

Hertfordshire SEND Partnership

Summary of the Continuous Improvement & Priority Action Plan (CIPAP)

Apr 2026 – Mar 2027

This Continuous Improvement & Priority Action Plan (CIPAP) sets out the key actions that the Hertfordshire SEND Local Area Partnership has collectively committed to prioritise over the next 12 months, from April 2026 to Mar 2027. This document summarises the plan.

The CIPAP builds on the previous [Priority Action & Improvement Plan](#) (PAPIP), which was developed in response to the 2023 inspection outcome. The actions outlined are grounded in robust evidence, data, and stakeholder feedback gathered throughout our improvement journey. They reflect an understanding of what has worked, where progress has been made, and where continued focus is required. The partnership's evaluation of the previous PAPIP's impact has helped identify which priorities must carry forward into this next phase of the new SEND Strategy.

The voices of young people, parent carers, schools/settings and our workforce are central to the plan and the SEND Strategy. We undertook a number of engagement activities across 2025, including the SEND Summit, to ensure the SEND Strategy and our actions were informed by their lived experience and what matters most to them. The SEND Strategy went out for consultation late 2025/ early 2026 to provide further assurance that the Partnership had the right priorities, before launching the SEND Strategy in April 2026.

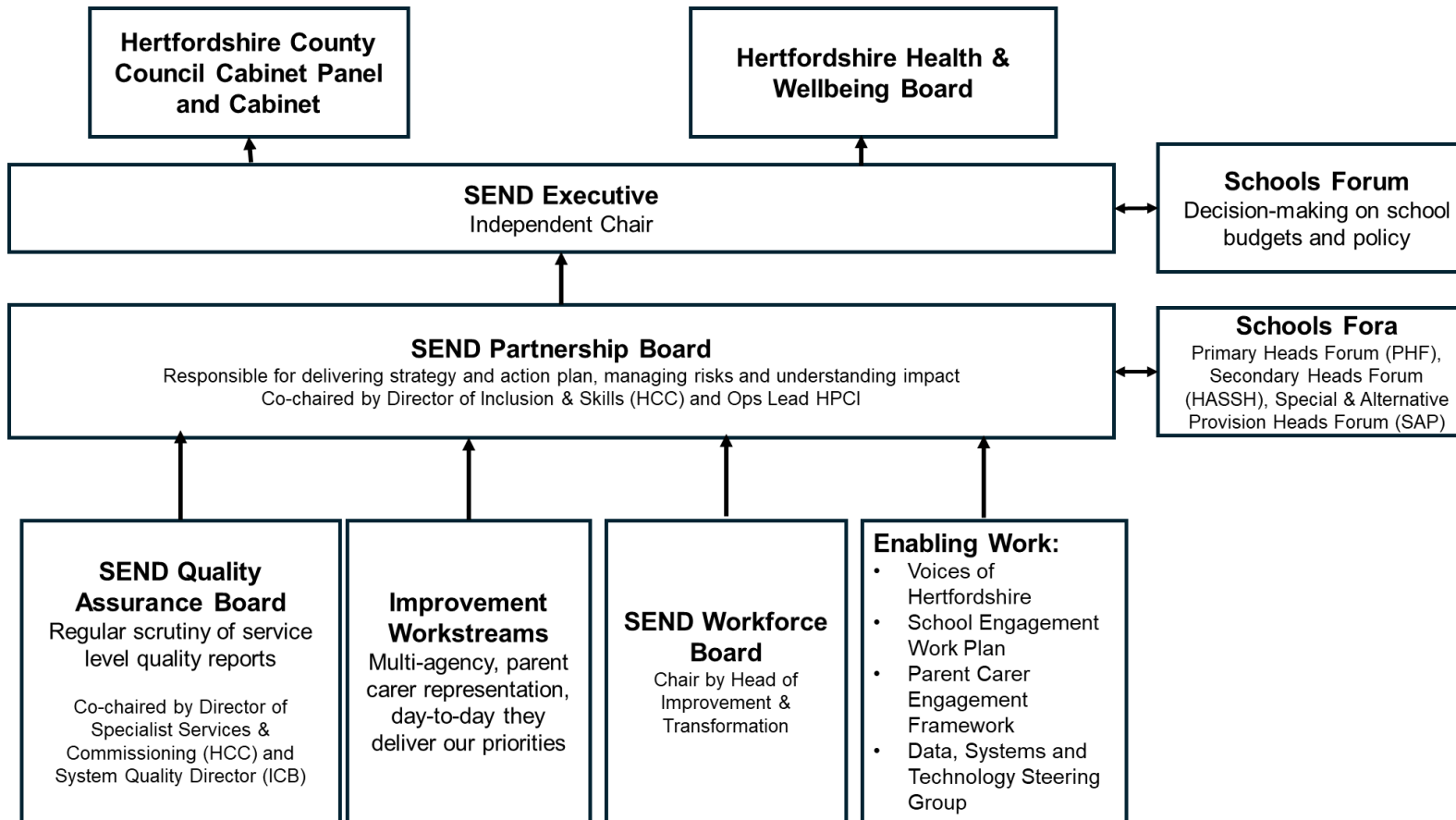
The plan is further shaped by our statutory self-evaluation (SEF) and intelligence from the SEND [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#). It incorporates external monitoring from the Department for Education, Ofsted, and the Care Quality Commission, including feedback from our 2025 Ofsted and CQC [Monitoring Inspection](#), and national and international research, including findings from the Education Committee's ['Solving the SEND Crisis'](#) Inquiry.

This document summarises the actions that the Partnership will prioritise over the next 12 months. However, we recognise that not all actions will be completed within the 12-month timeframe. Some represent long-term transformation efforts that will continue into future iterations of the plan, while others reflect ongoing behaviours that are now embedded as 'Business as Usual' but we want to continue to monitor their impact closely.

At the conclusion of the plan's lifecycle in Mar 2027, the partnership will produce a formal evaluation report to assess if we are making progress on delivering the ambitions of our SEND Strategy and refresh our plan to ensure it responds

Governance & Strategic Oversight: How the Continuous Improvement and Priority Plan is delivered

The plan is delivered and governed in partnership, building on the strong governance we developed through the SEND Partnership & Assurance Board and SEND Executive set up in December 2023. This partnership includes the Local Authority, Integrated Care Board, NHS Providers, Schools, Early Years Settings, Colleges and the Hertfordshire Parent Carer Forum Herts Parent Carer Involvement (HPCI).



Our workstreams deliver actions day-to-day, informed by children and young people through Voices of Hertfordshire. They are multi-agency, including representation from education, health, social care, early years, schools, colleges and Herts Parent Carer Involvement (HPCI). They report monthly into our SEND Partnership Board who monitor progress, risk and impact. If we need to discuss topics or challenges at a more senior level, our Independent Scrutineer Chairs the SEND Executive where Director-level and above members attend.

- Other partnership forums that also deliver on priorities and feed in:
- Early Years Strategic Board
 - Mental Health, Learning Disability and Neurodiversity Health and Care Partnership (MHLDN)
 - Hertfordshire Youth Justice Management Board
 - Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership
 - Families First Transformation Programme

This slide 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.

Effective Systems: Performance Management & Quality Assurance

Performance Management and Outcomes Framework

The Hertfordshire SEND Partnership operates a well-established and integrated **SEND Dashboard**, which consolidates key performance indicators from across the system. Updated monthly, this dashboard provides consistent, data-driven oversight and is actively used across all Workstreams, the Partnership Assurance Board, and the SEND Executive. It enables the partnership to systematically monitor progress, identify emerging performance challenges, and analyse trends that inform strategic and operational delivery. This approach is embedded within the Hertfordshire Intelligence & Insight Framework.

Importantly, this system-level performance management complements—rather than replaces—existing operational oversight at the organisational and service level. Individual services continue to use both dashboard data and service-specific metrics to manage performance as part of their routine business-as-usual processes.

This Continuous Improvement and Priority Action Plan includes the Key Performance Indicators that the partnership will closely monitor to assess if the aims of each of the SEND Strategy ambitions are being met.

In Hertfordshire, we have the [Outcome Bees](#), which is our framework of outcomes that we want children and young people to achieve. The SEND Partnership are working on a specific Outcomes Framework for SEND, which will explain what impact measures we review at a strategic level to understand if children and young people with SEND in Hertfordshire are achieving the seven Outcome Bees. When this is ready, we will publish it with the plan.

Quality Assurance

The partnership also maintains a rigorous **Quality Assurance Framework**, led by the SEND Quality Assurance Board. This framework is a cornerstone of the improvement programme, ensuring that quality assurance processes are consistently applied and effectively governed across the partnership.

The QA Board plays a critical role in driving improvement by maintaining a sharp focus on service quality and outcomes for children and families. Its work ensures that quality assurance is not a peripheral activity, but a central mechanism for accountability, learning, and continuous improvement across all areas of SEND service delivery.

Communications & Participation

Communications & Information

The Hertfordshire SEND Partnership recognises the importance of clear and consistent communication across the system. It remains committed to keeping families, professionals, and stakeholders informed about the work of the SEND Executive and wider partnership.

A range of communication methods are used to share updates on improvement activity, including:

- **The Local Offer website and newsletter**, which provide regular updates for parent carers and young people.
- **Social media platforms**, used to share key messages and promote engagement opportunities.
- **Public meetings**, such as the Education, SEND & Inclusion Panel, which offer a space for information sharing and discussion.
- **Education sector forums** to ensure the school community are aware, involved and understand the improvement agenda across the partnership

These channels help ensure that the partnership's work is visible and accessible, and that progress is communicated in a way that supports transparency and accountability. The partnership will continue to use and build on these methods and adapt them where needed to ensure communication remains relevant and reaches the intended audiences.

Co-Production & Participation

The Hertfordshire SEND Partnership remains committed to co-production and participation with children, young people, and parent carers. Over the past year, the partnership has strengthened its approach to participation, ensuring it is a consistent feature across key areas of work. This includes a range of co-production activities involving parent carers, young people, and SEND professionals.

A central part of this work is the ongoing collaboration with **Hertfordshire Parent Carer Involvement (HPCI)**, the recognised Parent Carer Forum for the area. HPCI plays a key role in shaping and challenging the improvement programme and jointly chairs the Partnership Assurance Board, helping to ensure that parent carer perspectives are embedded in governance and decision-making.

The partnership also values the views and experiences of children and young people. The **Voices of Hertfordshire** engagement model has been developed to support their involvement in a structured and consistent way. This model is now well-established and continues to inform the improvement programme including supporting the development of this plan.

The partnership will continue to build on these approaches, as identified in Ambition 1 of the plan below, recognising that co-production and participation are ongoing processes that require time, flexibility, and continued engagement.

SEND Strategy Ambition 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 can we continue to learn about what works and what doesn't.

Key Actions

- Expand parent carer engagement using a new engagement model so we can hear from more parent carers from a range of backgrounds and experiences.
- Increase involvement of children and young people in shaping and improving services through [Voices of Hertfordshire](#).
- Improve consistency of the 'voice of the child' in Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) through training and quality assurance.
- Strengthen partnerships between the Local Authority and schools and multi-academy trusts to improve communication and feedback loops.
- Embed early resolution culture across our services by learning from family experiences and expanding use of mediation.

Key Impact Measures

- Increased numbers of parent carers and children and young people participating in engagement activities.
- Audit evidence of improving quality of EHC Plans in relation to capturing child's voice.
- Termly survey data from schools to understand how well they feel informed and engaged in SEND partnership activity.
- Fewer families accessing dispute resolution pathways due to earlier resolution.
- Improved parent carer satisfaction monitored through surveys.
- Complaints rate for Local Authority Education complaints will remain below baseline of 4% (Q4 24/25).
- Appeal rate will continue to decrease from baseline of 4.2% (March 2025).

By When

These actions will be delivered over the 12-month period of the plan from April 2026 – April 2027

SEND Strategy Ambition 2. Early Identification of Need & Support

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

Key Actions

- Continue to develop the [Local Offer Website](#) and [service directories](#) and promote these to families.
- Strengthen Early Years services and focus on preparing children to be ready for school by age 5.
- Create a single neurodiversity referral front door with coordinated pathways.
- Develop a new paediatric audiology service model aligned to national guidance.
- Improve access to early help mental health services, focusing on children and young people from disadvantaged groups.

Key Impact Measures

- Increased hits to the Local Offer and service directories with reduction in % of people who say they can't find what they need.
- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of reception will increase to a minimum of 78.9% by summer 2028. (this is a long-term target)
- More EY settings attending training and evidence that they can manage needs.
- Number of families accessing the [Neurodiversity Hub](#) for support continues to increase in line with need.
- There will be equity of access of support and assessment across the county and stabilisation of waiting times for neurodiversity.
- The proportion of children and young people accessing early help mental health services compared to specialist mental health services.
- Slight increase of access to mental health services from children and young people from disadvantaged groups.
- The average number of weeks children wait for a paediatric audiology assessment will continue to reduce.
- More children will be supported by early intervention funding and continue to have their needs met at SEN Support.

By When

These actions will be delivered over the 12-month period of the plan from April 2026 – April 2027

SEND Strategy Ambition 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.

Key Actions

- Roll out the [Hertfordshire Ordinarily Available Provision \(OAP\)](#) guide and assess its impact on meeting children and young people's learning needs.
- Develop a range of new education provisions from early years through to college and in special and mainstream schools, backed by £140M capital investment.
- Develop a fair, needs-based funding model for specialist provision.
- Strengthen monitoring and commissioning of Alternative Provision and Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) packages.
- Continue improvement of Therapy Services with increased funding and new delivery models.
- Continue to improve timeliness and quality of EHC Needs Assessments and Annual Reviews.

Key Impact Measures

- Growth in Local Specialist Provision Capacity: places created as a % of intended capacity.
- Reduction in number of children waiting for specialist provision.
- Reduction in proportion of children being placed out of county.
- More children and young people with EHCPs remain supported in mainstream settings, a reduction of requests for specialist provision within a year of EHCP being issued.
- For Alternative Provision commissioned by the Local Authority, it is time limited for most children and young people due to effective re-integration into full-time education and learning.
- Increasing feedback from schools on speech and language training offer, which continues to be positive.
- EHC Needs Assessment Timeliness will be in at least the upper middle quartile of national benchmark by end of 2026.
- Annual Review timeliness continues to improve from Quarter 4 2025/2026 baseline.
- The % of new and existing EHCPs audited as 'good' or 'outstanding' will continue to increase from Quarter 4 2025/2026 baseline.

By When

These actions will be delivered over the 12-month period of the plan from April 2026 – April 2027

SEND Strategy Ambition 4. Aspirational for All

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

Key Actions

- Establish a schools-led inclusion collaborative to develop a shared vision of inclusion across Hertfordshire education settings.
- Deliver the second cohort of the [Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools](#) neurodiversity programme.
- Continue to improve monitoring and support for children with EHCPs who are on reduced timetables.
- We will further enhance our support and oversight of children who are electively home educated (EHE) and increase engagement with their families.
- Strengthen multi-agency approach to children missing education to help them re-integrate into education.
- Improve responsiveness to children with EHCPs at risk of exclusion so that earlier support can be put in place.

Key Impact Measures

- We will have an increasing number of case studies of inclusive practice in schools and settings.
- An increase in attainment for children and young people with SEND.
- Improved attendance rate, and a reduction in the gap between attendance of children and young people with SEND at school compared to their peers.
- A reduction in the average length of time children and young people with EHCPs spend on reduced timetables.
- The number of children missing education decreases and the average time they are missing education decreases.
- A reduction in rate of permanent exclusions for children with EHCPs

By When

These actions will be delivered over the 12-month period of the plan from April 2026 – April 2027

SEND Strategy Ambition 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.

Key Actions

- Investigate the experience of children who request an EHC Needs Assessment for the first time in secondary phase to understand what would improve their transition.
- Strengthen partnership working between schools and the Local Authority on phase transfer and admissions.
- Mental Health Services will work with schools to support smoother transitions and focus on meeting needs of young people aged 18–25.
- Continue to increase Learning Disability Register and Annual Health Check uptake for 14–17-year-olds with learning disabilities.
- Continue to identify and encourage the creation of education, employment and training opportunities for young people with SEND and those who are vulnerable and support them to transition to post-16 provision
- Working in partnership with HPCI, children with SEND and their families we will review and re model our Short Breaks Offer, to ensure more equitable reach of this essential resource.

Key Impact Measures

- Numbers of requests for EHC Needs assessments for first time when entering secondary phase (lower tells us more children have improved transition and needs are being met without an EHCP).
- Schools will tell us that Phase Transfer 2026 was an improved experience.
- Audits and dip samples will evidence positive transitions for children and young people through to adulthood (in relation to mental health services)
- The rate of 16-25 year olds with SEND who are in education, employment or training (higher is better)
- The quality of Preparing for Adulthood outcomes recorded in EHCPs (quality of Section E continues to improve each quarter)
- There will be a continued % increase in the numbers of young people undergoing annual health checks.

By When

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SEND Strategy Ambition 6. Strong Foundations

There are things required that are essential to achieve all of our five other ambitions. A strong partnership who governs well, a supported and skilled workforce, quality assurance processes that help us understand how services are working, insight & intelligence (data and information) that helps us deliver and plan services, and the ability to look forward and innovate through new technologies.

Key Actions

- Continue to operate the SEND Quality Assurance Board, inviting more services across Education, Health and Social Care to present their quality findings.
- We will undertake a thematic audit related to our [Accurate, Compassionate and Timely \(ACT\) communications framework](#) to check compliance with the standards.
- We will build further staff capacity in statutory SEND Services through an additional £6.3 million investment in service budgets. Additional staff will be recruited and receive a high-quality induction and onboarding process through the SEND Academy.
- Expand training through the SEND Academy, including a core training offer for schools.
- Continue to develop the partnership's SEND Data Dashboard with deeper insight into specific population needs.
- Explore artificial intelligence and digital innovations and how these could improve service efficiency.

Key Impact Measures

- Clear evidence of improved communications.
- Continue to see reduction in complaints and increase in compliments related to communications.
- Increased staffing numbers in statutory SEND services.
- Improved staff retention rates in statutory SEND Services
- Feedback from staff tell us that the SEND academy training is useful and relevant to their role.
- We will have an increasing number of staff accessing SEND Academy training
- Feedback from SENCOs and Teaching Assistants will evidence that the support and training they received is accessible, valued and helpful to their work.
- A digital roadmap is produced that sets out key technology projects.

By When

These actions will be delivered over the 12-month period of the plan from April 2026 – April 2027