

Freedom of Information – Response – 27628

Please send me a copy of the Council's Local SEND Reform Plan as submitted to the DfE on or before 19 June 2026. Please include all supporting documentation.

Thank you for your request for a copy of the Suffolk Local SEND Reform Plan.

The first iteration of the Draft Plan was submitted to the Department for Education on 19 June 2026 and is currently under review. As the plan remains in draft form and has not yet been formally approved, we are not able to share the full document at this stage. Slides outlining the draft are attached.

We expect feedback from the Department for Education in mid-September, after which we will be able to confirm the final version and details of publication.

We appreciate your interest and will continue to share updates as the work progresses.



SEND Reform: Implementation in Suffolk

Overview

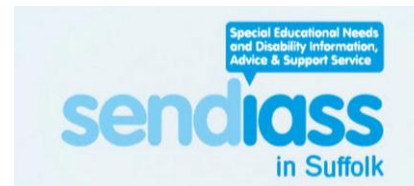
June 2026



Norfolk and Suffolk
Integrated Care Board



Suffolk
County Council



What we have heard and will act upon - Shaped by you, delivered with you

Parents & Carers and Children & Young People

44 CYP in CiC group, survey and workshops

13 parent/carers in workshops

175 parents/carers via survey



Key worries:

- Eligibility clarity (PIP/disability)
- Capacity gaps (provision & workforce)
- Reduced personalisation risk
- Environment barriers (sensory, pressure, scale, fairness)

Key suggestions:

- Accessible info (clear impact)
- Practical adjustments
- Consistent trusted adults
- Inclusion & life skills
- Deliver on commitments

Education Providers

Key worries:

-  **Funding and workforce gap:** Demand will outpace funding and the ability to recruit and retain skilled staff.
-  **Delivery pressures:** Admin burden, school capacity, and space constraints may limit what's realistically deliverable.
-  **Unclear new arrangements:** Ongoing uncertainty around thresholds, triage, accountability, and quality assurance.
-  **Inclusion risks:** Children may stay too long in unsuitable mainstream settings or experience internal segregation.
-  **School-centric design:** Early years, post-16, AP and non-school provision feel under-represented.
-  **Transitions under strain:** Weak planning and delays risk loss of support at key transition points.

Key opportunities:

-  **Earlier intervention:** Acting earlier (especially in early years/primary) could prevent escalation and reduce exclusions, tribunals and long-term pressure.
-  **Clearer tiered model:** Tiers align with current practice and could improve consistency, expectations and access to support.
-  **Access to expertise:** "Experts at Hand" welcomed to build workforce confidence and reduce variation in decisions.
-  **Stronger local inclusion:** Inclusion Bases, outreach and flexible pathways could keep more CYP successfully in mainstream where appropriate.
-  **Better multi-agency working:** Opportunity to improve alignment, information sharing and smoother transitions, particularly into post-16.
-  **Less adversarial system:** With safeguards, reforms could reduce reliance on EHCPs, disputes and long waits for support.

Parent & Carers

Key worries:

- EHCP reduction / weak alternatives
- Re-fighting for support
- Inappropriate mainstream placement
- Longer / repeated waits
- Cost-cutting risk (reduced provision)
- Workforce capacity & skills gaps
- Tiering vs individual need
- Low trust & poor communication
- Transition risk (primary → secondary)

Key opportunities:

- Better access to specialist support in mainstream
- Earlier identification of need
- Stronger workforce training
- Inclusive mainstream (if well supported)
- Effective ISPs (if delivered)
- Joined-up working

Key suggestions:

- Reduce assessment delays
- Invest in workforce (staff, training, pay)
- Genuine co-production (listen to parents)
- Increase specialist provision
- Protect EHCPs
- Strengthen accountability & support (MH, respite, families)
- Needs-led, tailored support



Education & Health Provider Engagement

Education Setting Online Survey | 127 responses across:

65 Mainstream Primary & Secondary Schools 26 Alternative Provision Providers
31 Early Years Providers 3 Post 16 Providers 2 Special Schools

Local Authority Maintained Schools | 97% engagement so far

- 37 out of 74 LA maintained primary schools attended a focus group
- All 3 LA maintained secondary schools attended a focus group
- 69 out of 71 LA Maintained Schools Leaders have engaged in either a survey or focus group

Post 16 Education

Suffolk New College, WS Training and Eastern Education Group (Suffolk One, Abbeygate & West Suffolk College) attended focused groups.

Multi Academy Trusts

38 MAT represented schools (primary and secondary) attended a focus group
5 MAT CEOs focus group with DfE Rise Advisor

Special Schools

15 attended a focus group.

Health Providers:

 James Paget University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
 Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust
 West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust

Suffolk Local SEND Reform Plan

Vision: The local area partnership will deliver an inclusive, early-intervention SEND system where children and young people achieve strong outcomes, families have trust and confidence, and resources are used effectively.

Goals:

Inclusive Education: More CYP with SEND thriving in mainstream, with reduced exclusions, less reliance on alternative provision, and improved life outcomes.

Confidence: Increased parental trust and satisfaction, with fewer children educated at home due to unmet need and stronger co-production with families.

Finance: A sustainable system that shifts from individual funding to earlier, needs-led support, setting based resource and reducing high-cost interventions.

Delivery Workstreams:
Additional areas

Data, Finance and Performance: Allocation of spend, linked to SEND Capital Development and clear metrics to track trajectory

Inclusion Bases: creation of new SEND Inclusion Bases - a data led dynamic system with accountability across the school system

Experts at Hand: development and delivery of specialist high-quality resource across all phases

Local Government Reform Readiness: LGR locality profiles and HNB, sufficiency review planning for Years 2 & 3

Inclusive System SEND Reform Building Blocks

System leadership, local partnership collaboration and coproduction

Strengthening Inclusion across education settings

Access to specialist support and local placements

Encouraging inclusive culture & behaviours

Local Area Inclusion Plan Foundation:
The right pathways to deliver SEND Reform

Communication Coproduction and Strategic CYP Voice

Strategic and Governance

Inclusive Practice

Resource and Sufficiency

Pathways

Preparing for Adulthood and Transitions

Enablers



Children, Young People and Families at the heart of planning



Strong partnerships with Education providers, Health and Social Care



Confident, stable workforce: shared training, supervision and system leadership



Integrated data systems: real-time understanding of need, demand and impact



Complete alignment to Best Start in Life, Family Hubs and Families First Programme

Building trust across all stakeholders in Suffolk's SEND Reform Plan

✓ **Co-production as standard practice**

Work in genuine partnership with parents, carers, young people and education providers, with shared decision-making and visible impact (“you said, we did”).

- ✓ **Provide clear, honest and consistent communication**

Agree shared expectations for families and providers by explaining changes openly, acknowledging risks, and using accessible, consistent messaging across the system.

- ✓ **Listen, respond and demonstrate impact at pace**

Strengthen feedback loops with both families and settings, ensuring insights shape system design and improvements are clearly evidenced through governance and reporting.

- ✓ **Deliver reliable, early and needs-led support**

Build confidence by ensuring children's needs are met earlier through consistent, easy-to-navigate pathways that reduce escalation and reliance on crisis intervention.

- ✓ **Strengthen the education workforce - confidence and system alignment**

Listening to and supporting education providers with the training, specialist input and joined-up multi-agency working needed to deliver inclusive practice, so professionals feel confident and families experience consistent support.



JSNA (Sept 2025) and supported by live intelligence to focus the SEND Reform Plan

Suffolk's **EHCP 20-week timeliness** is at **YTD 60.9%** in May 2026, outturn in April 2026 - **c.80%** exceeding the national average. This provides a strong foundation, alongside our SEND Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), to better understand and respond to live system demand.

Rapidly rising demand and increasing system pressure:

- EHCPs increase by 20.6% (9,637→11,627); c.200 plans/month
- Sustained pressure across mainstream and specialist provision



Increasing complexity of need:

- Demand driven by SEMH (45.5%) and C&I (42.2%)
- Rising autism, SLCN and mental health complexity



Significant geographic variation and inequality:

- EHCP prevalence up to 8–10% in some areas
- Rural/coastal areas face limited access and longer travel



Inequitable and inconsistent access to support:

- Access varies by locality and capacity
- Inconsistent, referral-led pathways



Late identification and reactive pathways:

- Needs identified late; escalation to EHCPs
- System remains reactive rather than preventative



Escalation to high-cost and specialist provision:

- Unmet need rising sharply:
 - Special schools +91% (1,307→2,498)
 - Units +172% (91→248)
 - SEMH +96.5% (636→1,250)
- Increased reliance on specialist and independent placements.



Workforce and system coordination challenges:

- Workforce and coordination gaps impacting delivery.
- Need for stronger multi-agency alignment.



Strong evidence for earlier, locality-based intervention:

- Clear case for earlier, coordinated support.
- Local, multidisciplinary models improve equity and outcomes

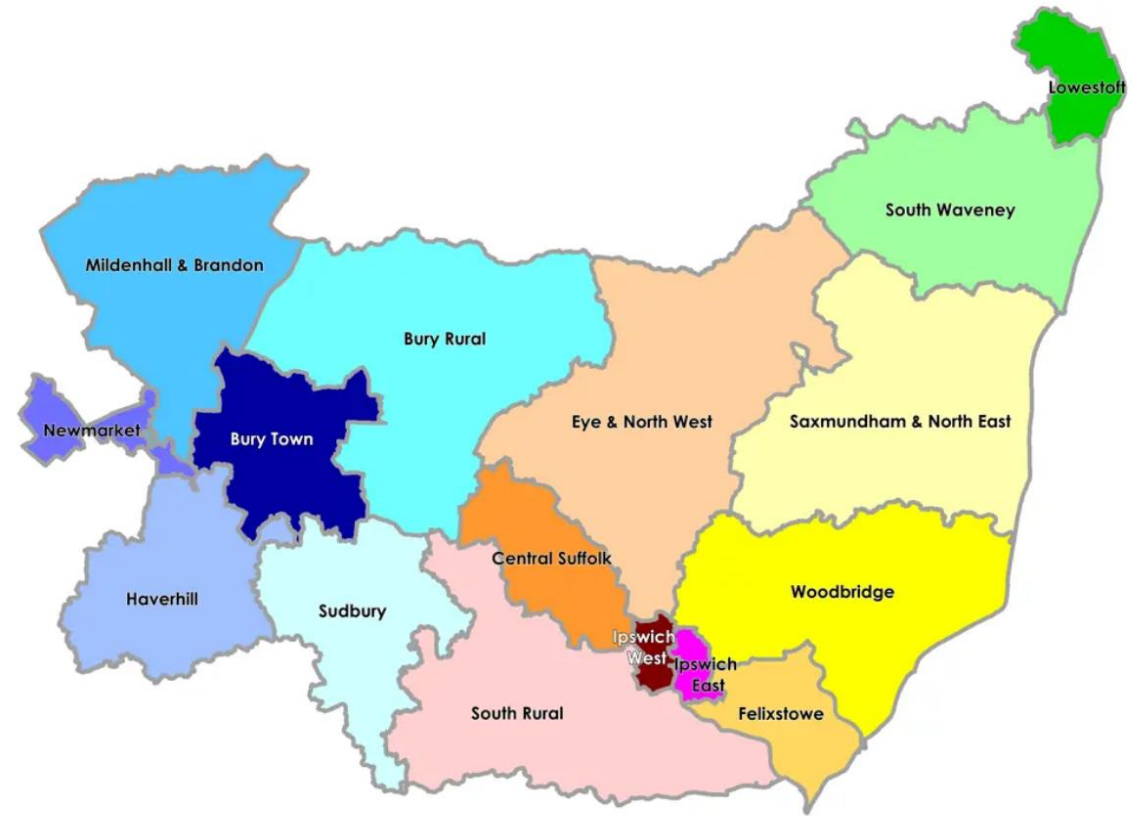
Capital Sufficiency Programme and Inclusion Base approach

Suffolk's Sufficiency Capital Sufficiency Programme

identifies demand pressures into a time-bound, locality-based delivery plan, ensuring that planned place growth is deliverable, targeted and impact-focused, delivering for children without a specialist placement

Suffolk's inclusion base programme will be designed as a controlled response to identify further sufficiency gaps with:

- clear parameters on how many inclusion bases are required
- exact plans for location
- what phases they serve
- the primary needs they will be commissioned to meet.



Inclusion base locations are deliberate, equitable and aligned to local demographic need with a blend of LA maintained and Academy Trust engagement to affect culture change across the Suffolk SEND system.

Inclusion and Specialist Base Locality Plans

✓ **Mainstream inclusion/support bases**

Focus: Early years, primary (majority) and early secondary (transition risk)

Needs: Communication & Interaction and emerging SEMH

Purpose: Strengthen early intervention, build mainstream capacity and reduce escalation; the EAH offer will support pedagogy, curriculum and workforce development and will enable confident environments where children and staff feel they belong and can learn safely together

✓ **Post-16 inclusion bases**

Focus: Preparation for Adulthood and stabilising post-16 placements

Purpose: Address gaps in post-16 pathways, reducing placement breakdown and non-participation following transition from secondary school (NEET, NSAP and INMSS)

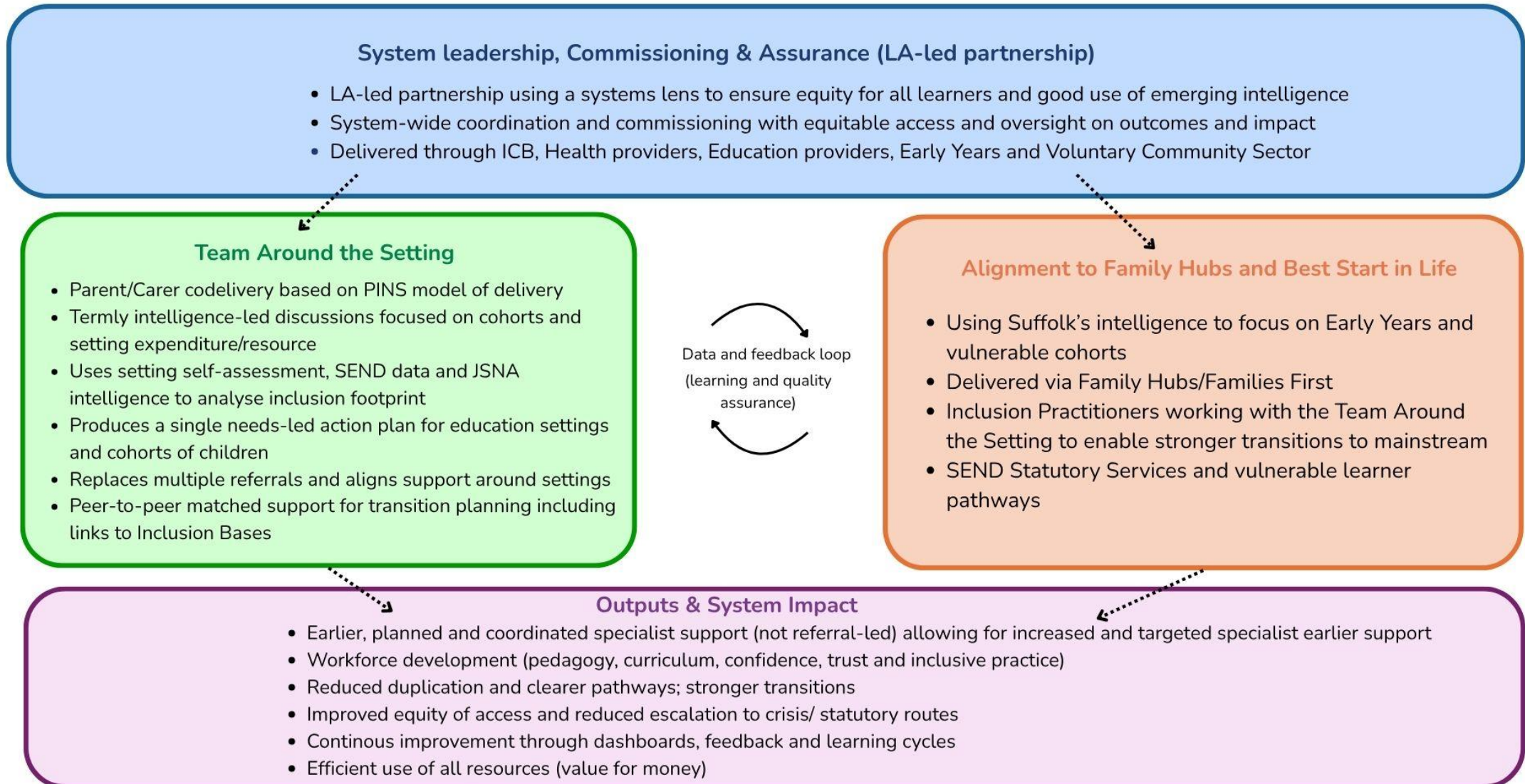
✓ **Secondary specialist bases**

Needs: SEMH and Communication & Interaction

Purpose: Target areas of highest secondary pressure and prevent escalation to specialist, independent or non-school provision



Experts at Hand Offer - Proposed Delivery Model



Experts at Hand Offer - How it will change system dynamics



System Oversight, Efficiency & Quality

- ✓ Reduces duplication and fragmentation
- ✓ Improves timeliness and consistency
- ✓ Efficient pathways and responsiveness
- ✓ Central oversight, MI analysing and addressing system changes

Early Intervention & Graduated Response

- ✓ Earlier, planned and coordinated support
- ✓ Supports the graduated response
- ✓ Reduces reliance on reactive referrals
- ✓ Successful Transitions with reduction in INMSS/NSAP
- ✓ Increased engagement of SEND learners across KPIs

Workforce & Capacity Building

- ✓ Strengthens workforce capability and confidence
- ✓ Peer led specialist support for some aspects of delivery

Access to Expertise & Support Model

- ✓ Enhances access to specialist expertise
- ✓ Consultation, coaching and cohort-level support
- ✓ Specialist input used where it has greatest impact
- ✓ Better use of existing statutory services

Pathways, Integration & Place-Based Working

- ✓ Integration across the system
- ✓ Aligns health pathways and referral routes
- ✓ Connects with Family Hubs and Early Years
- ✓ Builds on Therapeutic Thinking, PINS and inclusion practice

We will work with education settings to:

- ✓ Ensure Experts at Hand is successfully piloted in Academic Year 26/27 and further refining the model for full roll out in Academic Year 27/28
- ✓ Develop peer-to-peer support approaches
- ✓ Work towards a coproduced partnership wide universal offer embedded in new Inclusion Standards
- ✓ Support Suffolk specialists in SEND to explore a new Outreach Model
- ✓ Develop the Curriculum following Curriculum and Assessment Reforms and introduction of Inclusion Standards

How schools can get involved:

Headteacher and SENCo forums

Peer to peer support

Belonging and Inclusion Conference (Sept 26)

SEND and AP Partnership (SEND Reforms) Board

Inclusion Strategy clinics and workshops

Trust-level roundtables



We will work with CYP and Parents & Carers to:



- ✓ Successfully pilot and roll out Experts at Hand, including parent carer codelivery
- ✓ Co-produce SEND Reform explainers, FAQs and 'what good early support looks like'
- ✓ Ensure SEND Reform planning, development and decisions reflect real experiences of inclusion and belonging
- ✓ Define indicators of inclusion
- ✓ Build confidence in earlier, clearer support and transparent pathways

How CYP and Parents & Carers can get involved:

CYP and Parent Carer
Networks e.g. Multi Schools
Council

Co-delivery of Experts at
Hand (P.I.N.S model)

Belonging Together in Suffolk
events

SEND and AP Partnership
(SEND Reform) Board

Digital platforms e.g. Local
Offer and social media

Coproduction and
engagement workshops