The SEND and Inclusion Reforms - Derby City's Response



EYSG 0-7 Early Years Strategy Group
SS&AP NETWORK Special Schools & Alternative Provision Network
LIVING MY BEST LIFE
Derby City Council
PSG PRIMARY STRATEGY GROUP
DERBY SEND VOICE
NHS Derby and Derbyshire Integrated Care Board
DERBY CITY SECONDARY HEADS

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Introduction

The government's intent is to build an education system where inclusion and high standards are two sides of the same coin. In doing so we want to raise attainment for all. Every child deserves high-quality, inclusive education close to home, where they can learn, make friends, and participate in their community. To make that happen, we want to take the best of the SEND system and make it part of the mainstream, so that we have one education system, not two parallel ones.

For clarification on the acronyms used within this booklet, please see the glossary towards the back.

To achieve an inclusive education system, the government has committed to:

- strengthen the law to ensure evidence-based support for children and young people is provided early in mainstream settings so they can stay in education, achieve and thrive alongside their peers;
- integrate support across health, care, and family services, ensuring children's needs are identified and addressed as soon as they emerge; and
- increase upfront investment so support is readily available for classes and communities of children, rather than locked behind lengthy and bureaucratic individual assessment processes.

Five principles underpinning the reforms

Early

Children and families should receive the support they need as soon as possible, with a quick response to changing needs.

Local

Children and young people with SEND should be able to learn at an education setting close to their home, alongside their peers.

Fair

Every education setting should be resourced and able to meet common and predictable needs.

Effective

Reforms should be grounded in evidence, ensuring all education settings know where to go to find effective practice that has excellent long-term outcomes for children and young people.



Shared

Education, health and care services should work in partnership with one another, Best Start Family Hubs, local government, families, teachers, educators, experts, the voluntary sector and representative bodies to deliver better experiences and outcomes for all our children and young people. The voices of children should be at the heart of decision making.

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There are 10 building blocks set out in the White Paper to meet the reforms for children and young people in early years through to post 16.

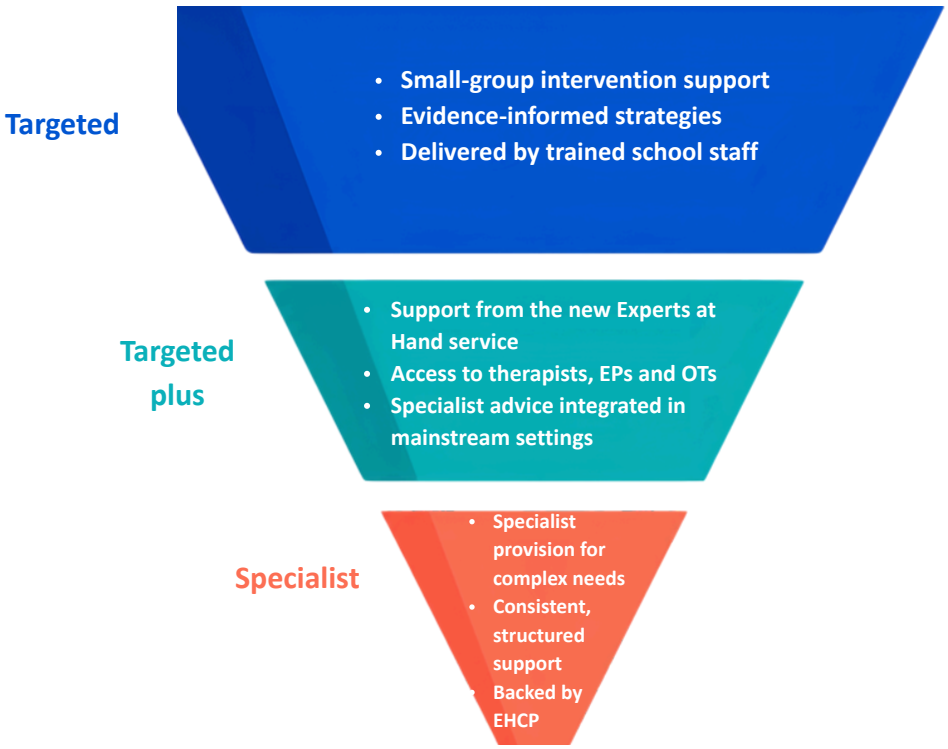
Five of the building blocks are expected to be led by the Local Area Partnership. These include:

1. A new Universal offer, to include:

- Ambitious leadership and governance that embed inclusion in planning
- Evidence-based support prioritising early intervention
- High-quality teaching with a curriculum designed for all learners
- Accessible and enriching provision beyond the classroom
- A safe and respectful culture fostering belonging and attendance
- Strong partnerships with families and wider services
- Inclusive environments with continuous improvements to accessibility
- All education settings to have an Inclusion Strategy

2. Delivering three layers of support: Targeted, Targeted Plus and Specialist, with an Experts at Hand support team

Three layers of support



3. Having skilled staff to support children and young people locally

4. Providing support for children in the earliest phase of life through local authority Best Start in Life programmes

5. Ensuring all capital allocations to local authorities are focused on developing inclusion

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Additionally, there are five nationally-held ambitions to include:

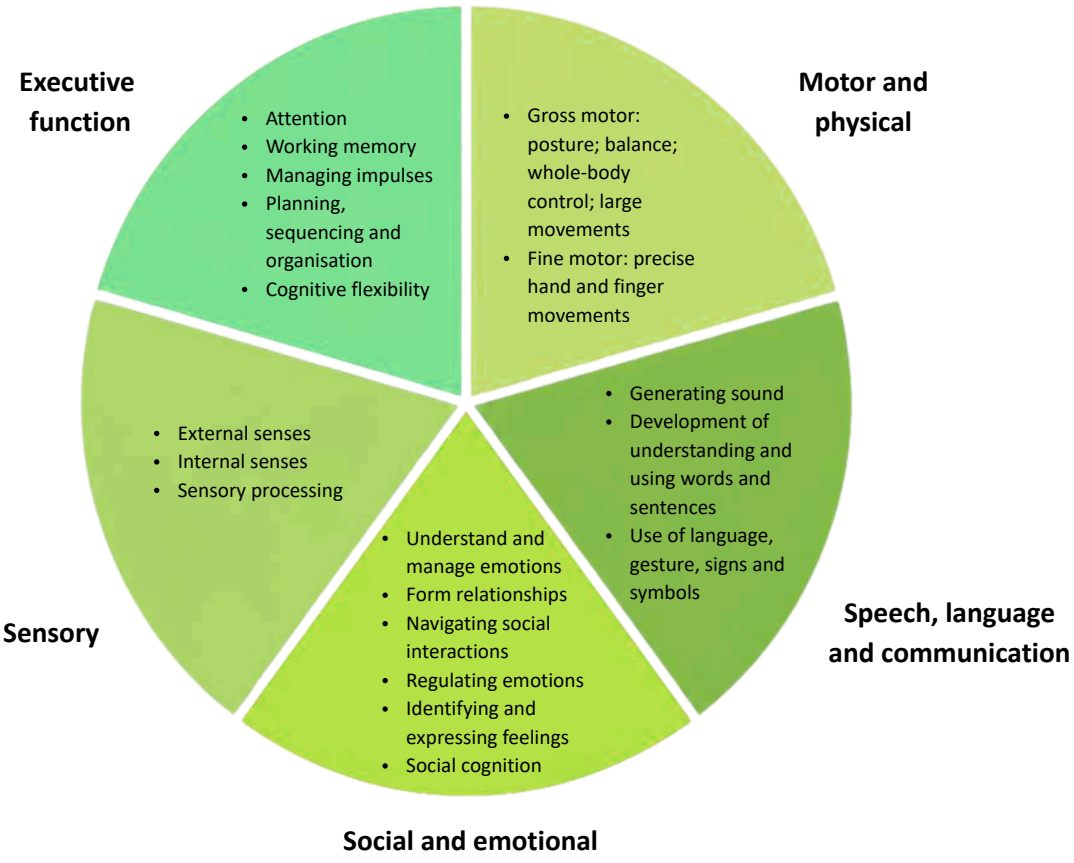
1. A new workforce development offer.
2. Updating the code of practice by 2029 with refreshed areas of need set out in the Code to better reflect key areas of child development – renaming them 'areas of development'. The term Mental Health is to be removed from the existing social, emotional and mental health needs category. This recognises that most children at some point in their life will require mental health support and not as a consequence of SEND.

The new Areas of Development will be used to:

- Identify strengths and aspirations.
- Support outcome-focused conversations.
- Inform planning and target setting.
- Track progress over time.
- Provide a more holistic picture of a child's or young person's development.

Areas of Development

Proposed areas of development



3. Establishing national inclusion standards.
4. Reviewing the funding for SEND.
5. Defined specialist packages of support to be delivered in local areas by special schools and colleges.

There is an expectation that the current code of practice is maintained until legislative changes are made.

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Our journey to the SEND reforms

The journey to build a 0-25 system where children and young people receive support to achieve and thrive through more inclusive settings and stronger local partnerships began in 2021, post inspection. In 2023 the Local Area Partnership embarked on an improvement journey to bring the potential of the partnership to life, through co-production and collaborative working, with a clear shared vision of enabling children and young people to thrive and succeed.

The ambitions of the Partnership are set within the coproduced Local Area Inclusion Plan that speaks directly to the reforms.

The Local Area Inclusion Plan is set around the following three aims:

1. **A strong collaborative partnership**
2. **Support at the right time right place and**
3. **To be an inclusive and collaborative city**

Click or scan to view the Local Area Inclusion Plan.

To achieve these aims the Partnership has focused on improving mainstream capacity and supporting the workforce to identify and meet need.

The Partnership has the following in place:

- **Co-production at the heart of all we do**. A strong parents/carers forum with over 150 members and 1000 followers and over 100 young ambassadors across mainstream, special, alternative and post-16 provisions.
- **Targeted plus interventions** across settings supporting early interventions.
- **A comprehensive workforce development programme,** leading to over 3,000 staff being trained in strategies directly impacting on inclusion and the learning of children with SEND and additional needs.
- **The Derby Way:** a toolkit specifying ordinarily available support; a graduated approach for Inclusion, SEND and Speech language and communication; a SENCO toolkit; an inclusive adaptive curriculum repository.
- **A SENCO forum and support system**.
- **A team of education specialists** that support schools to improve their offer to SEN children at a whole-school, classroom and individual level.
- **A multiagency neurodiversity triage system** ensuring that children requiring additional support or a neurodiverse (ND) assessment receive it in a timely way.
- **A multiagency Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance** (EBSNA) support pathway.
- **Support for children with SEN** via Family Hubs.
- **Early Years Talk Boost across Private, Voluntary and Independent** (PVI) and nursery school settings.
- **Mature multiagency delivery** for complex needs across education, health and care.
- **Speech language therapy provision** is within national timescales.
- **ND Hub,** supporting children, young people and families before and after diagnostic assessments.
- **Family Hubs,** enabling access to early learning, health and care services.
- **Alternative provision** tier 1 and 2 offer is available.

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A universal inclusion offer: The city has established a multiagency Inclusion Strategy Group that reports to the Local Area Inclusion Board; an Inclusion Charter that 100% of schools are signed up to acts as a golden thread for all inclusion strategies; training and development for staff to enable inclusive settings; an annual conference and (for 2026-27) one inclusion-focussed INSET day.

Click or scan to visit the Inclusion Partnership website.

A comprehensive Inclusion and School Attendance offer that provides a single point of contact to all schools and a robust citywide In-Year Fair Access (IYFA) and behavioural process that supports collective ownership of all children and young people, prevention of exclusions and NEETs (Not in Employment, Education or Training).

PFA (preparing for adulthood) matters: Establishing the Derby Promise, jointly developed with employers, third sector and education settings to raise aspirations and opportunities across education, employment and training. Over 6,000 children per year have engaged in careers education and experiential industry led events. NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training) are reducing due to earlier interventions and a focus on transitions.

Confidence in the system is improving and maturing. The timeliness and quality of meeting needs at EHCP is strong. The timeliness for an EHCP being completed in 20 weeks is at 99% (year to date, with exceptions)[1]. The quality of plans and communication has improved, and the majority have been judged good. Annual reviews are at 76%. Complaints are lower and tribunals have been halved in the last two years.

There is a clear plan to deliver 400 places to **improve local sufficiency** underway.

The reforms offer an opportunity to shape the next steps. Our focus will be to expand our early intervention offer via our Experts at Hand provision; the universal inclusion offer; improved targeted support and interventions; and to continue to build the confidence of parents and carers in the system so that children's needs are met earlier and in local provision.



[1] August 2026

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What success will look like

By 2029, Derby will have a fully embedded locality-based inclusion model, where schools, health services, family hubs and specialist teams work together to meet need early, reduce escalation and enable more children and young people to achieve and thrive within their local communities.

Measures of success - By 2029 we expect to see:

Children and young people

More children thrive within their local communities and mainstream settings.

Measures

- Attendance above national average in primary schools and in line with national average in secondary schools
- Zero permanent exclusions (Pex) in primary schools
- Reduction by 50% of secondary Pex in Localities 1 and 2
- Improved educational attainment at Reception age KS2 and KS4
- NEET levels below 5%
- ND assessment waiting times achieving a minimum 20% total reduction (c.5% per year from 2027)

Families

Families trust that needs will be identified and met at the earliest opportunity.

Measures

- Parents/carers and young people happy with their school/setting
- Improved parent and carer confidence in the local offer
- Increased participation in co-production activities
- Reduction in complaints and escalation to tribunal
- Parents'/carers' voice
- Young people's voice

System

A sustainable and inclusive SEND system delivering support earlier.

Measures

- Increased use of graduated response and inclusion support planning
- More children supported through Experts at Hand and locality services earlier
- Improved financial sustainability
- Settings report they have a good access to services and a consistent understanding of needs



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How will we achieve this?

During Autumn 2026 we will build the foundations to meet the reforms. We will also deliver the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act and continue to deliver against the Code of Practice 2015.

The Local Area Partnership will:

Expand the Universal offer

1. The Inclusion Strategy Group will begin to expand the charter across Early Years and Post-16 providers
2. The Inclusion Strategy Group will roll out coaching circles and restorative and relational practice across the charter schools
3. The Inclusion Strategy Group will consult on and design a Derby City Inclusion Support Plan (ISP) and the core principles of the City Inclusion Strategy. These will be rolled out across all charter schools
4. Derby SEND Voice to lead the co-design of a new social contract at a city and locality level. Supporting new home-to-school agreements and parent partnerships, inclusive of community groups
5. Best Start in Life will continue with the roll out of Early Years Talk Boost across the City

Additional universal and targeted offer

Core City Inclusion Strategy in all schools
Charter - Expanded to EY and Post 16
Inclusion Conference and One City Inset Day

High quality teaching and curriculum
Uni of Derby - CPD - Adaptive curriculum, - executive functioning:
LA Schools - WalkThru

Evidence based early intervention
SLC plan for every school
Sensory plan for every school
Aligned 0-19 school nursing service, MHST in all schools

Accessible and enriching provision beyond the classroom
Derby Promise, Holiday Activities and Food (HAF)

Derby City Inclusion Support Plan
Inclusion support wheel - grounded in the Derby Way
Graduated approach

Strong partnerships with families and wider services
Social contract development led by parents
Engagement with GPs
BSIL Family Hubs outreach

Inclusive environments with continuous improvements to accessibility
Capital programme focus

A new school-level and child-level inclusion dashboard and children not in school register
Insight led interventions

New Inclusive Mainstream Fund to drive inclusive practice across Early Years to FE

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Supporting the move to targeted, targeted plus support in every education setting

Click or scan to view the Derby Way.

1. The Local authority education specialist services will lead the co-design of an inclusion wheel (name to be agreed via co-production) that will sit underneath the ISP and be rooted in the Derby Way and the new areas of development. This will provide pupil-level and school-level assessments of need profiles which direct to appropriate support.
2. Provide every school with a SEND and Inclusion data set at pupil level and a school level aggregated data set to support cluster and city-wide decision making.
3. This school/cluster profiling will be included as part of our drive to be insight led.
4. We will create One Multidisciplinary Experts at Hand Service that operates as a team around the school and team around the cluster. A clear and accessible route for staff to seek advice and guidance will be co-developed by a multi-agency working party and stakeholder engagement.
5. Cluster groups will enable a discussion across the locality (early years and primary) or the sector (secondary and post 16) of the areas of need, supporting a clear mapping of support requirements, workforce needs, and to triage support from Experts at Hand service for early years, primary and secondary.
6. Cascade the Experts at Hand and Cluster toolkit to all head teachers, SENCos and behaviour leads.
7. Establish a workforce development audit tool and programme, including an extensive training offer to support each education setting, to develop the skills required by staff to meet ambitions in the reforms.
8. Undertake an audit of inclusive environments in each school to meet sufficiency and a capital schedule of works and understand how spaces might be shared.
9. Work with early years and school settings to understand how the notional budget and inclusion funding is being used.
10. In partnership with schools we have reviewed the tier 1-3 alternative provision offer, In Year Fair Access Protocol and Behaviour Panels to align with the SEND and Inclusion reforms.

During Spring 2027 we will:

- Establish training for all early years and primary school staff on executive functioning and adaptive curriculum with the University of Derby.
- Be clear about the interdependencies with the SEND Reforms, FFP and health reforms.
- Review the progress of Experts at Hand.
- Review the opportunity for joint or pool commissioning at a locality/cluster level to enhance inclusion.



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Experts At Hand

The Experts at Hand service is focused on targeted plus support for early years and mainstream schools. The focus for post 16 is to support workforce development through CPD, support/coaching and webinars to develop strategies according to cohort requirements. Derby City already has a strong support offer for non-statutory specialist team around the school support from a range of different internal services and partners. This includes the following services:

- **STePS**
  - **Social Communication and Autism Team (SCA Team)**
  - **Intervention First Team**
  - **Educational Psychology Service**
  - **Early years SEND Specialists**
  - **SEND Advisory Teacher Team**
  - **Physical Disability Advisor**
  - **Assistant education psychologists**
  - **Derby SEND Advice Line (SAL)**
- **Mental Health Support Teams, funded by the NHS**
- **Inclusion and School Attendance Service**
- **Early Years Quality Improvement Team and PACE**
- **Virtual School**
- **New Communities Achievement Team (NCAT)**



As noted earlier we also have a comprehensive workforce development offer located on the Inclusion Partnership website.

We have consulted with settings and SENCOs about what support they want and need to enable the first wave of the offer to be designed by Derby, for Derby.

Through the new dashboards and school-level inclusion assessments we shall be insight led.

We are creating a **One Multidisciplinary Experts at Hand Service.** This will build on the existing offer mentioned above.



(See Appendix one: Panels for further details)

This will not only support education settings to meet the principles in the reforms, it will also enable us to:

- Embed the PINS principles and neuro-inclusive network principles within each primary school.
- Expand the triaging of children on ND and CAMHS assessment waiting lists.
- Establish the Lancaster framework as part of the whole-school setting needs assessment.
- Align the 0-19 nursing service as part of the team around the school.
- Proactively support schools to meet the needs of children and young people.

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Every School offer

Every mainstream school will have a targeted support meeting to review the needs of children in school. In partnership with the school, we shall be insight led, review the impact of targeted support and interventions and agree the E@H offer.

Clusters offer

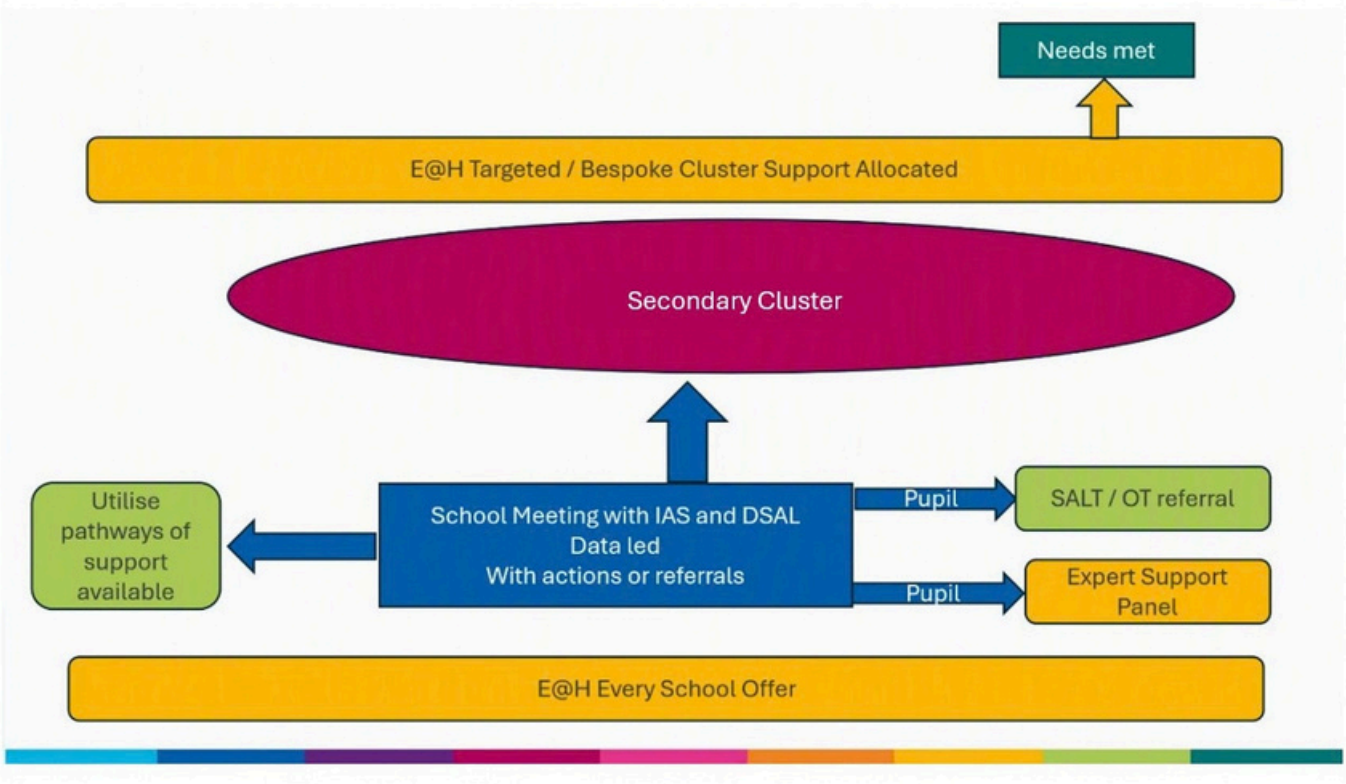
As we all understand, Derby is an extremely diverse city with areas of significant affluence and significant deprivation. We want our support offer to deliver what is needed at a local level.

The cluster model will be based around termly meetings where strengths, development needs and opportunities are shared by settings.

Secondary schools have already identified their preference for operating within a secondary cluster model.
Using the Post-16 forum we shall undertake an audit of CPD requirements for staff in post-16 settings. The offer under the Inclusion Partnership will be expanded to providers, including the Inclusion Charter, a common inclusion strategy and tools to support inclusion.

The model is agile and we will shift to make this work for settings.

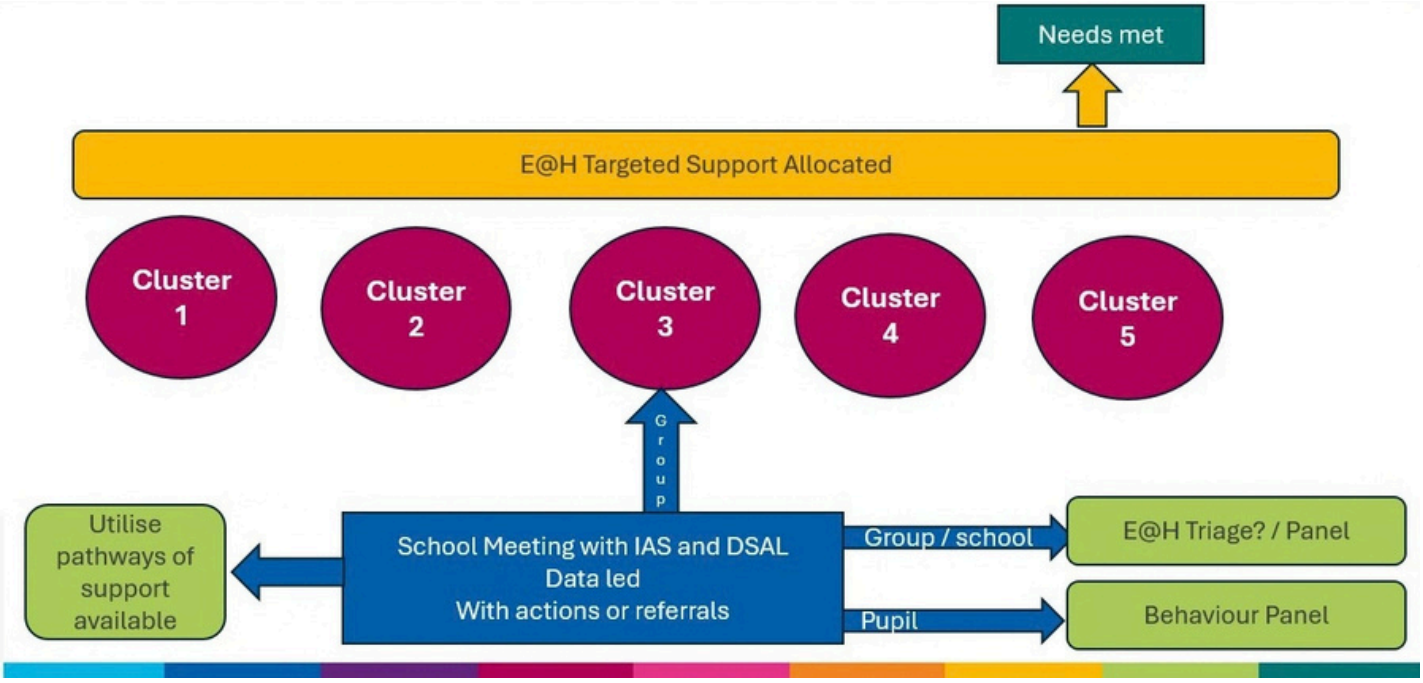
Secondary model - example



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Given the number of early years and primary settings, the intent is to utilise the locality structure and to create smaller local cluster partnerships, looking to learning continuity and commonality in communities, local care and health services.

Early Years and Primary model - example



The cluster meetings will provide the opportunity for headteachers and school staff responsible for inclusion and SEND to discuss targeted interventions; challenges, areas of support and school workforce development requirements. The clusters can review progress of the implementation of the reforms, and support delivery of the reforms.

The Derby ISP and Wheel will be analysed, emerging and changing at setting and cluster level to understand needs, and along with the aggregated Inclusion Dashboard will provide an opportunity for clusters to undertake a strategic analysis of needs, informing provision development and commissioning of CPD and support services, including alternative provision.

During the autumn term a full Terms of Reference will be co-developed and will include an agreed process and standard agenda. This will include the interface with key panels.

Implementation timescales

- **The first cluster meetings will be held in the Autumn Term 2026/7.**
- **Experts at Hand enhanced offer will operate from the second half term of 2026/7.**



Inclusion Bases

'Inclusion Bases' is an umbrella term for any dedicated area in school used to provide support and intervention for specific groups of pupils to ensure their full participation and inclusion in school.

In Derby, we use the term **'School Support Base'** to refer to an Inclusion Base that has been set up and run by the individual school or multi-academy trust. Access to School Support Bases, whether on a full- or part-time basis is decided through internal school processes, depending on the needs of the cohort.

We use the term **Specialist Base** to refer to an inclusion base that is registered with the DfE and where places are commissioned via the Local Authority. These bases are specifically for children with an EHCP and will be the named setting in Section F of the plan. These children may have attended another setting before joining the Specialist Base. Funding for these Specialist Bases is allocated differently based on number of places commissioned; they will then get a top up for the pupil.



The BRIDGE framework provides a strategic framework for leading Inclusion Support Bases. Moving forward, all Inclusion Bases in Derby will be asked to adhere to The BRIDGE Framework, which focuses on:

- **B**elonging
- **R**elational Practice
- **I**ntentional Design and Time limited
- **D**ignified Curriculum
- **G**raduated Approach
- **E**xit – with next STePS

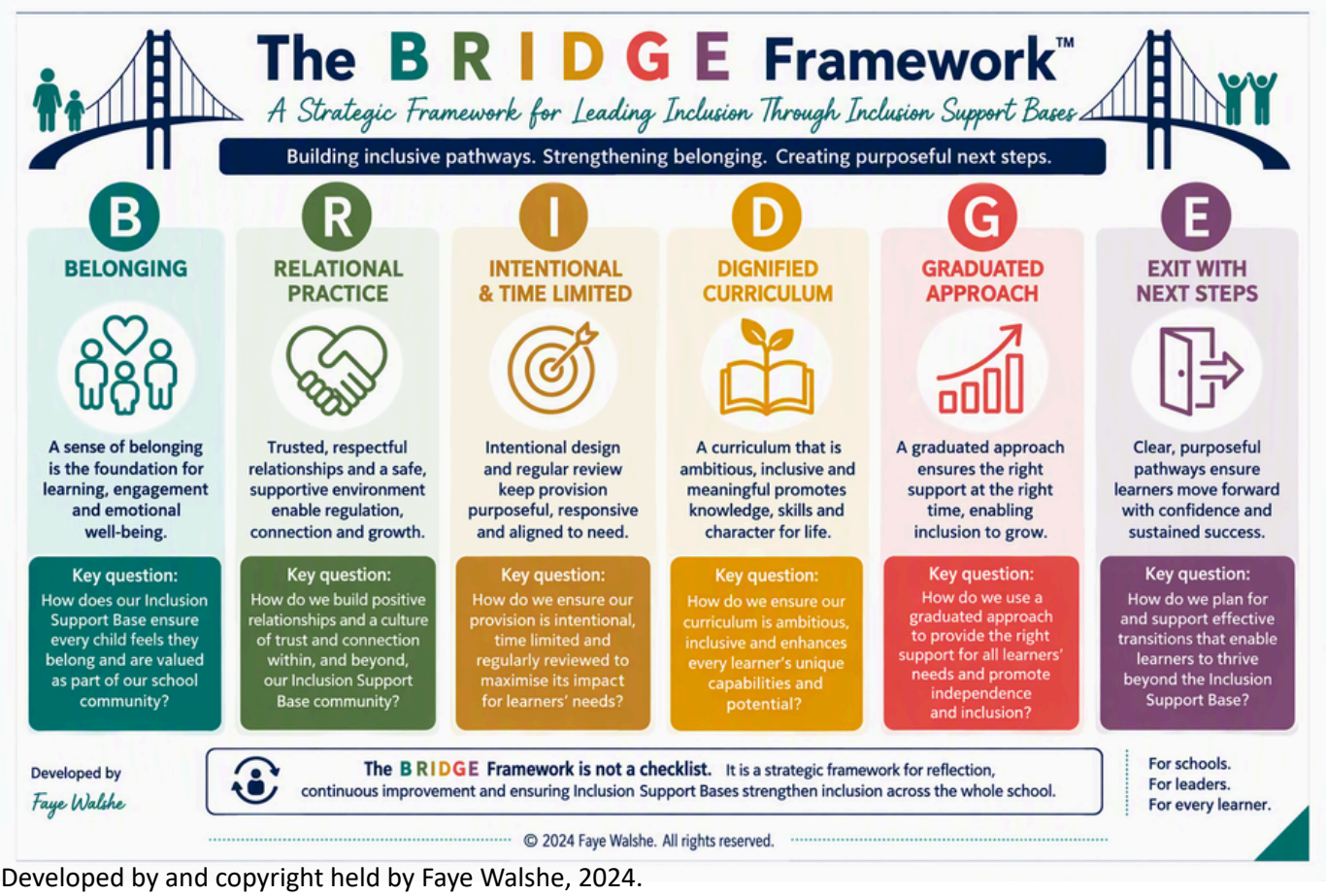


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A new programme of training has been developed to support schools to deliver the BRIDGE Framework, to set up new Inclusion Bases and to ensure existing bases adhere to the new guidelines. This training will be introduced at the Heads' SEND and Inclusion meetings, with delivery following later in the Autumn term. The programme consists of three online sessions, aimed at Headteachers and staff responsible for leading Inclusion Bases. There will also be follow-up support available through the Whole School Intensive Support programme, or bespoke support based on need.

The Bridge Framework



Developed by and copyright held by Faye Walshe, 2024.

Details on how to sign up for the training can be found in upcoming school circular items and the Inclusion Partnership website.

The Social Contract

What is the social contract?

A shared, reciprocal agreement that guides behaviour, builds trust, and defines mutual responsibilities.

The aim of this strand of work is to create a way of engaging and behaviour that puts the rights of the child to an education at the heart of all we do.

The outcome of this work will be:

- Families and settings in Derby will have a shared understanding of the purpose and value of learning and inclusion.
- More children are in mainstream schools accessing full-time education.
- Learning and enrichment stretching beyond the school day, into the home and over the holidays.

In partnership with the Derby SEND Voice we will co-produce and establish a charter that lays out the relationship with services, settings, families and communities, and can be applied in all schools and settings as the cornerstone of the home-to-school partnerships.

How we shall do this:

- Establish a working group to steer the work drawing on community representatives, families, young ambassadors, settings and services.
- Hold conversations with school-parent partnerships, families in community settings, within third sector organisations and in adult learning centres.
- Create community champions for education and learning from communities.
- Design, with the working group, a set of easily acceptable FAQs to share with parents/carers and settings.



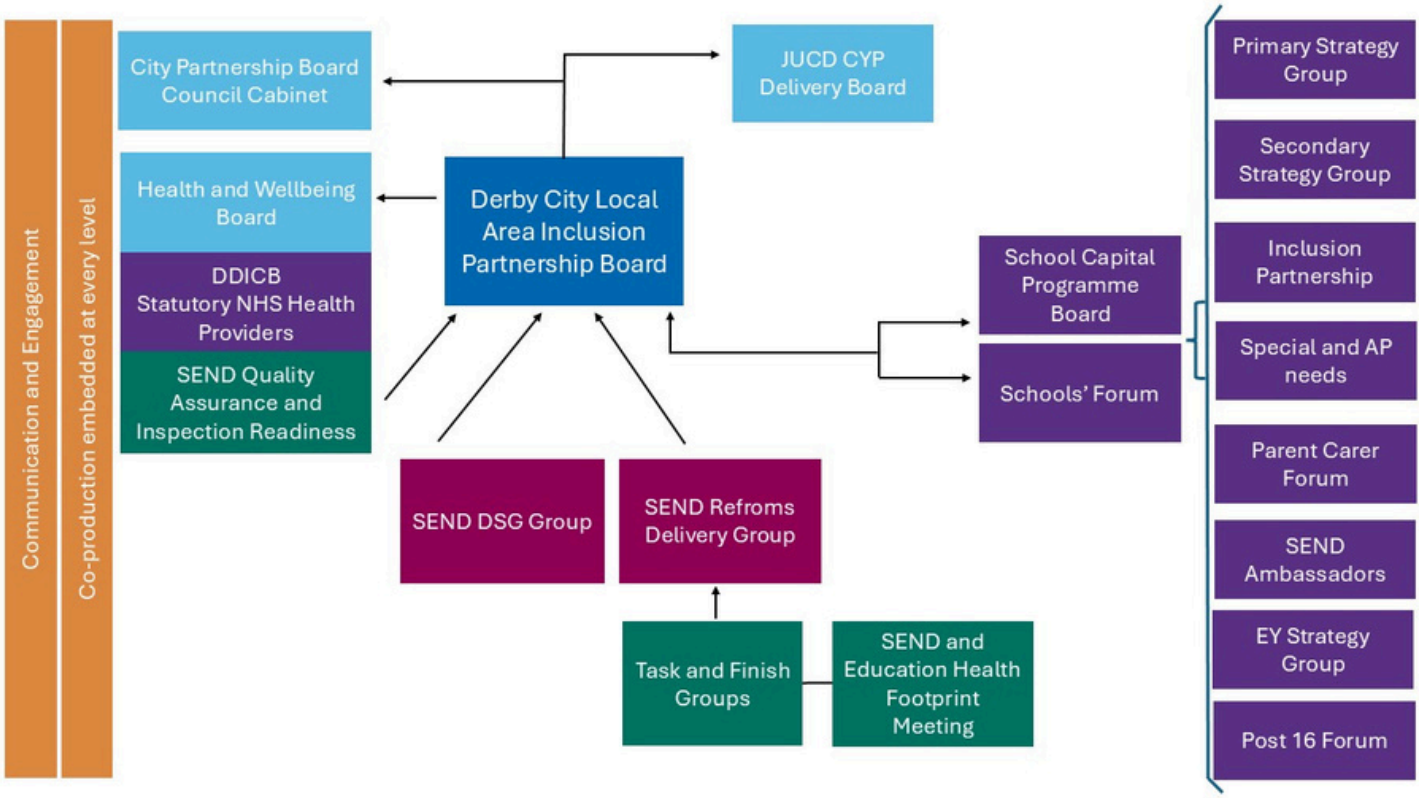
We will measure the success of the SEND and Inclusion reforms through the voice of families, young people and front-line staff, and by extension their experience, trust and confidence in the system.

How will we provide overview and governance for the implementation of the reforms

Derby City has a long-established multi- agency governance arrangement with oversight from an independent chair from the University of Derby, elected members, chairs of key stakeholder groups and Directors of Derby City Council and the NHS Derby and Derbyshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) for the performance and commissioning of Inclusion and SEND services.

The governance arrangements across the local area partnership are designed to foster co-production, insight-led decision making and high support/high challenge to deliver the best possible services for the city. There are a number of workstreams that underpin this arrangement, which provide space in the system to think innovatively about how we meet the needs of children and young people at the right time, and in the right place. These governance arrangements, with co-production intrinsic, have shaped the commissioning framework and how we work together and deliver services together.

The image below demonstrates how services are governed in Derby.



The SEND Reforms Delivery Group provides operational oversight, support and challenge to how the reforms are being delivered. Representatives from the stakeholder groups will be secured in the autumn term.

Timescales

Inclusion dashboard completed October 2026.

Communications campaign underway October 2026.

Alternative Provision, including S19 and more specific tier 2 interventions and tier 3 transition offer commences November 2026.

New policies and protocols launched October 2026.

Workforce audits commence November 2026.

E@H working group: Building the foundations from September 2026.

Clusters defined October 2026 with delivery commencing second half term Autumn 2026.

Social contract scoping and planning with parents/carers, young people, schools and community groups commences November 2026.

Full delivery plans completed for the SEND Reform Delivery Group beginning of October 2026

Outcomes mapping and interdependency planning across all the reforms completed by December 2026



Glossary

AP Alternative Provision
APST Alternative Provision Specialist Team
Best Start in Life NHS Parent Hub
Boxall Comprehensive whole-school approach to assess & support SEMH needs
BSIL Best Start in Life
CAMHS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CBT Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
CPD Continuing Professional Development
DCCT Derby County Community Trust
DDICB Derby and Derbyshire Integrated Care Board
Derby Promise Derby Promise is a programme run by business, culture and Local Authority partners across Derby with the shared aim to support every young person in the city to live their best life. Together they provide meaningful opportunities to get careers experience; to build skills; and to give children and young people the confidence to reach their full potential.
Derby SEND Voice Independent Parent Carer Forum for Derby City
DfE Department for Education
DSAL Derby SEND Advice Line
DSG Dedicated Schools Grant
EAH Experts at Hand
EBSNA Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
EHCP Education, Health, and Care Plan
EP Educational Psychologist
EYFS Early Years Foundation Stage (reception – age 4 to 5)
Family Hubs Provides support and things to do for families
FAQs Frequently Asked Questions
FE Further Education
FFP Families First Partnership
GPs General Practitioners
HAF Holiday Activities and Food programme
ICB Integrated Care Board
INSET In-Service Education and Training day
ISP Individual Support Plan
IYFA In Year Fair Access - a fair access protocol exists to ensure that children without a school place, especially the most vulnerable, are offered a place at an appropriate school as quickly as possible.
JUCD CYP Delivery Board Joined Up Care Derbyshire's Children and Young People's Delivery Board
KS1 Years 1 and 2 – infants – age 5 to 7
KS2 Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 – primary – age 7 to 11
KS3 Years 7, 8 and 9 – lower secondary – age 11 to 14
KS4 Years 10 and 11 – GCSE years – age 14 to 16
KS5 Years 12 and 13 – sixth form – age 16 to 18
LA Local Authority
MHST Mental Health Support Teams
NCAT New Communities Achievement Team

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ND Neurodiversity
NEETs Not in Education, Employment or Training
OT Occupational Therapist
PACE Professional Advocate for Children in Education
PCF Parent Carer Forum
PEX Permanent Exclusion
PFA Preparing For Adulthood
PINS Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools
PRU Pupil Referral Unit
PSD Personal and Social Development
PSG Primary Strategy Group
S19 Section 19 of the Education Act 1996 places a duty on local authorities that they must arrange suitable education at school or elsewhere for pupils who are out of school because of exclusion, illness or for other reasons, if they would not receive suitable education without such arrangements. In addition, the duty applies where a child has or is likely to be absent for 15 days or more (consecutively or not) [and the school is not providing educational support].
SaLT Speech and Language Therapy
SCA Team Social Communication and Autism Team
SEMH Social, Emotional, and Mental Health
SENCO Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SEND Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SEND Ambassadors Derby Young people with special educational needs or disabilities that meet monthly to discuss important topics
SLC Plan Speech, Language and Communication plan
SSG Secondary Strategy Group
STePS Specialist Teaching and Psychology Service
Virtual School Offers guidance and support for parents, carers, schools and other professionals

Appendix one: Panels

Panel A: Expanded specialist education services (Intervention First Team)

- Citywide Provision Mapping Tool
- Early Years Intensive Support Programme
- Early Years SENDCo Toolkit & Resource Bank
- Early Years SENDCo Training
- Extended Whole School Intensive Programme Offer
- Inclusion Bases Quality Assurance
- Inclusion Bases Training & Workshops
- SENDCo New to Role Training & Mentoring Programme
- SEND Governor Training
- SEND Inclusion Library
- Teaching Assistant Professional Development Programme

Panel B: Alternative Provision Specialist Team

Secondary Alternative Provision Specialist Team (APST)

Target cohorts: at risk of permanent exclusion

Reintegrating from PRU to mainstream school

2 Youth workers
1 Advanced emotional wellbeing practitioner
1 Family worker

Outcome
Improved outcomes at KS4

Positive progression into Post 16

Panel C: Educational Psychology offer

- Termly Cluster Meetings
- Coaching and Supervision
- Psychological Formulation
- Consultation focused on groups and classroom
- Implementing and Evaluating Interventions
- Training and Staff Development
- Strengthening the EBSNA Pathway

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EYSG 0-7 Early Years Strategy Group

SS&AP NETWORK Special Schools & Alternative Provision Network

LIVING MY BEST LIFE

Derby City Council

PSG PRIMARY STRATEGY GROUP

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