

SEND Reform Plan 2026

What parent carers need to know

A parent-friendly briefing from Parent Carer Foundation

The plan in one minute

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Earlier help

Support should reach children earlier through the universal SEND offer and Experts at Hand.

More local provision

More local inclusion bases and specialist places are proposed.

Money matters too

The plan also aims to reduce High Needs Block pressures.

Does the support actually meet each child's needs?

What looks encouraging

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Earlier support

Help before needs escalate, including specialist advice.

More local specialist provision

Inclusion bases, satellite sites and additional specialist places.

Current problems recognised

BCP acknowledges fragmented pathways and inconsistent experiences.

Stronger parent voice

Co-production is an explicit ambition.

A key area to watch: EHC needs assessments

There are plans to measure fewer cases moving to statutory assessment and fewer EHC needs assessment requests progressing to an EHCP.

The parent-carer question

Are lower numbers happening because early support is working well, or are children who need statutory support missing out?

Good outcomes must matter more than lower numbers.

“Experts at Hand”: what does it mean?

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The idea

A cluster-based route to earlier specialist advice and support.

Who is involved

Speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, educational psychologists and others.

Important promise

Local Authorities are saying this is additional capacity and does not replace existing provision.

Mainstream inclusion: what should we look for?

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Attendance

Can the child attend consistently?

Belonging

Does the child feel safe, welcome and understood?

Stability

Can the placement continue without repeated crisis?

Outcomes

Is everyday life and learning improving?

Inclusion is more than where a child is placed.

Six questions parent carers can ask

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1. How will EHC needs assessment decisions be protected?

2. What does “parental entitlement” mean in the plan?

3. How show children without an EHCP get enough support?

4. How can families access or challenge cluster support?

5. What outcome information will BCP publish?

6. How will a wide range of parent carers shape the reforms?

What happens next?

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The three-year roadmap

BCP submitted the plan in June 2026. September Cabinet papers also describe a £1.5 million a year Targeted Cluster Funding Model.

Keep the June 2026 plan and compare what was promised with what children and families actually experience.

What are national organisations saying?

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Broadly welcomed

- Earlier help
- Stronger inclusion
- More specialist input
- Better staff training
- Less conflict for families

Common concerns

- Legal protections
- Accountability and challenge routes
- Workforce capacity
- Suitable specialist provision
- Implementation risks

IPSEA • Contact • National Autistic Society • Whole School SEND / nasen • Children's Commissioner

What does that mean for BCP?

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Can BCP deliver earlier, better SEND support while protecting statutory rights and keeping specialist provision available for children who need it?

Welcome the potential benefits. Ask for evidence, safeguards and accountability.

What we welcome

- Earlier, easier-to-access support
- Genuinely inclusive education
- Help before families reach crisis
- Meaningful parent-carer involvement

What must be protected

- Support based on individual need
- Strong, enforceable rights
- Specialist provision when needed
- Transparent evidence and accountability
- Financial pressure must not determine individual support

We are not against SEND reform. We want reform that makes things better for children and families, while protecting the safeguards they need when the system does not work.

Questions & discussion

What would you like to ask, explore or challenge?

Keep coming back to one question:

What has actually changed for children and families?

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