

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING	Health and Wellbeing Board
MEETING DATE:	7 May
TITLE:	Local SEND Reform Plan
WARD:	All
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM	
List of attachments to this report: Slide-deck of the White Paper and SEND Reform Plan	

1 THE ISSUE

On 23 February, the Government launched the 'Every Child Achieving and Thriving' White Paper. This focuses on:

- Higher academic outcomes for children (so that every child is stretched and can achieve); and
- Halving the disadvantage gap for children from low-income backgrounds.

The White Paper outlines the three key shifts that they will be delivering to transform education for all children:

1. Narrow to Broad – a curriculum that builds knowledge and skills, alongside enrichment opportunities for all children
2. Sidelined to Included – high standards and inclusion come together.
3. Withdrawn to engaging – children feel safe and connected to their school environment and meet academic excellence.

The White Paper also focuses on the numbers of Children and Young People with SEND who have been told they cannot thrive in mainstream education. This is further detailed in the accompanying 'SEND Reform: Putting children and young people first' consultation paper.

The SEND Reform consultation paper outlines the changes it wants to make over 10 years. The SEND Reform principles are **Early, Local, Fair, Effective and Shared**. The consultation paper main theme is inclusion and local partnerships providing a wrap-around system of support for children.

There are also proposed changes regarding: the statutory system (especially funding); governance and inspection over multi-academy trusts; and a capital programme geared at creating more Inclusion Bases.

Whilst this is a consultation, the DfE are clear that they want local partnerships to take immediate action. On 9 March, in a joint letter to LAs and ICBs, DfE confirmed that they were commissioning each local area partnership to develop and submit a Local SEND Reform Plan in June 2026, underpinned by a Local Partnership Maturity Assessment.

The ask is for these documents to clearly set out how we will improve and further strengthen our system, tilting provision towards stronger inclusive practice and early intervention, and ensuring that the conditions underpinning effective long-term outcomes are in place. This will help to identify and spread best practice as we work collectively to reform our SEND system.

The Local SEND Reform Plan is the key accountability vehicle for this collaborative commitment, with expectations that are reviewed annually as proposed reforms rolls out.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to:

2.1 Note the contents of this paper.

3 THE REPORT

3.1 The Local Partnership Maturity Assessment Tool asks Local Partnerships to rate themselves on a scale of 0 to 3 (where 0 is 'Not yet emerging'; 1 is 'Emerging', 2 is 'Developing' and 3 is 'Maturing') against 7 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 – Effective Partnership working across education, health and social care;
- Pillar 6 – Skilled and organised workforce;
- Pillar 7 – Targeted, judicious and sustainable use of resources including sufficiency, place planning and capital.

3.2 This exercise has now been completed, and the Local Partnership has come out as a '2' (Developing) across all Pillars, with the exception of Pillar 5, where the partnership felt that we were 'Emerging' around joined-up practice.

3.3 The Local SEND Reform Plan asks partnerships to look at the areas of development that the Maturity Assessment Tool identified, and then focus its work into 4 areas:

- Experts at Hand Offer

- Sufficiency and Place Planning
 - Effective Practice – Universal Offer (including Early Years – aligned with Best Start in Life – and Post-16)
 - Effective Partnerships (including co-production and mediation).
- 3.4 By having been in the Safety Valve programme, the Local Authority has developed a strong foundation to deliver the Plan already.
- The Sufficiency and Place Planning work mirrors Safety Valve’s ‘SEND Capital and Sufficiency’ workstream. This includes the LA’s commitment to delivering the special SEND school on the old Culverhay site.
 - ‘Effective Practice – Universal Offer’ builds on the work of the Inclusion and SEND Advice Service, which has been operational for 18 months. This Service was funded by the LA as part of Safety Valve and is focused on what all settings should be providing as part of ‘Ordinarily Available Provision’ (i.e. ‘the Universal Offer’).
 - The Effective Partnerships workstream develops the governance model already established through our Local Area Inclusion Partnership (LAIP).
 - The area of significant change and opportunity is the **Experts at Hand Offer**, where partnerships have been asked to create more equitable access to specialists (such as Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists) for all settings. This is where local partnerships have been encouraged to explore clustered models of delivery.
- 3.5 Cross-partnership ‘content working groups’ are launching 29 April and will run until 11 May. This will be where the Partnership will discuss what they will commit to delivering together, which will then outline the contents of the SEND Reform Plan.
- 3.6 In terms of the drafting process, timelines are incredibly tight. As the ‘system convener’, the Local Authority is tasked with writing and submitting the Plan. We will have approximately one week to do this before we submit a draft to our DfE Advisors. We will then have another week to make edits from their feedback, in order to meet governance deadlines both internally within the LA, as well as the LAIP and ICB. The final deadline for Plans is 19 June.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 None.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

5.1 None.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision-making risk management guidance.

7 EQUALITIES

7.1 Improved outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

8.1 More local SEND provision will reduce carbon emissions by a reduction in mileage of cars and Home to School Transport.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 None.

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 Jean Kelly – Director of Children’s Services

Contact person	Antonia White
Background papers	
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	