

SEND REFORM

SUMMARY – FIGHT

FOR ORDINARY

SEND REFORM OVERVIEW



LEGAL CHANGES: STRENGTHENED AND WEAKENED AREAS

Introduction of Individual Support Plans

ISPs impose statutory duties on schools to monitor and adapt support, ensuring earlier intervention and universal availability.

Narrowed Eligibility for and weakening of EHCPs

Eligibility for EHCPs is limited to children with the most complex needs requiring Specialist Provision Packages, reducing statutory plans; ISPs part of EHCPs, not appealable nor duty to deliver

SEND Tribunal as Last Resort

Tribunal remains, but weakening of its role – eg school placement

Mixed Impact of Reforms

Reforms strengthen mainstream duties and early support but contract rights at EHCP level

FOUR LEVELS OF SUPPORT

- Universal – core inclusive offer in every setting (leadership, adaptive teaching, reasonable adjustments, inclusive environments)
 - Targeted – school/college-led interventions recorded in an ISP (e.g., small-group language work, curriculum adaptations)
 - Targeted Plus – multi-agency input via Experts at Hand; access to Inclusion Bases; ISP continues and is reviewed regularly
 - Specialist – EHCPs available where a child needs a nationally defined Specialist Provision Package; ISP captures day-to-day provision
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DUTIES ON SCHOOLS

- Statutory duty to create and publish an annual Inclusion Plan/Strategy showing how the universal, targeted and targeted-plus offers are delivered
 - Legal duty to produce and review an Individual Support Plan (ISP) for any child receiving targeted / targeted-plus / specialist support
 - Use the National Inclusion Standards to plan evidence-based support and select interventions
 - Greater Ofsted focus on inclusion and use of Inclusion Bases; governors/trust boards to scrutinise inclusion and sample ISPs
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EXPERTS AT HAND

- £1.8bn over three years to embed EPs, SaLTs, OTs and other specialists into mainstream settings
 - Quicker support without waiting for statutory assessment; focus on upskilling staff and group-level support
 - Backed by growth in key workforces (e.g., >200 extra EP trainees per year from 2026) and delivery guidance
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SPECIALIST PROVISION PACKAGES (SPPS)

- Nationally defined, evidence-based packages for the most complex needs; developed and reviewed by an independent expert panel (tested with parents).
 - An EHCP will guarantee the educational provision from the child's matched SPP; day-to-day delivery sits in the ISP at setting level (weakening of EHCPs and Tribunal?)
 - Local authority-led statutory needs assessment matches the child to the appropriate SPP; parents'/young person's views included.
 - SPPs describe characteristics, expected outcomes, interventions, staffing/training/equipment and environmental adaptations; linked to national costing/banding for consistency.
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- Packages will cover cohorts across mainstream, specialist bases and special schools (not diagnosis-led; determined by the provision needed).

SPECIALIST SECTOR REFORMS

- Specialist Provision Packages define evidence-based offers for the most complex needs; EHCPs guarantee this provision
 - Greater outreach from special/AP settings to mainstream; more specialist places delivered via Specialist Bases in mainstream
 - Reform of Independent Special Schools: align duties, national bands, stronger value-for-money and transparency
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SPECIALIST PATHWAYS (POST-16 & TRANSITIONS)

- Stronger transition planning from school to college; tailored packages and earlier planning (12+ months)
 - Expanded Supported Internships; apprenticeships incl. new pathways; improved links to HE (reasonable adjustments, DSA)
 - Alternative Provision: outreach, time-limited placements for assessment & reintegration, and longer-term placements where needed
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FUNDING AND INVESTMENT

NEW FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENTS AND MECHANISM CHANGES

Increased Investment in SEND

Over £7 billion funding planned for SEND reforms aims to enhance early intervention and inclusive mainstream support, including

Inclusive Mainstream Fund (2026–2029)

£1.6 billion over three years to help early years settings, schools and colleges deliver an improved inclusion offer and invest upfront in early intervention.

Experts at Hand Model

£1.8 billion investment brings specialists like educational psychologists directly into mainstream settings for timely support.

Capital Investment for Facilities

£3.7 billion capital investment to create Inclusion Bases, modernise buildings, and expand specialist placements.

Reformed Funding Mechanisms

Funding shifts to mainstream budgets and pooled SEND funding promote equitable resource sharing and simplified structures.

FUNDING FLOWS & POOLING

- Rebalancing: more SEND funding moves into mainstream core budgets to enable early, flexible support
- Inclusive Mainstream Fund (£1.6bn over three years) to boost upfront resources and strengthen universal/targeted offers
- Capital: £3.7bn to create Inclusion Base places and expand special capacity
- Pooling: school groups pool part of inclusion funding to commission shared provision and smooth variation

LOCAL SEND GROUPS OF SCHOOLS

- All schools join a local SEND group working with the LA & ICB to plan provision and share resources
 - Groups coordinate shared expertise, Inclusion Bases, and specialist teaching; peer review and challenge to reduce variation
 - Schools pool a minimum share of inclusion funding to meet needs fairly across schools in the group
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IMPLEMENTATION TIMETABLE

KEY DATES & PHASING

- Now–2029: Upfront investment to build capacity — Inclusive Mainstream Fund, Experts at Hand, national training, and capital for Inclusion Bases.
 - 2026–2029: National Inclusion Standards developed and rolled out; workforce expansion (e.g., EP training) and delivery guidance issued.
 - September 2029: Start of assessments under the new system; first cohort at end of primary, secondary and post-16 assessed for transition.
 - September 2030: First moves into the new system — either onto Specialist Provision Packages with EHCPs or onto ISPs in mainstream.
 - Until at least September 2030: Existing EHCPs and protections remain; no child asked to leave a special school because of the reforms.
 - Oversight: Children's Commissioner to oversee transition and implementation.
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DCP IMMEDIATE REACTION

DCP RESPONSE SUMMARY

Support for Inclusive Vision

DCP strongly supports a society where disabled children and families receive timely, barrier-free support.

Strengthening of support for children without EHCPs

Stronger duties on schools; legally backed ISPs

Concerns on EHCP Access; ISPs within EHCPs; SSPs and Tribunal role

Restrictions on EHCPs; lack of detail on the Specialist Provision Packages

Importance of consultation period

DCP urges continued partnership among government, families, and young people for reliable, enforceable support.
