

# SEND Provision Plan

2026-2029



# SEND Provision Plan Executive Summary

Improving the lives of children and young people with SEND is something we can only achieve by working together. Families, schools, health partners and the council have all played a vital part in shaping this plan, and it reflects what people have told us matters most. While national reform is on the way, including the Government's focus on early help, local provision, fairness, effective support and shared responsibility, children and families need better support now. This plan sets out how we will make that happen in Hertfordshire.

The SEND Provision Plan sits beneath our wider SEND Strategy and explains how we will strengthen the support available to children and young people over the next three years. To help show how the two fit together, we have included information that reminds you of the key ambitions set out in the SEND Strategy and how this plan delivers them in practice.

Children and young people have been clear about what makes the biggest difference: getting help earlier, learning closer to home, and feeling understood and included in their school community. Families want a simpler and more consistent system, with clearer information about what support is available. Mainstream schools want the confidence, clarity and support to meet the needs of our children and young people well.

This plan responds by improving inclusion across all early years settings, schools and colleges, so more children can have their needs met in their local mainstream school. It expands specialist provision within mainstream schools through new Specialist Resource Provisions and SEND Units, giving children with complex needs who need more tailored support the chance to stay connected to their peers and their community. It also increases the number of special school places for children with more complex and co-occurring needs and updates school designations so that specialist settings can better reflect the growing complexity of children's needs.

Most children and young people, including many with EHCPs, will continue to have their needs met in their local mainstream setting, with specialist support available when it is needed. And for those who require a more specialist environment, there will be more high-quality places closer to home. We will make information clearer and more transparent so families will be able to see what each type of setting offers and how decisions are made, replacing older, more complex admissions guidance with something that is easier to understand.

This plan has been shaped through extensive engagement with families, schools, professionals and more than 400 children and young people. It reflects both the national direction and the realities facing local families every day. Our ambition is simple: every child and young person with SEND should feel included, supported and able to thrive in the place they call home. By working together and keeping children at the centre of every decision, we can create a clearer, fairer and more responsive SEND system for Hertfordshire.

**Jo Fisher**

*Executive Director of Children's Services. Hertfordshire County Council on behalf of the SEND Partnership*

# Contents Page

This SEND provision plan sets out how we will create a more inclusive SEND system in Hertfordshire. It is aligned with our SEND Strategy and the national direction of travel, grounded in evidence and shaped through co-production with families, schools, health partners, and young people.

Our focus is on equity, sustainability, and local access. We will strengthen inclusive practice in mainstream schools while ensuring timely, high-quality specialist support for children with higher levels of need. We will develop a clear, child-centred approach to placement decisions.

Children and young people tell us they want to learn locally, stay with peers, and have help that adapts as needs change - our plan does exactly that. Local support first, specialist when necessary and simpler pathways. We recognise that children's needs change, so we are committed to reviewing and refining our approach to keep it relevant, responsive, and impactful.

Section:	Pages:	What this section aims to explain:
Our SEND Strategy	4-5	To summarise what we want to achieve from writing and delivering this strategy and what outcomes we want children and young people to achieve.
Context	6-7	This includes important local and national data points, and what our journey to this point has been.
Your Voice	8-9	We have a wide range of ways that we hear from people that both use SEND services and those that work in them. This summarises the findings from the engagement activity that has taken place to specifically feed into this plan. You told us what is most important to you.
What is changing?	10 - 16	Sets out what will be different and the key elements of the SEND Strategy the proposed SEND Provision Plan aligns to, along with details on what is changing within the proposed SEND Provision plan.
How we will deliver this plan – our governance	17	Provides a diagram of the different board meetings who will oversee progress of the strategy and continuous improvement plan, and how they link together.
Links to other key strategies	18	This strategy is not the only one which aims to improve children and young people's outcomes, we have reviewed other strategies to ensure our ambitions for children and young people align with theirs and we have listed these.

If you do not have access to the internet, you can visit your local library where free access is available to all Hertfordshire residents.

The easiest way to let us know your views is to complete the online response form on our website (*link to be added when we go live with the consultation*)

Should you wish to have a paper response form or need help understanding this information, please email [SENDStrategy@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:SENDStrategy@hertfordshire.gov.uk) or call us on 07583038259.

An interpreting service is available for those who need it.



# Strategy

## Hertfordshire Local Area Partnership

2026-2029



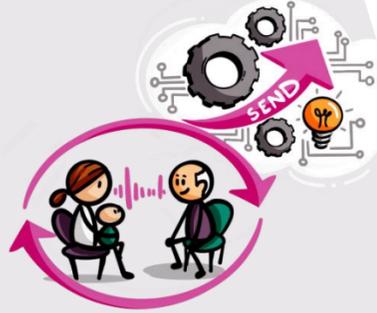
# Our Ambitions



These priorities have been based on what you told us matters most.

Throughout our engagement activities in 2025, we asked whether these ambitions reflect the right priorities for children and young people with SEND. Over 85% of respondents agreed that they do.

## 1. Listen, Engage, Collaborate, Evolve



We will continuously listen to children, young people, families, staff and education settings and take time to understand their experiences. They should always be engaged in our continuous improvement work. This is so we can continue to learn about what works and what doesn't.

## 2. Early Identification & Support



Children and young people can have needs which emerge at any time. Our services will aim to provide timely assessments which identify needs at the earliest possible point to enable early support. Guidance and support without a diagnosis will be readily available and promoted.

## 3. Local Provision for Children and Young People



We will provide children and young people with access to high quality education, health and social care provisions that are local to them and work together to consider their needs and outcomes. All of our provision will operate flexibly to meet varying and changing needs.

## 4. Aspirational for All



We want children and young people with SEND to be included and feel like they belong in their community and where they learn. All partners must champion inclusion and do more to engage and influence wider system partners, community and public on this, creating a more inclusive society.

## 5. Preparing for the Future



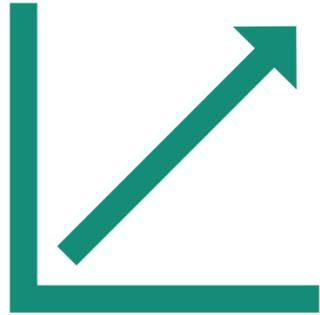
For children, young people and families, transition at any age or life stage is vitally important and can be stressful. We will support children and young people to be ready for the next step in life.

## 6. Strong Foundations



There are things required that are essential to achieve our five other ambitions. Examples include good communication, strong workforce, good technology and good partnership working.

# Context: SEND Provision in a Changing System



Requests for specialist places are rising fast. In Hertfordshire we have seen:

- National Department for Education (DfE) data shows sustained and accelerating growth in both Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and SEN Support, with EHCP numbers rising faster than overall pupil population growth
- by 2025, Children and young people with EHCPs had increased 251% in Hertfordshire from 2015, a faster rate than nationally (166%).
- By 29/30 there will be almost twice as many children who will require some form of specialist support

There is increasing recognition at a national level of the challenges faced by local areas and education settings in delivering services and meeting the needs children and young people who need more support.

We must consider how we sustain and make further improvements at the same time as facing increasing need and significant funding challenges.

We are also influenced by national context:

- This SEND provision plan is live during a time of increasing pressures and uncertainty in the system, with many areas of national policy change being proposed.
- The Department for Education's five principles for SEND reform – Early, Local, Fair, Effective, Shared – set the national expectation for inclusive, needs-led provision.
- The Every Child Achieving and Thriving White Paper published on 23<sup>rd</sup> February sets out central governments ambitions to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND which is currently being consulted on by central government.
- Ofsted's new Education Inspection Framework is in use from November 2025, with more focus on how education settings are inclusive.

Our plan broadly aligns with the national direction of travel, focusing on early help, local provision, and fair, child-centred decisions. We will strengthen our graduated offer that supports most children in mainstream schools, alongside increased investment in specialist provision in both mainstream and special schools. Mainstream settings, SRPs and SEND Units will enable more children and young people with SEND to access education closer to home, while special schools will continue to play a crucial role for children with higher levels of need. This ensures a full range of support, from moderate to complex needs, with a focus on local provision.

# Context: Our Improvement Journey since 2022

Hertfordshire has been on a journey to improve outcomes and experiences for children and young people with SEND following the **2023 SEND Inspection**. We have delivered many of the commitments in the [24/25 Priority Action & Improvement Plan](#).

The OFSTED SEND monitoring visit 2025 recognised that we have taken effective action, including ‘carefully planned increase in the number of special school places’; however, ‘effective action does not mean that the area for priority action is no longer a concern or that the local area can stop taking action to address it’.

We know there is still more to do so that children, young people and their families to consistently experience good quality and timely services and get the support they need. These areas are a focus through the new SEND Strategy and the proposed SEND Provision Plan.

## Key progress made since the last place planning strategy:

### Major investment:

- **£137 million capital investment** approved since 2022 to expand specialist education provision.
- Delivered **601 new special school and SRP places since 2022**, with 479 approved and 230 in feasibility for delivery by 2027/28. That will represent **48% increase** in specialist places
- Over **2000 children have been placed** in specialist provision since Sep 2023, with an 82% increase in 2024/25 compared to 22/23. The number of children waiting more than two years has dropped by 69% (Sep 2025).

### Special school growth:

- Rebuilt and enlarged The Valley School.
- Introduced new Communication and Autism sector, including one new primary and one new secondary special school, alongside the existing Roman Fields academy.

### Mainstream inclusion strengthened:

- Created **13 Specialist Resource Provisions (SRPs)** – 9 primary and 4 secondary – to support communication and autism needs.
- Rolled out **Ordinarily Available Provision** guidance for mainstream schools and Support on a Page for professionals and families.

### Co-production at the heart:

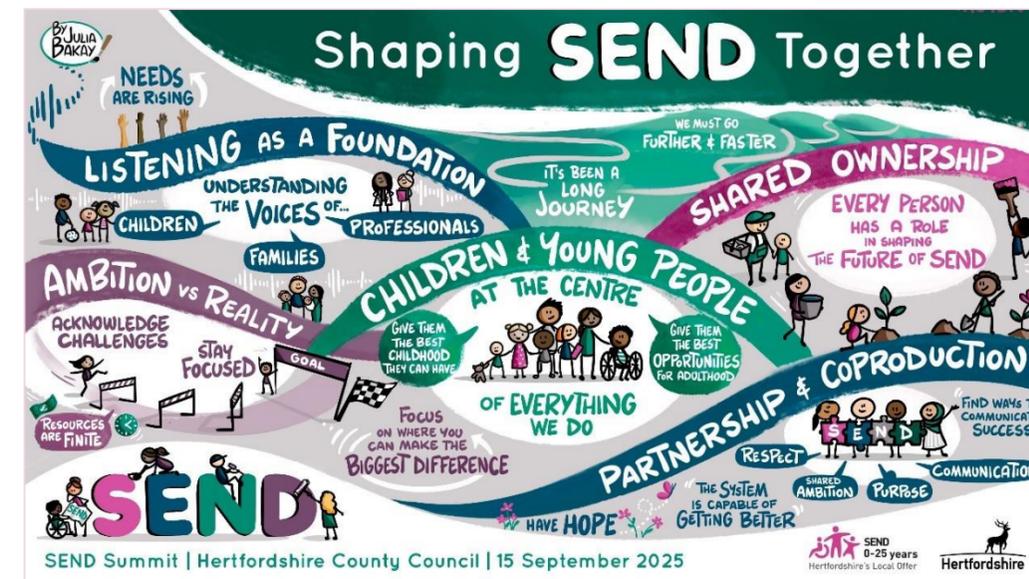
- Extensive engagement: **44 multi-agency workshops**, SEND Summit (Sept 2025), and community listening events.
- Over **400 young people** and families shaped priorities for the SEND Strategy 2026–2029.



# Your Voice Shaping SEND together

We've worked together to make sure every child gets the right support. Through a series of workshops, we've focused on creating a fair and needs-led funding model for special schools, finding better ways to support specialist provision in mainstream schools, and clarifying the role of special schools for children with the most complex needs. We've also built a strong learning and development approach to help schools and professionals work together. This has been a shared effort - with 44 meetings involving education, health, social care, and parent carer groups, plus feedback from over 400 young people through our Voices of Hertfordshire programme.

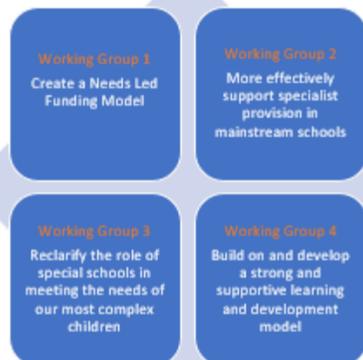
In September 2025, the partnership hosted a SEND Summit, attended by parent carer representatives, Head Teachers, SENCOs, voluntary and community sector organisations, County Councillors, young people, and Leaders from Education, Health and Social Care services. The aim of the event was to listen, understand challenges and work together to find solutions, which have informed the priorities of this SEND Strategy. In addition to the wide range of ways that we hear the views of people across the SEND System, we heard from over 1000 voices in the lead up to the SEND summit. This included parent carers, children and young people, and professionals working across education, health and social care.



Visual notes capturing the SEND Summit – September 2025



**387 young people** aged from 8 to 18 in face to face sessions in primary, specialist and secondary schools across Hertfordshire gave their views on what local means to them



**44 workshops** involving education, health, social care, and parent carer groups.



In total, over **50 hours** of County Councillor and Officers time was spent meeting with over **130 parent carers** and professionals at community events.



**531 responses** were received in a parent carer survey, **193 responses** were received in a survey for educational professionals, and **135 responses** were received in a survey for young people.



The Local Offer Team attended **23 community events** and **chatted to 77 people** about the challenges and solutions.



**124 people** from across education, health, social care and parent carer representatives **attended the SEND Summit**. They shared their views, insights and ideas in interactive workshops.



**Over 100 people** joined the event via the livestream and submitted questions for a Q&A session. Recordings are available to watch on the [Local Offer YouTube](#).

# Your Voice

## What you told us at the SEND Summit....

You want children and young people to feel part of their local communities, and for this to continue once they leave school.

When children and young people are in a learning environment that is tailored to their needs, they thrive. Specialist provision, such as deaf schools and SEND Units were highlighted as excellent resources.

You'd like to see mainstream schools with a genuinely inclusive culture, so that children and young people feel a sense of belonging.

You'd like more access to Specialist Provision so that children and young people are able to learn in an environment that meets their needs.

You'd like children and young people with SEND to be supported by professionals who have access to ongoing training and development, so that they feel confident and well-equipped to do their job.

There's lots of information out there, but you'd like it to be clearer on where to go, and when to access different types of support and services.

## 'What is Local' face to face sessions with 387 children - March 2025



Voices of Hertfordshire



Hertfordshire Partnership University  
NHS Foundation Trust

Children and young people considered carefully 'What does local mean?'. They largely agreed with each other on what this meant and this is as follows

- At primary and nursery age, local means being able to walk or wheel to your school, clubs, friends and activities.
- At secondary it means not having to drive for more than 20 minutes to get to your school.
- There should be an option to travel by foot or wheel to your friends house if you live in a town or city and for it to take no more than 20 minutes to see a friend or go to an activity if you live in a village.
- Anywhere you can bike to in 20 – 30 mins

When discussing 'local' in your plans please consider the above.



# What is changing?

1. National policy sets the direction - SEND provision in Hertfordshire is being reshaped to reflect the principles of the national SEND Reform conversation (December 2025)

**Early and Local and Fair and Effective and Shared**

2. Our SEND Strategy sets the local ambition - *What will be Different* in the draft SEND Strategy:

**Support starts earlier**

Families will be able to access help even without a formal diagnosis. Resources like the [Local Offer](#) website and the [Neurodiversity Hub](#) will contribute to clearer pathways to support. All partners will focus on reducing delays, uncertainty, and inequity.

**More local provision that meets needs**

We will develop a graduated offer of provision that means families will have more options in mainstream settings, with more specialist provision available for those with the most complex needs. Development of provisions will be informed by data and jointly planned by education and health services.

**Inclusion is embedded across the system**

Inclusive values will be promoted across schools and services. Children will feel more welcomed and supported, and families will be more connected to their communities.

3. The proposed SEND Provision Plan delivers the change – This plan translates the strategy into practical action across schools and settings

**1. Strengthen capacity mainstream schools and settings**

We will ensure that schools have access to resources, tools and training to support children with SEND. This means clear guidance, practical strategies, and help from specialist teams when needed. Families will feel confident that their child can thrive in their local school

*This strengthens early, local, fair, effective and shared SEND provision and support*

**2. Expand specialist capacity in mainstream schools**

Our ambition is to create at least **650 new places** in Specialist Resource Provisions and SEND Units by 2029. These will sit within mainstream schools, giving children with complex and wide-ranging needs access to tailored support while staying connected to their peers and local communities.

*This expands local, fair and shared SEND provision that works and effectively*

**3. Create more special school places**

For children with higher levels of need, we aim to create more places where they are needed, adding up to **500 new special school places** across Hertfordshire by 2029. This ensures those children and young people who need the highest level of support can access it locally.

*Supports early, effective and fair access to local specialist provision for children with higher levels of need*

**4. Update special school designations**

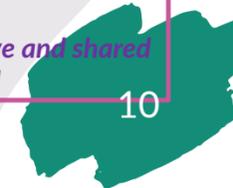
Developing a better spread of SEND provision in mainstream schools means that special schools will be able to focus on supporting the most complex children, reflecting the changing and the increasingly complex needs of children and young people. This means that special schools will need to adapt to support a wider range of needs, including children with more than one type of need, so every child gets the right help.

*This makes specialist provision clearer, fairer, and better shared across the system*

**5. Child centred placements**

We will make placement decisions by focusing on each child's needs and strengths, with professionals agreeing the setting that can support them well. We will move away from the existing admissions guidance so decisions are more individualised and child-centred, supported by clear, transparent information - leading to quicker specialist placements for children who need them most.

*This ensures early, local, fair, effective and shared decisions for every child*



# Continuum of Provision

Mainstream school approaches  
*Provision varies by school depending on space, staffing and approach*

## Nurture/Inclusion Groups

- Mainstream schools early support.
- Small, inclusive setting; pupils stay enrolled in mainstream.
- Flexible, SEND-focused curriculum by a qualified teacher.

## Internal Alternative Provision

- Mainstream schools, on-site support for behaviour/emotional/social challenges.
- Goal: remove barriers, reintegrate pupils.
- Trauma-informed, relational approach.

## Specialist Outreach Support

- Delivered by external experts to help schools and nurseries meet SEND needs.
- Includes therapists, Primary Behaviour Services, Education Support Centres, and specialist teachers from special schools or the Local Authority.
- Provides targeted advice and practical strategies to support inclusion and progress.
- Support could be both systemic and individual



### Specialist Resource Provisions (SRPs)

- Places allocated by the Local Authority via the EHCP process.
- Based in a mainstream school for children needing frequent specialist intervention and a modified environment.
- Provides access to the mainstream curriculum with tailored support.
- Smaller classes, higher staff-to-pupil ratio; intensive intervention to reduce barriers.
- Pupils gradually spend more time in mainstream classes with peers.

### SEND UNITS

- Places allocated by the Local Authority via the EHCP process.
- Based in mainstream schools for children with complex learning needs, significant delayed attainment, and possible physical/sensory needs.
- Specialised, individualised curriculum in an adapted environment.
- Pupils spend most time in the unit; limited time in mainstream for social or non-core subjects.
- There may be opportunities for pupils to spend increased time in mainstream classes.

### Primary Behaviour Services (PBS)

- Owned by mainstream schools, supported by the Local Authority.
- Small inreach service for children with social, emotional, and mental health needs.
- Provides short-term places and works with families and schools to reintegrate pupils into mainstream.

### Education Support Centres (ESCs)

- Allocated by the Local Authority.
- Provide intensive support for pupils excluded or with significant social, emotional, and behavioural needs.
- Work mainly with secondary-age pupils to stabilise behaviour, improve engagement, and reintegrate into mainstream or move to an appropriate setting.

### Special Schools

- Places allocated by the Local Authority via the EHCP process.
- Designed for children with the highest level of need.
- Provides tailored teaching, resources, and support to help pupils achieve their potential.
- Smaller class sizes, specialist staff, and high levels of health/social care support.
- Pupils usually remain in specialist education with structured transition to post-school life.

# 1. Strengthen capacity in mainstream schools & settings

We will ensure that schools have access to resources, tools and training to support children with SEND. This means clear guidance, practical strategies, and help from specialist teams when needed. Families will feel confident that their child can thrive in their local school. We will do this by:

## Building strong inclusive practice:

We know how important it is that every child has access to high-quality teaching and participation in their school community. Many schools already do great work to support and include children with SEND as more children and young people require additional support. Together, we will work to make this consistent across Hertfordshire. We will agree clear expectations for inclusive practice and embed 'Ordinarily Available Provision' in every school. Building on the considerable investment made by the county council and upcoming investment from the DfE to support SEND training for all teaching staff, we will work collaboratively to strengthen the SEND workforce, supporting recruitment, and training, embedding fairness and consistency across all schools, including those with physical disabilities.

## Delivering the right support for schools (early help when it matters most)

We will work with schools, colleges and early years settings to provide support at every level - from universal strategies to targeted and individualised interventions. This includes practical tools like Support on a Page SEND service directories, and specialist help through specialist outreach services, Early Years SEND teams, and Special School Outreach. We will make early funding easier to access and will support early targeted intervention such as nurture groups and internal alternative provision, facilitated through our Delivering Specialist Provision Locally networks (DSPLs) network. Early intervention can prevent needs from escalating and help children thrive sooner.

## Working together to reduce variability

Every mainstream school should be confident in meeting the needs of most children and young people with SEND so that parents have confidence that whichever school their child attends, they will be supported and included. We will strengthen local networks, including through DSPLs, so that schools can share expertise, learn from each other and spread effective practice. We will use data to identify and provide direct support to where it is most needed. Families will be partners in planning transitions for every stage and building confidence in their local provision. By working together, our aim is that every child should get the same opportunities, wherever they live.

## What this means for you and your child:

A consistent, collaborative approach means children and young people can learn locally, stay connected to friends, and get the right help at the right time. It builds confidence for families and makes the system fairer and better able to support children and young people into the future.

**I really value having a space to come together and collaborate around a problem, working out solutions together.**

*SENCo – Community Listening Event Summer 2025*

**Inclusion is creating a space where every learner, regardless of ability, feels safe, valued, and empowered to grow. When schools embrace inclusion, they nurture not only academic success but empathy, resilience, and a sense of community in every student.**

*Headteacher – Pre-Summit Survey Summer 2025*



# 2. Expand specialist capacity in mainstream schools

Our ambition is to create at least 650 new places in Specialist Resource Provisions (SRP) and SEND Units by 2029. These will sit within mainstream schools, giving children and young people with complex and wide-ranging needs access to tailored support while staying connected to their peers and local communities. We will do this by:

## More specialist places where they're needed

You have told us that strengthening SEND support in your local area is important to you. We will enhance local options for children and young people, by creating more SEND Units and Specialist Resource Provisions (SRPs). This helps families access the right specialist support locally, by creating calm, specialist spaces in mainstream schools to support children with SEND, allowing them to access tailored facilities close to home while joining with main school activities and classes when they can. This approach reflects the national focus on embedding more provision in mainstream schools closer to home.

## Specialist Support within Mainstream schools and settings (local access with tailored help)

We will work with mainstream schools to establish more formal specialist provision within mainstream schools, creating at least 650 SRP and SEND Unit places for children with needs such as Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH), Cognition and Learning (C&L), and Communication and Interaction (C&I) including autism. These units will provide tailored support while keeping children and young people connected to their peers and school community and provide a wider range of options as part of a county wide graduated offer.

## Quality and Collaboration

Every new provision will meet high standards through clear agreements and outcomes-based monitoring. Schools will have access to specialist training and, where needed, capital support for site adaptations. Alongside this, we will work with mainstream schools to strengthen the SEND workforce so mainstream schools have trained and sufficient staff needed to meet pupils' SEND needs in SRPs and SEND units. Families will have more options in mainstream settings and confidence that inclusion is embedded across schools and services.

## What this means for you and your child:

If your child needs a specialist place, they will have better access to specialist support in a local mainstream school without needing to travel too far. Families will have clearer pathways with more options within their community, with places prioritised for local children identified as needing specialist provision.



“The biggest success is that children who were accessing only 30 minutes of education a day are now attending full time and making incredible progress in their learning

*Head Teacher SRP*

“What happens to those children that can't cope in mainstream schools, but don't need a special school to have their needs met?”

*Question at SEND Summit 2025*

“I want to go to school where my friends go to school.”

*CYP Pre-Summit Survey Summer 2025*

# 3. Create more special school places

For children with higher levels of need, we aim to create more places where they are needed, adding up to 500 new special school places across Hertfordshire by 2029. This ensures those children and young people who need the highest level of support can access it locally. We will do this by:

## Expanding special school capacity

We will continue to grow special school places for children with the most complex needs, with focus on Complex Cognition and Learning, Social Emotional and Mental Health and Communication and Interaction, with all schools supporting Autism. By 2029, we aim to create up to 500 additional places across Hertfordshire so these children can learn alongside their peers in the right environment.

## Creative solutions for growing need

We will work with special schools and local colleges to explore new, effective ways of meeting the needs of children and young people with the most complex profiles. This will mean exploring creative solutions to provide extra places including developing more satellite provisions to increase flexibility.

## Fair access to specialist expertise

We will promote special school places for children with the most complex needs. This will help the most vulnerable children access the right support and reduce the need for children with the most complex needs travelling long distances. This ensures fairness and directs specialist expertise to those who need it most, while keeping the system effective, sustainable and responsive.

## What this means for you and your child:

If your child has very complex needs, there will be more special school places available locally, reducing long journeys and giving access to the right support. Our goal is to make sure every child gets the help they need in the setting that works best for them in the most effective way possible.

“Disabilities are part of normal life so why do we call them special”  
CYP- The term ‘Specialist’ debate  
March 25

“Love the breakout room and playroom”  
CYP- Colnbrook expansion July 24

“More access to Specialist Provision so that children and young people are able to learn in an environment that meets their needs”  
Parent - Community Listening Event Summer 2025



# 4. Update special school designations

Developing a better spread of SEND provision in mainstream schools means that special schools will be able to focus on supporting the most complex children, reflecting the changing and the increasingly complex needs of children and young people. This means that special schools will need to adapt to support a wider range of needs, including children with more than one type of need, so every child gets the right help. We will do this by:

## Updating special school designations

We are proposing to revise some special school designations so they reflect the growing complexity and co-occurring needs of children and young people. This means schools will need to adapt to support changing needs. We will support special schools with this change by working collaboratively to enable special school staff to have the skills and confidence to support a wider range of needs.

## Adapting to meet evolving needs

We are proposing that all Learning Difficulties (LD) schools and Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) schools will become “Complex Cognition and Learning” schools. This reflects the growing need for places to support children with more complex and significant needs. Children with the most significant health needs will have access to provision that support those needs. All special schools will be able to support children who have additional needs such as communication, interaction, and autism. We also propose to adapt some SEMH secondary schools so they can accommodate girls. Before any changes happen, we would consult further with each school and their community in the autumn term 2026.

## Planning and funding fairly

We will also work with special schools to create a fairer funding model that reflects individual needs of children, promotes equity, and ensures long-term stability. We will also explore physical adaptations needed to our special school buildings to support these changes. For children with the highest level of complexity that special schools cannot meet, we will continue to use independent placements to make sure they get the right support.

## What this means for you and your child:

Special schools will be able to meet a broader range of needs, so your child can access the right support in the most appropriate setting. These changes will make the system fairer, better understood, more flexible, and better able to respond to what children need and young people need. Children and young people who are already in special schools will continue to be supported in their current school, unless an alternative placement is agreed through the usual annual review process.



“ Moving from primary to secondary school was a really difficult time for us as a family.”

Parent Carer - Pre-Summit Survey  
Summer 2025

“ It can feel really scary for families when their teenager is finishing school, they want to know what options they have and this can feel really limited.”

Social Care Professional - Listening Event Summer 2025

“ Transitions between primary, secondary and further education, all in Stevenage SEND settings, have been brilliant. The settings know each other and the transition programs are great. We felt known and well looked after.”

Parent Carer - Pre-Summit Survey Summer 2025

# 5. Child-centred placements

We will make placement decisions by focusing on each child's needs and strengths, with professionals agreeing the setting that can support them well. We will move away from the existing admissions guidance so decisions are more individualised and child-centred, supported by clear, transparent information - leading to quicker specialist placements for children who need them most. We will make decisions for children and young people to be placed in mainstream settings with SRPs or Units and special schools by:

## Making consistent and fair decisions

We will continue to make decisions about where a child learns based on each child's individual needs and strengths. Decisions about placements must be based in line with legislation (9.79 of SEND Code of Practice 2015). A multiagency panel - including education, health and social care professionals - will look carefully at each child's needs and the support required on a child-centred basis, so they can agree the setting that is the best fit for them. Existing special school admissions guidance will no longer be used, as its current usage can contribute to children with the most complex needs not being placed in a specialist setting in a timely manner. Special school admissions guidance in Hertfordshire also does not adequately reflect co-occurring and complex needs and is based on current designations of special schools, some of which are narrow in scope and do not enable consistent, timely, appropriate decisions for children who really need it. Decisions going forward will be individual, evidence-based and needs-led, focusing on whether settings can take reasonable steps to support a child or young person.

## Providing simple, transparent information

We propose the introduction of sector profiles to help parents, settings and other professionals understand the continuum of provision offer that we have in Hertfordshire. These will be developed with our school partners and will describe the types and complexity of needs each sector will support. Families will know what each type of provision offers and how their child could be supported there. This will make it easier for parents/ carers to understand what each type of setting offers and therefore make considered preferences for a type of school, ensuring that children with the most complex needs have access to provision best suited to their needs.

## Keeping children connected

We will update the Local Offer to focus on local, inclusive provision, centred on keeping children close to friends and communities. Families will have better information and confidence in the choices available. Most children and young people will learn in their local setting with the right support, and we will aim to ensure more timely access to specialist provision for those who need it.

## What this means for you and your child:

You will have clear, simple information about their options and a multi-agency decision making process which is based on individual needs of the child. Most children and young people will learn in their local school with the right support, and we will aim to ensure timely access to specialist provision for those who need it.

“Ask me what works for me!”

Young Person - Big Get Together  
February 2025

“There's so much information out there it can be overwhelming.”

Professional - SEND Summit Sept 2025

“Thank you for everything you've done . Placing my daughter in xx SRP was absolutely the right decision - she's thriving there and loves every day.”

Parent following an SRP placement



# How we will deliver our plan

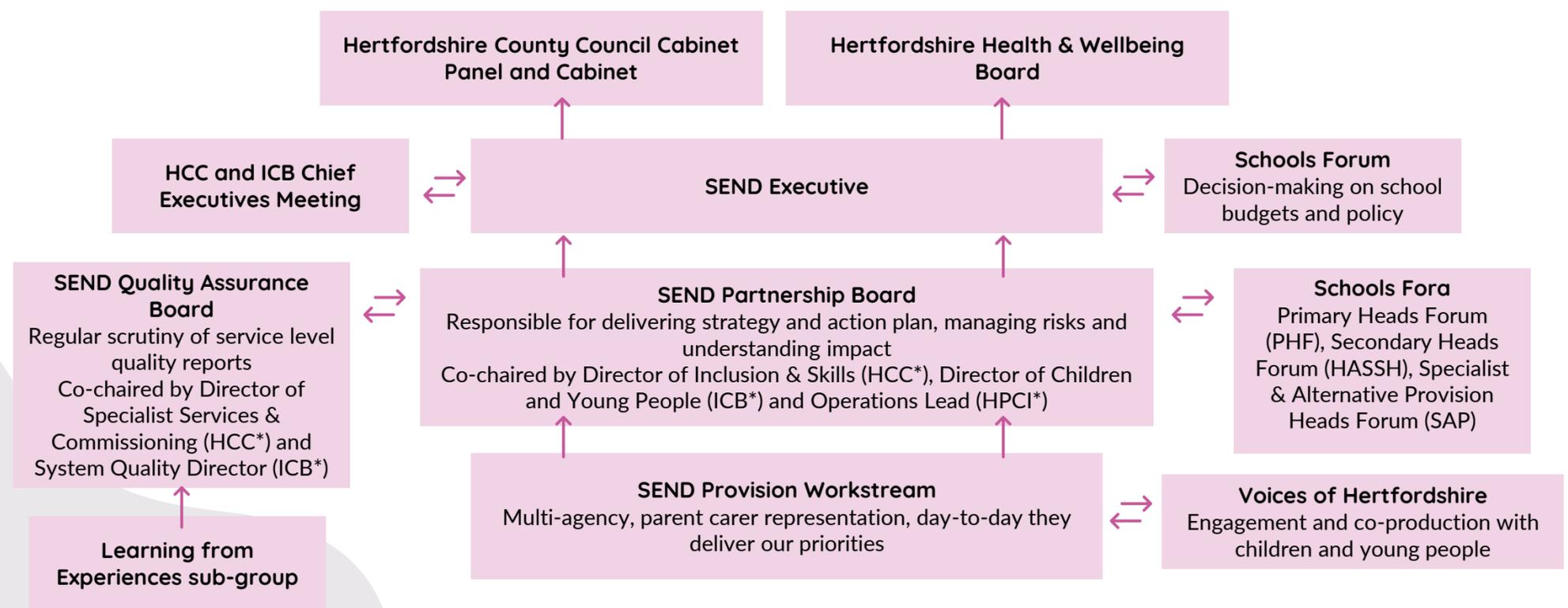
To deliver against our five key areas of focus, we have developed a continuous improvement plan for the Hertfordshire SEND Partnership. This plan provides the detail on what actions we are going to undertake, and how we will measure whether these actions have made a difference. When we make changes or introduce something new, it's really important that we get it right the first time—so it works well for children and young people. That's why we take time to think carefully about what needs to be improved, and in what order, to make sure each step makes a positive difference

Every 12 months, we will produce and publish a report summarising the progress we have made and we will refresh the continuous improvement plan.

Upon publishing our SEND Priority Action & Improvement Plan in January 2024, we set-up new governance structures (the boards and meetings we operate to oversee improvement work) which were recognised by the DfE and NHSE as being strong and successful in helping us to deliver improvement. In developing this new strategy, we have considered what tweaks we need to make to ensure our governance continues to represent all partners and will help us deliver our ambitions.

## SEND Provision Governance:

This does not cover organisational only governance such as quality reporting methods in ICB, ICB Board, Children's Services Core Board. These do exist and work alongside SEND Improvement Governance.



\*HCC - Hertfordshire County Council  
ICB - Integrated Care Board  
HPCI - Herts Parent Carer Involvement



# Key Resources

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LOCAL PROVISION  
FOR CHILDREN  
AND YOUNG PEOPLE

SEND Strategy: [Hertfordshire SEND Strategy 2026-2029](#)

Local Offer: [The Hertfordshire SEND Local Offer](#)

Support on a Page: [Services for children and young people](#)

Ordinarily Available Provision: [Ordinarily available provision - Hertfordshire Grid for Learning](#)

Updates on our Improvement Journey: [SEND Improvement Plan](#)

## Other strategies this one links to

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In Hertfordshire there are many services and organisations supporting all children and young people, and often supporting the same or similar groups of children and young people.

It is important to consider other strategies which support children and young people. The following have been reviewed to ensure our plans align:

[County Council Plan for Children and Young People 2021 - 2026](#)

[Hertfordshire & West Essex Integrated Care Board Medium Term Plan](#)

[NHS 2025/26 priorities and operational planning guidance](#)

[Hertfordshire Early Help Strategy](#)

[Hertfordshire School Improvement Strategy 2021 - 2026](#)

[Hertfordshire Carers Strategy 2022 - 2025](#)

[Adult Social Care Strategy \(2018 - 2033\)](#)

[Hertfordshire Sensory Strategy \(2025-2028\)](#)

