion Standards



Break for tea/coffee at 2.15pm





Purpose

- To provide information about the Schools White Paper and SEND consultation
- To provide space for reflection and feedback to shape provision locally.
- To use the time to support the LA's contribution to those aspects subject to consultation.

The background

Shropshire's role in the SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Change Programme brought together the council, schools, health partners and families to improve outcomes for children and young people with additional needs.

The programme is drawing to a close and wrap-up and evaluation are now under way.

The programme laid the local foundations; the SEND reforms are now beginning to embed and scale them.



The Schools White Paper sets out our vision to improve education for all children in England.

The Schools White Paper commits to the following key policies to ensure all children can achieve and thrive, supporting children to move **from a narrow to broad education, from sidelined to included, and from withdrawn to engaged.**



SEND

1. A formal consultation launching in February, concluding in May on SEND reform, incl. funding, mainstream inclusion and accountability.
2. A request to all local authorities to produce detailed Local SEND reform plans.
3. Proposals that funding for supporting mainstream inclusion will increasingly be integrated into core school budgets, with responsibility and accountability for the use of that funding sitting with schools.



School Trusts

1. A commitment that in time, all schools will be part of high-quality school trusts
2. A commitment to expand diversity in the trust landscape, by enabling LAs to establish trusts and revising co-operative articles.
3. A commitment to introduce new expectations for all trusts on collaboration and engagement, providing local communities access to trust governance.
4. A commitment that DfE will work with local partners (LAs, religious bodies, schools and trusts) to develop a school landscape that is right for their area.
5. A commitment to publish a new set of revised standards for trusts. These will inform new commissioning guidance from Regions Group that will underpin our decision-making on school groupings. They will also inform Ofsted in developing its future MAT inspection framework.



School Improvement

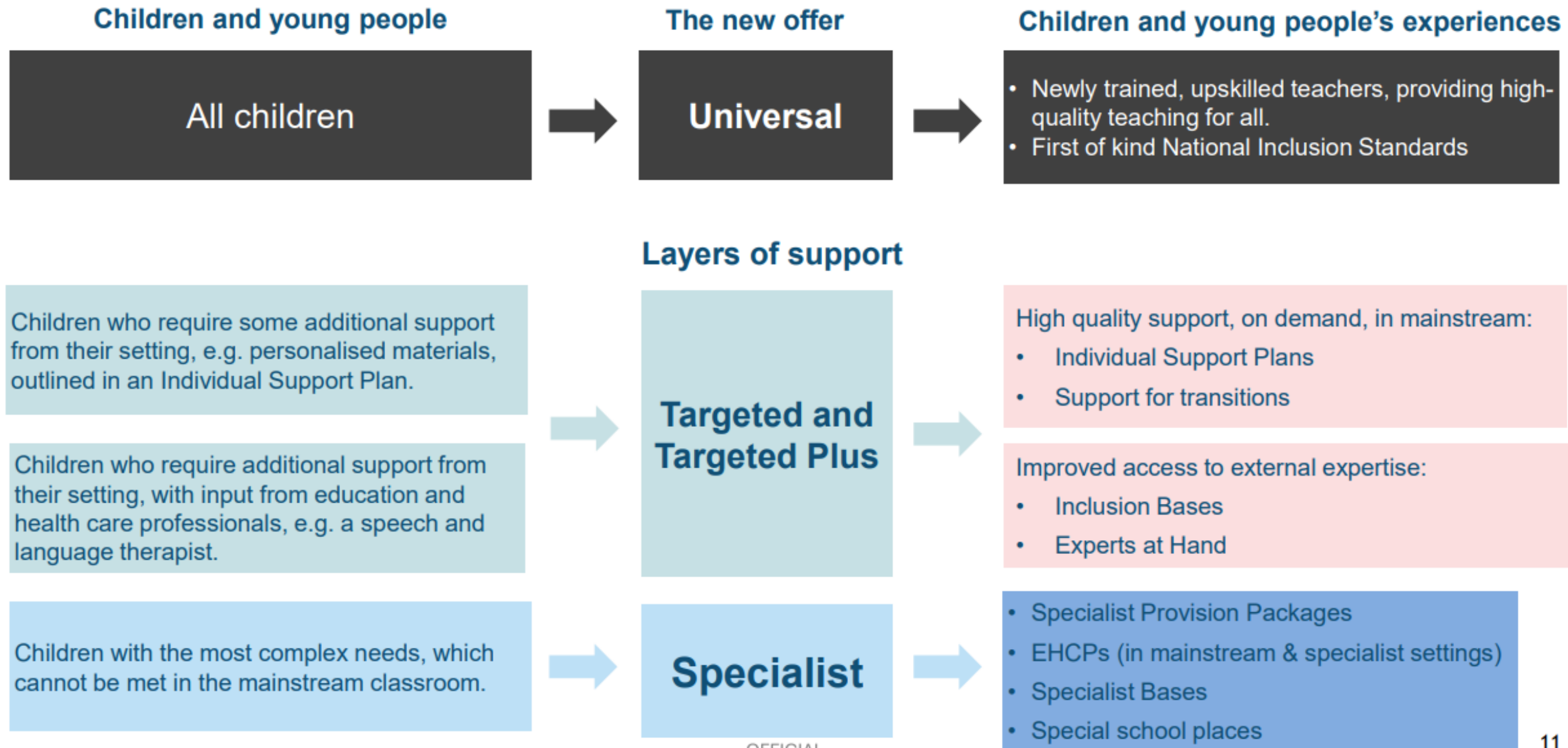
1. Confirmation that we will continue to roll out and define the Universal RISE service, through our work on the National Priorities, Universal+ and the new digital service.
2. Scaling up work on targeted RISE, through the expansion of RISE into RSI schools from September 2026
3. Changing our approach to intervention, shifting from a duty to convert failing maintained schools to academies to a power, and introducing inspection of and intervention in trusts.
4. Establishing a KS3 alliance to pioneer best practice on KS3.



Other reforms

1. Education Estates Strategy Published
2. Post-16 Qualification reform, following the consultation with the sector.

The reformed SEND system will ensure an improved Universal Offer, and three additional layers of support for those who need it built on the best of what works



Timescales and status of changes

| Proposal / Reform Element | Status | Implementation Date / Consultation Status |
|---|------------------|---|
| Ofsted Whole-Trust Inspections | Implementation | Pilot Late 2026 / Full 2027 |
| Statutory Duty: Inclusion Strategy | Implementation | December 2026 |
| Year 8 National Reading Test | Implementation | Plans in Autumn 2026 |
| Reintegration Support Partnerships | For Consultation | Proposed 2027/28 |
| Digital Individual Support Plans (ISPs) | For Consultation | Proposed September 2029 |
| RISE Reception Networks | Implementation | Starting 2026/27 |
| Independent Special School Price Caps | For Consultation | No specific date (Pending Law) |
| Inclusive Mainstream Fund (£1.6bn) | Implementation | Phased from Late 2026 |

Timescales and status of changes

| Proposal / Reform Element | Status | Implementation Date / Consultation Status |
|---|------------------|---|
| Secondary School Inclusion Bases | Implementation | Rolling out from 2026/27 |
| National SEND Consultation | Active | Closes May 18, 2026 |
| Specialist Provision Packages (leading to EHCP) | For Consultation | From September 2030 (Gradual) |
| "Experts at Hand" (£1.8bn) | Implementation | Rolling out 2026 – 2028 |
| National Inclusion Standards | Implementation | Final publication by 2027/28 |
| Four-Tier SEND Support System | For Consultation | Proposed September 2029 |
| National SEND Teacher Training | Implementation | Starts 2026/27 Academic Year |
| Parental Forums & Local Boards | For Consultation | No specific date (Pending Law) |



Reforms under way

- Best Start in Life
- Youth Transformation
- Families First Partnership
- SEND Reforms
- Health Reforms



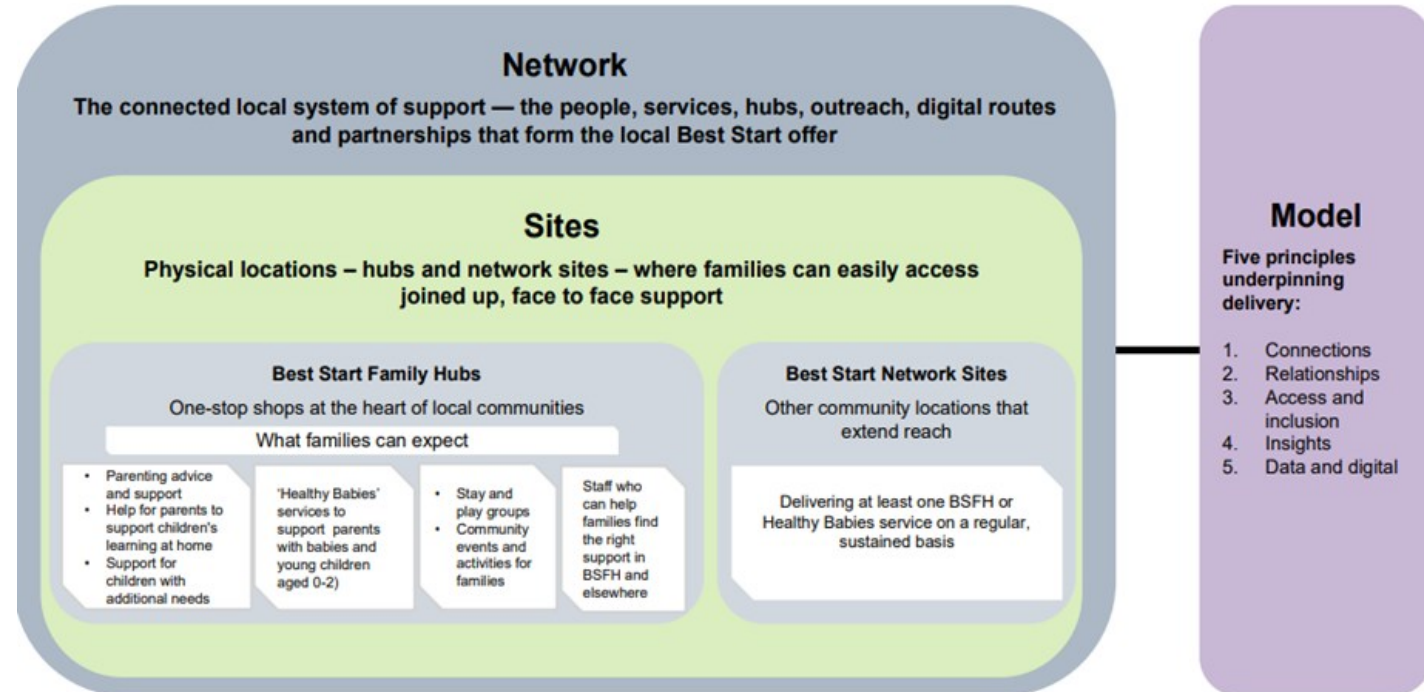
Children's
Transformation

An opportunity to build the preventative system that we know children need.

Headlines: BSiL

- Improving early outcomes focussed on reducing inequality, target of 77% of children reaching the GLD by 2028.
- Fully integrated health services for children and families.
- Delivering a core offer of stay and plays, HLE and parenting and targeted offer for SEND families.
- Not about the buildings but the network (Family Hubs, one stop shop for families, network sites which are trusted venues delivering aspects of not full programme, outreach and digital routes.)
- Family Hubs are the gateway to health and wellbeing services, safeguarding support, cost of living support, family support and services for under 5s and over 10's.

Figure 1: The Best Start Family Hubs Framework – overview





Headlines: Youth

- New National Strategy, Youth Matters Published in December 2025.
- Builds upon the Local Youth Transformation Pilot.
- Commitment to reinvigorating the accountability for Young People in line with the statutory duties this includes,
 - Trusted Adults,
 - Strengthened Workforce,
 - Friendships and Relationships,
 - Access to meaningful activities,
 - Good Work,
 - Keeping Young People Safe,
 - Engaging Young People in decision making and
 - Access to support young people to be physically and emotionally well.

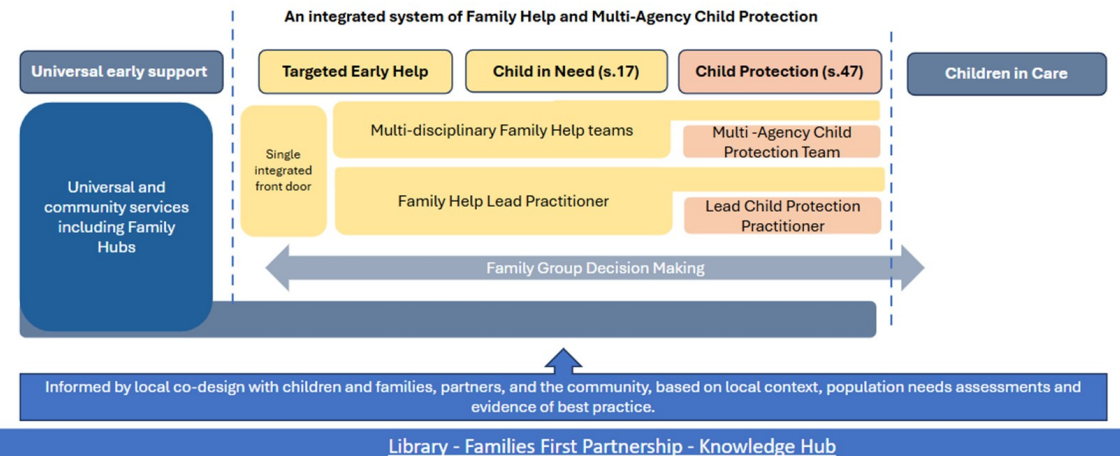
Headlines: Families First Partnership

- **Aim:** The aim of the Families First Partnership (FFP) programme is to transform the whole system of help, support and protection, to ensure that every family can access the right help and support when they need it, with a strong emphasis on early intervention to prevent crisis.
- **How:** Four key areas, Strengthened Partnership **Family Help (FH)**, with local **Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDTs)** that wrap support around families to reduce escalating needs, where **families are engaged in group decision making** and their broader family network play a critical role in helping prevent crisis and where crisis does happen specialist **Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPT)** who are skilled to navigate complexity offer advice, support, challenge to help the care team.

Families First is on the way.....



Locally designed systems that meet the needs of the population with effective, integrated and joined up services with partners



Implications for ICBs and ICB/LA relationships

A system shift away from late, diagnosis-led provision towards:

- Earlier intervention
- Health professionals embedded in mainstream settings
- Clearer accountability across education, health and care

ICBs have a significantly strengthened leadership and commissioning role in SEND.

- Greater commissioning influence
- Clearer accountability
- More health presence in mainstream schools and early years
- Stronger partnership duties with LAs and education

ICBs and LAs are jointly accountable for outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

- The ICB to co-lead the local SEND Partnership



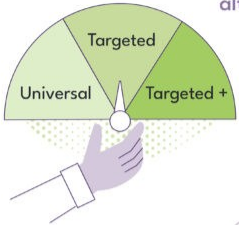
Implications for health providers

- Earlier developmental surveillance
- Stronger links with primary care, HVs, school nurses
- Joint working with Best Start Family Hubs, Parent Carer Forums (PCFs), and children and young people.
- Shared language across services
- Clearer expectations within EHC processes
- Speech and Language Therapy Advanced Practitioner role in each ICB area
- Increased need for advisory support
- Training and consultation roles
- Collaborative care planning



Experts at Hand: an offer of support to mainstream settings

A continuum of support that includes alternative provision intervention and specialist pathways



Specialist & Advisory Teachers

Outreach support from Special Schools and Alternative Provision

Teams of specialists working together

Building confidence & capacity in the mainstream workforce

Occupational therapy

Whole-school strategies for inclusive environments

Working alongside Mental Health Support Teams



Providing easy access and support to navigate available services

Teachers & practitioners: There's a real sense of collaboration, I've got more tools in my toolkit now

Families: Getting the right support isn't a battle, it's a partnership - everyone's focused on what's best for him

Leaders & SENDCos: I know there is always someone at the end of the phone

I am learning and having fun

I feel safe, happy and healthy

Facilitating targeted support & sharing effective practice



Working with settings to understand what they need and plan support

Educational psychology

Sharing spaces and resources with Best Start Family Hubs

SEND Practitioner

Support with screening & identification of needs

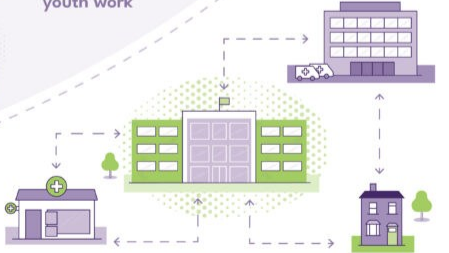
Speech & language therapy

Small group targeted support



Strengthening links between home and setting

Family support & youth work



Integrated with multidisciplinary working in Neighbourhood Health Teams

Part of reforming the Special Educational Needs & Disabilities system to be:

- Early
- Local
- Fair
- Effective
- Shared

Commissioning and delivery of Experts at Hand

A major new commissioning role

- **Joint commissioning with LAs** of health and education professionals, including SaLT, OT, EPs, mental health
- Health professionals are to be **embedded directly into mainstream settings**, not accessed only via referral or diagnosis.

ICBs are expected to help ensure that this resource is:

- Equitably distributed
- Accessible quickly
- Focused on early intervention and prevention

Around **£1bn of the £1.8bn Experts at Hand investment** supports commissioning of health professionals via LAs and ICBs.

Key risks

- Insufficient health workforce capacity to support early intervention
- Lack of mature joint commissioning arrangements with LAs



Commissioning and delivery of Experts at Hand

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Learnings and opportunities

- Local delivery of ELSEC (Early Language Support for Every Child) and PINS (Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools) over 2024/25 and 2025/26
- Both focused on strengthening "ordinarily available" support within mainstream settings, and informed the development of Experts at Hand
- Both successful, evaluated local models of support we can build on and learn from
- A workforce (particularly with ELSEC) already in place.



The development of the SEND Reform Plan

Where have we come from and what are we doing?

- SEND and AP Change Programme is largely finished, with evaluation and 'wrap up' taking place April-August.
- ELSEC, PINS, APST and Special School Outreach will finish this term in their current form but will be evaluated and the learning from these projects will inform the future 'Experts at Hand Offer' (EAHO).
- Some projects will continue into academic year 26/27 to support schools with developing 'Support Bases':
 - Primary Inclusion Development Grants (with enhanced support from Natalie Packer)
 - Whole Education SEND Leadership Programme for secondary schools

In addition, SALT and OT support for LA commissioned Hubs will continue until December 2026 and will also inform the Experts at Hand Offer.

Local Area SEND Reform Plan

LA must submit a Local SEND Reform Plan by **19th June**.

Writing off HNB deficit (up to 90%) is contingent on DfE approval of this plan.

The LA is currently working with partners from across the system to:

- Draft a Local Area Maturity Matrix
- Complete a data return (ongoing quarterly return to measure impact)
- Draft a Local Area Reform Plan

Today's session forms part of the partnership working to inform the direction of our local reforms.

Timescales and status of changes

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Phase one: 2026 to 2028</p> <p>Investment and building new system</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce training programmes for all staff. • Schools, colleges and early years settings receive Inclusive Mainstream Fund. • Experts at Hand comes on stream for all settings. • Specialist Provision Packages published. • National Inclusion Standards published. |
| <p>Phase two: 2028 to 2029</p> <p>Improved support</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will continue to invest in and build-up the new system • New legislation expected to come into effect from September 2029 |
| <p>Phase three: School year 2029/30 onwards</p> <p>Future system</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School year 2029/30: First assessments of children take place under reformed system. • EHCP, National Inclusion Standards and Individual Support Plan legislation enacted. • First children using Specialist Provision Packages. • 60,000 new school places for children with SEND will have been created in special schools and inclusion bases. |

Year 1 Expectations

Year 1 is about laying the essential foundations for reform, enabling every area to pivot toward early intervention, strengthen mainstream inclusion, and prepare for the full rollout of the reformed

Local areas are expected to deliver:

Clear, testable workstreams with quarterly milestones, aligned to the national delivery cycle and used in monthly progress meetings.

This includes early work on EAHO workforce, data improvements, governance strengthening, and inclusion infrastructure

A robust financial baseline and a credible investment plan showing how Year 1 actions support long-term DSG sustainability.

Year 1 must demonstrate disciplined financial planning before deficit relief can be unlocked.

Early implementation steps for the Expert at Hand Offer (EAHO), including multidisciplinary workforce modelling and initial joint LA-ICB commissioning activity.

EAHO is a core pillar of reform and must be planned for from Year 1.

Strengthened governance and partnership arrangements, reflecting weaknesses identified through the Local Partnership Maturity Assessment.

Year 1 should prioritise improved LA-ICB collaboration, PCF involvement, and clearer leadership roles.

A workable system for monitoring and evaluation, including readiness for quarterly data returns and use of national metrics to create accurate baselines.

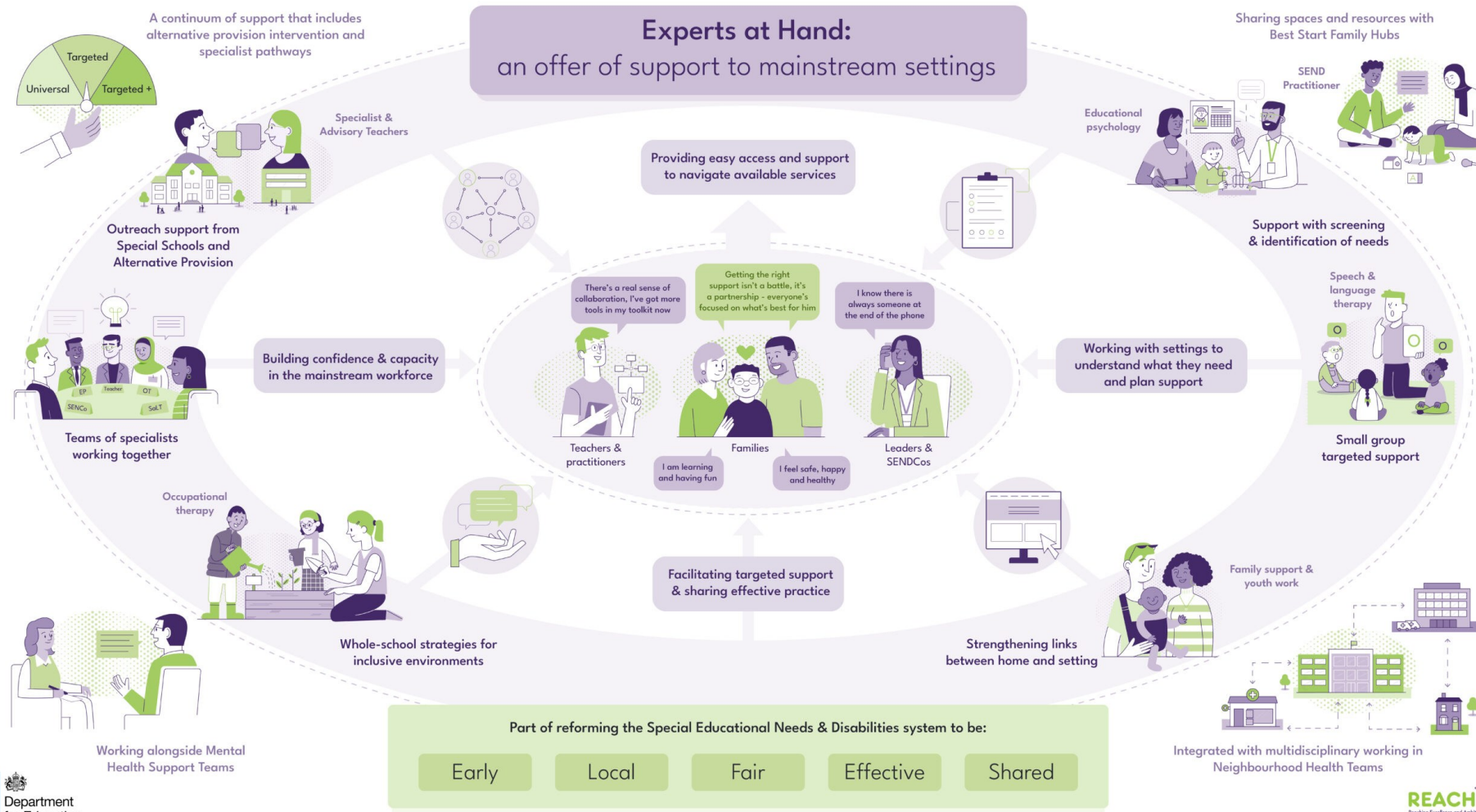
Reliable data is essential for progress reviews and national oversight.

The focus of Year 1 is progress, not completion. It is about establishing the building blocks, demonstrating grip, and showing a credible, evidence-based trajectory for the next three years.



Experts at Hand
Inclusive Mainstream Funding
Inclusion Strategy
Inclusion Standards

Experts at Hand Offer



- EAHO is a core pillar of SEND reform designed to strengthen mainstream settings' capability to meet needs earlier and more effectively
- Experts at Hand and SEND Transformation guidance was published 15th April
- Further EAH guidance is expected around 7th May



| What EAHO Provides / Changes: | What This Looks Like in Practice: |
|--|--|
| Provides a defined route for mainstream settings to access specialist support from: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Educational Psychologists (EPs) and EP assistants➤ Speech & Language Therapists (SALTs) and assistants➤ Occupational Therapists (OTs) and assistants |
| Shifts practice away from 1:1, individual referral models toward: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Group-based interventions➤ Whole-setting advice, modelling, and capability-building➤ Strategic workforce deployment across education & health |
| Builds embedded capability within mainstream, enabling settings to: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Understand needs within their cohort➤ Strengthen universal and targeted provision➤ Use specialist expertise strategically rather than reactively➤ Reduce reliance on statutory assessment and individualised provision where not required |

EaH Indicative funding (as of 15th April)

Shropshire's indicative allocation for 2026/27: **£1,943,857**

- At least 80% of funding must be spent on EAH direct delivery for all settings, staff and their children and young people.
- No more than 10% of funding can be spent on admin costs for delivering the EAH offer.
- No more than 10% of funding can be spent on local authority transformation costs, including staff or other associated costs.

'No funding can be used to provide:

- *support named in children and young peoples existing education health care plans (EHCPs)*
- *to make provision schools can or should make themselves*
- *assessment for EHCPs*
- *for wider social care or family support (for example, Family First Partnerships and Mental Health Support Teams as these are funded separately) - we encourage local areas to ensure these offers join up into an integrated support service.*

This funding is not intended to fill existing gaps or replace current provision, including traded services. The EAH offer should build on and enhance existing local capacity and good practice.'

LISO feedback – From ‘Change Programme’ to ‘Experts at Hand’

Through a series of network meetings and surveys, we have collated the following feedback which will inform our Local SEND Reform Plan.

WHAT WORKS WELL

- Strong specialist services such as Outshine, SIS, PINS, EQAs, MHST and EPs are responsive and effective.
- Guidance offers including GSP panels, LO/SLG information, and EH Meet & Chats are valued.
- Training including Complex Needs, PINS and ELSEC have been appreciated.

WHAT COULD BE EVEN BETTER

- Navigation challenges across too many online platforms and inconsistent or unclear pathways.
- Capacity issues across SALT, EP, OT, and MH services, causing delays.
- EHCP/EHCNA process delays, inconsistent communication and timescales not being met.
- Gaps in CPD availability and affordability.

WHAT ELSE WOULD HELP

- More consistent communication and defined contacts, especially for Post-16.
- Clearer pathways for under-5s, EBSA, CAMHs, ARFID, Tourette's, and complex needs.
- More face-to-face support and school visits from specialist teams.
- Reduced administrative burden and simplified EHCNA paperwork.

OTHER SYSTEM-LEVEL THEMES

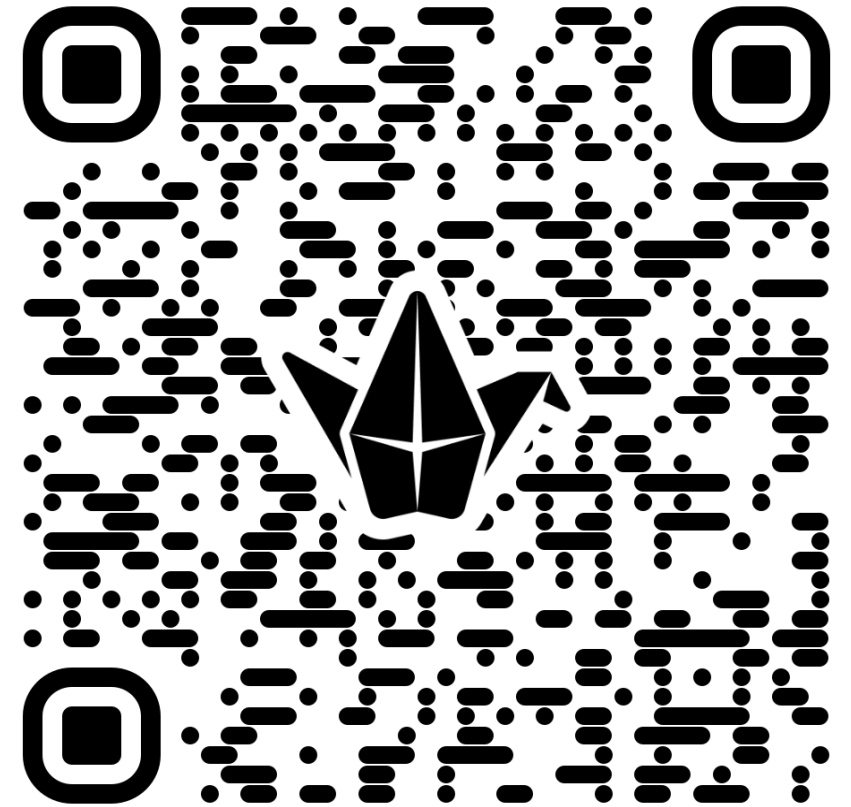
- Increased funding and staffing capacity are needed.
- Faster EHCNA and AR timescales, with more joined-up working.
- Stronger transition support at secondary phases.



What should 'Experts at Hand' look like in Shropshire?

What is needed to:

- Work with schools and settings to understand what they need to plan support?
- Provide easy access and support to navigate available services?
- Build confidence and capacity in the mainstream workforce?
- Facilitate targeted support and share effective practice?





Inclusive Mainstream Funding

DfE have told us they will provide:

- A share of the £1.6 billion Inclusive Mainstream Fund over three years to embed inclusive practice at your school alongside your existing core funding for SEND. This will give you greater responsibility over funding
- Over time, there will be further rebalancing of funding from the high needs budget into schools. In the future, more funding for SEND will go straight into schools' and colleges' core budgets so they can respond to additional needs quickly and flexibly
- The inclusive mainstream fund for schools is not a personal budget for individual pupils.
- It is for schools to decide how to allocate their total school funding allocation, after assessing the needs of their overall cohort and the evidence-based activities and approaches that will be effective in their context.

Inclusive Mainstream Funding: *early years*

The inclusive early years fund will provide £47 million of additional early years funding in 2026 to 2027 to support the early years sector to become more inclusive of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

It is upfront funding intended to:

- help providers adopt setting-wide inclusive practices
- reduce reliance on individual child-based funding applications
- enable early intervention for children with SEND

Funding rates are based on the number of part-time equivalents (PTEs) taking up the 3 and 4-year-olds universal 15 hours entitlement as recorded on the January 2026 schools, early years and alternative provision censuses

LAs are expected to:

- communicate details of the local approach to distribution and indicative allocations to DfE and providers before the end of May 2026
- confirm allocations before the end of August 2026
- Local Authorities must pay providers before the end of September 2026. Payment should be made as a single lump-sum payment.

Shropshire Early Years team are currently drafting our approach in line with the guidance and timescales.

Inclusive Mainstream Funding: *school age*

The Government has committed to £1.6bn Inclusive Mainstream Fund over 3 years from 2026-2027, to support settings to become inclusive by design.

DfE will confirm final school-level allocations will be confirmed in May and the grant will be paid:

- at the end of June for local authorities
- in early July for academy trusts

Schools will receive one payment to cover the 2026 to 2027 financial year. New and growing schools will receive their inclusive mainstream fund later in the financial year (see separate guidance)

The base funding rates for the 2026 to 2027 financial year are:

- A lump sum of **£3,000** per school
- For primary school pupils, a rate of **£16 for each pupil** (including pupils in reception) and an LPA per-pupil rate of £79 per eligible pupil
- For secondary school pupils, a rate of **£14 for each pupil** up to the age of 16, and an LPA per-pupil rate of £88 per eligible pupil

Inclusive Mainstream Funding: *Post 16*

- The 16 to 19 inclusive mainstream fund for schools and colleges will provide additional funding for all mainstream settings that receive annual funding allocations from the Department for Education (DfE) for the provision of 16 to 19 education.
- DfE will pay the grant for the period April 2026 to March 2027. There will be one payment to cover the period and they expect to pay this in July 2026.
- A de-minimis amount of £3,000 shall be applied in cases where the calculated value of the grant falls below this threshold, and the institution does not have a pre-16 inclusive mainstream fund grant.
- No grant will be allocated for closing institutions and where the 16 to 19 provision is ceasing for either year 12 or 13 at the end of the 2025 to 2026 academic year.
- Allocations will be confirmed and published in May 2026, showing the total funding allocated for the 2026 to 2027 financial year.
- Further education institutions will be required to set out how they will use this funding to transition towards the reformed system within their accountability statement, ensuring public accountability.
- Schools will be required to published standalone plans of how they will use this funding across their age range and their sixth form provision will be included within this. For 16 to 19 academies we expect they will cover SEN within their own strategic plans.

Inclusive Mainstream Funding – Permitted uses

DfE recommend that schools allocate funding across the following **7 themes of activity** to help deliver evidence-informed inclusive practice to children and young people.

1. **ambitious leadership and governance that embeds inclusion in planning** – this includes a continuous consideration of learning and development needs within schools' cohorts, data collection and peer review to deliver high standards for all children and young people
2. **evidence-based support prioritising early intervention**, so children and young people with SEND can access effective targeted provision at the right time
3. **high-quality teaching with curriculum designed for all learners**, with teaching and support staff trained, supported and effectively deployed to address a diverse range of needs
4. **accessible and enriching provision beyond the classroom** which provides all children with opportunities to support their personal development, build their independence and prepare for adulthood
5. **a safe and respectful culture fostering belonging and attendance** – approaches may include practice and policies supporting attendance or behaviour ambitions and upskilling of staff by alternative provision specialists
6. **strong partnerships with families and wider services to support children and young people**, particularly through transitions – activities may include sharing expertise and resource across settings, extra staff time to aid transitions, and outward engagement with families to support wellbeing and attendance
7. **inclusive environments with continued improvements to accessibility**, creating more supportive learning experiences – classrooms should be designed to support learning, minimise distraction, and meet a range of sensory and regulatory needs



Ordinarily Available Provision

Shropshire's OAIP documents have been extended to include EY and Post-16 and are ready to launch.

In time, they will need to align with new Inclusion Standards, packages of support and the new Code of Practice and 5 proposed 'areas of development'.

EQAs will lead an Action Research project this term and into the Autumn with some settings to test the existing OAIP documents alongside the reform guidance and refine as required (e-mail EQA@shropshire.gov.uk if your setting would like to be involved)



Inclusion Standards

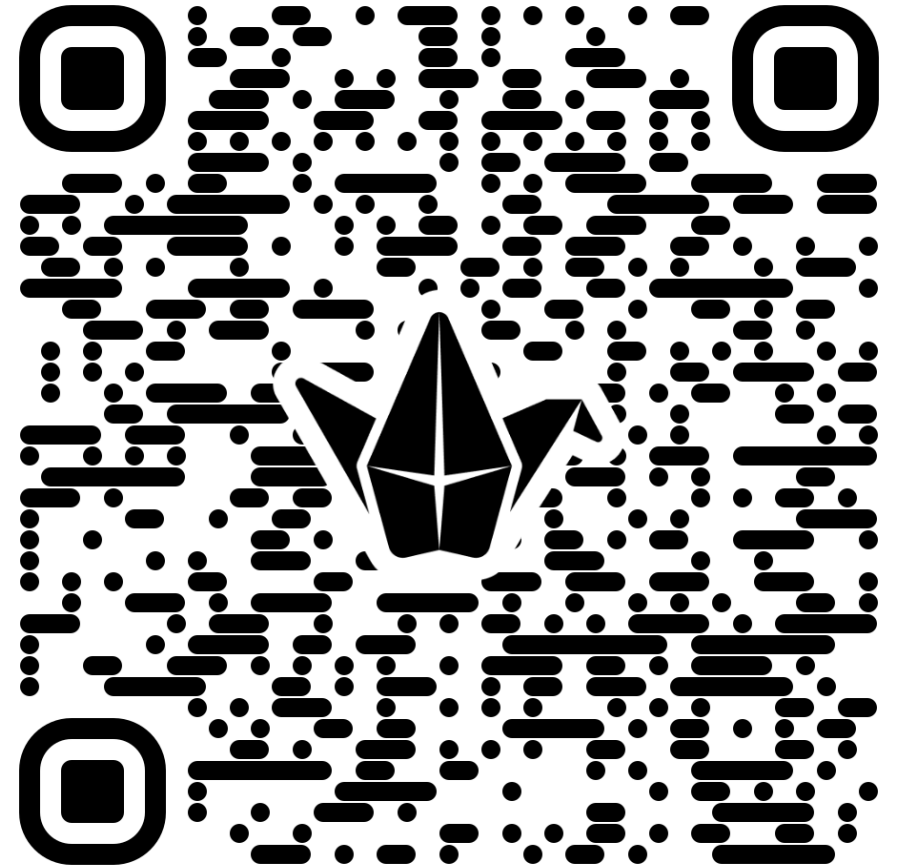
- Awaiting publication – 2027/2028
- Will be linked to Ofsted framework and packages of support
- Becomes ‘business as usual’ for schools.
 - There is an expectation that the Inclusive Mainstream funding will allow schools to ensure they can deliver the core offer of 'ordinarily available provision'.
- Link to an ‘Inclusion Strategy’ (schools to publish by 31/12/26) detailing what schools will do and planned impact
- Locally, there will be a role for EQAs to support in developing and monitoring plans

Inclusion Strategy - Expectations

- Schools will be required to publish an inclusion strategy (this will replace the current SEN Information Report).
- An inclusion strategy is a report of their activity and approaches to identify and meet commonly occurring and predictable needs within their cohort and embed inclusive practice.
- This activity will be funded by the school's core funding allocations, including their notional special educational needs (SEN) budget calculated and communicated by their local authority, as well as the inclusive mainstream fund.
- The inclusive mainstream fund should not be considered the only source of funding to deliver this activity.
- Through their inspection framework, Ofsted will assess how leaders ensure the Inclusion Strategy is embedded in practice and how staff are equipped to deliver it.
- This Inclusion Strategy will also show how schools intend to use their funding to support inclusion. We will work with the early years and post-16 sectors to develop appropriate and proportionate approaches to an Inclusion Strategy for these cohorts

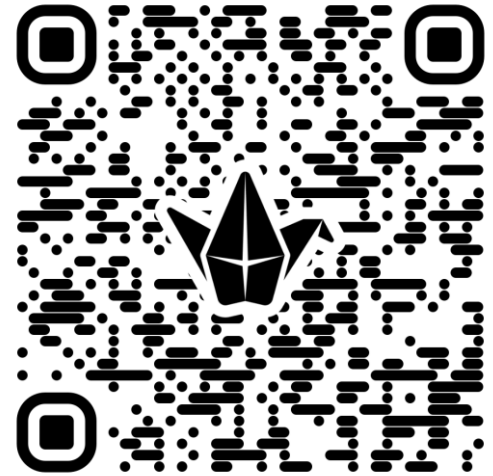
Developing an Inclusion Strategy

- What are the challenges around the development of an Inclusion Strategy?
- What support will you need to develop this?
- What would be useful?
- What is the best way to support?



This is the start – Communication with schools and settings

- Headteacher Briefings
- SENCO network meeting
- CEO group
- Tuesday Education Update and SEND newsletters
- Maintained Schools Forum
- Schools' Forum



Consider – What else would be useful?