

Information on SEND reform for those working in Early Years settings

The Department for Education has published the schools white paper, *Every Child Achieving and Thriving*, alongside a consultation on SEND reform, called *Putting Children and Young People First*. These documents set out our plan to improve the lives of all children and young people. Our reforms will give every child, including those with SEND, the best start in life.

We are committed to identifying and addressing additional needs early and locally by strengthening support for families and access to high-quality early education for children with SEND. We want to build on support at home, to make sure every child arrives at school ready to continue their learning.

In our *Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life* strategy published last July, we committed to embedding inclusive practice across early years settings, increasing inclusion funding and making it simpler to access, and having family facing SEND practitioners in every Best Start Family Hub. The strategy also includes new partnerships between early years settings and schools to strengthen transitions into Reception.

The SEND consultation document builds on these commitments, outlining a series of proposals on which we are seeking your views.

What is changing

- A more inclusive universal offer providing high-quality support to children with SEND early and locally
- New flexible layers of support and Individual Support Plans (ISPs) for children with additional needs, developed in partnership with parents
- New Specialist Provision Packages for children with complex needs, setting out exactly what interventions, resources and standards are required
- A fast track for a Specialist Provision Package and EHCP for children under 5 with complex needs
- An updated SEND Code of Practice
- National Inclusion Standards for a nationally consistent, evidence-based understanding of best practice

What you'll receive

- Access to expert advice and services through the new Experts at Hand offer, which brings more speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and education psychologists into mainstream settings
- New early years inclusion training, as part of the 3-year £200 million national training package
- £47 million of additional early years inclusion funding in 2026 to 2027, as part of the 3-year £1.6 billion Inclusive Mainstream Fund
- A consultation on wider reform to simplify the early years funding streams
- Over £200 million invested to strengthen the SEND offer in Best Start Family Hubs

What is expected of you

- Embed inclusive practice as standard across your setting with our support to identify and meet needs early
- Engage with the new national training package when it becomes available
- Work in partnership with Best Start Family Hubs, health professionals, and local authorities
- Support effective identification of children's needs, including through the progress check for two-year-olds
- Develop Individual Support Plans with parents for children with SEND in school-based nurseries. We will work with PVIs and childminders to understand how these will work in their settings
- Compliance with the Ofsted inclusion judgments and expanded Area SEND inspections
- Use inclusion funding effectively, with local authorities monitoring delivery in their areas

Timeline

Repair and reform to this new system will be gradual with support in place before changes are made.

Phase one: 2026 to 2028 Investment and building new system	• 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.
Phase two: 2028 to 2029 Improved support	• We will continue to invest in and build-up the new system • New legislation expected to come into effect from September 2029
Phase three: School year 2029/30 onwards Future system	• 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.

Have your say and more information

Visit gov.uk/dfe/send-reform

- [Every Child Achieving and Thriving Schools White Paper](#)
- [SEND Consultation](#)
- [Further information and fact sheets](#)