

Oxfordshire
SEND

Local Area Partnership **SEND Strategy (Draft)** 2026-2029



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Executive summary

This SEND Strategy sets out Oxfordshire's Local Area Partnership's (LAP) shared ambition for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). It ensures that they are valued, included, supported early and can thrive in their communities and prepare confidently for adulthood.

It provides a clear framework for how partners across education, health and social care in Oxfordshire will work together to improve experiences and outcomes for children, young people and their families.



The LAP is made up of:

- SEND Youth Forum, representing the views of children and young people
- Oxfordshire Parent Carers Forum (OxPCF), the official body for the voice of parent carers
- SENDIASS : A Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support Service for parents & carers of children and young people with SEND
- Oxfordshire County Council
- Education settings and schools
- Thames Valley Integrated Care Board (ICB)
- Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust
- Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (OUH)

Vision

This strategy is part of a wider strategic context, including our children and young people's plan and the education and inclusion strategy.

These strategies reflect a shared vision – that Oxfordshire is a place where all children and young people are safe, healthy, supported and able to achieve their full potential.

As a LAP, we have co-designed our vision for services that support children and young people with SEND, and this approach and vision underpin this strategy.

Local Area Partnership

We are committed to taking accountable and purposeful **action** to ensure that children and young people with SEND, along with their families, are **valued, respected, and empowered** to thrive in an inclusive and supportive community.

Our Approach

Together, we embrace a holistic perspective that **celebrates individuals' strengths**, aspirations, and achievements.

Through **partnership, involvement and collaboration**, we support children and young people with SEND, their families and carers to fulfil their wishes and aspirations.



Our eight commitments

At the heart of the strategy are eight co-designed commitments which describe what we consider good practice in SEND and what families and young people should expect from the SEND system:

1. **Inclusive culture** – recognising and valuing difference so that children and young people with SEND feel welcomed, respected and included.
2. **High quality provision** – delivering person-centred, ambitious and flexible support that improves outcomes and experiences.
3. **Proactive engagement** – consistently seeking, hearing and acting on the views of children, young people and families through co-production.
4. **Early intervention** – identifying needs early and providing timely support to prevent escalation and improve long-term outcomes.
5. **Working together effectively** – ensuring education, health and social care partners collaborate, share responsibility and provide joined up support.
6. **A sense of belonging** – ensuring children and young people with SEND feel they belong within their school or educational setting, with schools acting as anchor institutions.
7. **Preparing for adulthood** – supporting young people from an early stage to achieve meaningful education, employment, independence and wellbeing outcomes.
8. **Skilled workforce** – developing and sustaining a diverse, confident and skilled workforce across education, health and social care that understands and values difference.

Oxfordshire's SEND system landscape

Oxfordshire has a large, diverse and growing population of children and young people, with increasing levels of SEND and complexity of need.

Oxfordshire's SEND system spans early years, schools, post 16 provision and further education, health services, social care and the voluntary and community sector. Children and families interact with multiple services, often at times of transition or increased vulnerability, making joined up working and clear pathways essential.

Number of children and young people aged 0–25 in Oxfordshire **232,684**

Number of children and young people with an EHCP **8,565**

Distribution of children across mainstream, special and alternative provision

Mainstream schools or academies..... **4,218**

Maintained special schools or special academies..... **1,492**

Post 16 **1,034**

Alternative provision or hospital schools..... **611**

Non-maintained special schools or independent schools..... **611**

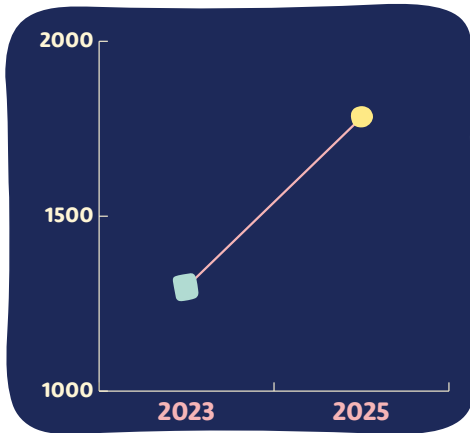
Specialist bases **141**

Early years **74**

Trends in EHCP requests and growth over time

Requests for EHC needs assessments have risen year-on-year from **1,298 in 2023** to **1,782 in 2025**.

Demand remains consistently high into 2026, indicating sustained and increasing pressure on the SEND system.



Primary areas of need

Calendar year 2025

Autistic Spectrum Disorder	3,566
Social, Emotional and Mental Health	1,679
Speech, Language and Communications needs	1,560
Moderate Learning Difficulty	687
Physical Disability	328
Severe Learning Difficulty	260
Specific Learning Difficulty	190
Other Difficulty/Disability	94
Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulty	60
Hearing Impairment.....	59
Downs Syndrome	45
Visual Impairment	34
Multi-Sensory Impairment.....	3
SEN support but no specialist assessment of type of need	0
Total number of EHC plans	8,565

What SEND reform means for Oxfordshire

For Oxfordshire, SEND reform presents both an opportunity and a challenge. It reinforces the need to shift from reactive, process driven responses towards a more preventative, inclusive and outcomes focused system, while continuing to respond to rising demand and increasing complexity of need.

It is shaped by the government's White Paper, which sets out a national direction for creating a more inclusive, consistent and sustainable SEND system.

Locally, Oxfordshire is using this opportunity to build on what is already working, address longstanding challenges, and make practical changes that improve everyday experiences for children, young people and families.

Locally, this means:

We are strengthening inclusion across education settings.

More children's needs will be identified early and met in early years, schools, settings, post 16 provision and colleges, with clearer expectations about what support should be available for children and young people with SEND. This means more consistent inclusive practice across Oxfordshire and better experiences for children and young people in their local communities.

We are improving access to specialist support and local placements.

Specialist expertise from education, health and social care will be used earlier and more effectively, including supporting mainstream settings to meet children's needs before those needs escalate. Over time, this will reduce the need for children and young people to travel far from home for support and help shorten waiting times.

We are strengthening system leadership and partnership working.

Education, health and social care partners are working more closely together, with shared responsibility for improving outcomes. Parents, carers, children and young people will continue to be involved in shaping plans and decisions, so services reflect real experiences and needs.

We are encouraging inclusive culture and behaviours across the system.

SEND reform is not just about services, but about how organisations work together. By promoting collaboration, inclusion and shared accountability, Oxfordshire aims to build a SEND system that is fairer, more sustainable and focused on what makes the biggest difference for children, young people and families.

Together, these changes will help ensure that children and young people with SEND in Oxfordshire feel included, are supported earlier and achieve better outcomes, now and in the future.

The SEND system is operating in a period of national reform. This strategy is therefore designed to be flexible and responsive, providing a stable long-term vision and set of commitments, while enabling delivery plans to adapt as national policy, guidance and funding arrangements evolve. Changes arising from SEND reform will be reflected through updates to the improvement journey, ensuring Oxfordshire continues to respond to national expectations while remaining grounded in local priorities and lived experience.

About the strategy

How we got here: the development of this SEND Strategy

2023 Ofsted Inspection

Development of the Priority Action Plan

Co-design of our SEND vision

Set up of the SEND Strategy Delivery Group

Co-design of the 8 commitments

Public consultation on the 8 commitments

Following the SEND local area inspection, partners across education, health and social care recognised the importance of setting a clear, shared direction for improvement rooted in the lived experiences of children, young people and families in Oxfordshire.

The SEND Strategy was therefore codesigned from the outset, beginning with the development of a shared vision for partnership working that allows children and young people with SEND to thrive in their local communities.

This was followed by a set of jointly agreed commitments that describe what will change in practice.

This strategic direction has then been supported by delivery activity, including the SEND Priority Action Plan (PAP), which focuses on translating those commitments into concrete action and improvement across the system.

This SEND Strategy has been developed to articulate a shared long-term vision, define what good looks like across the system, and provide a stable framework within which improvement and reform activity could sit.

Developing the strategy

The strategy has been developed through partnership working led by the LAP, with contributions from:

- The SEND Youth Forum
- The Oxfordshire Parent Carers Forum (OxPCF)
- Thames Valley Integrated Care Board and Health Trusts
- Education settings, schools and post 16 provision
- Oxfordshire County Council

A SEND Strategy delivery group was established to shape the structure, content and key messages of the strategy, drawing on learning from other local areas, feedback from engagement activity and emerging national SEND reform proposals.

The group agreed a clear focus on:

- describing shared commitments rather than service-by-service detail,
- using accessible, inclusive language,
- and ensuring the strategy could adapt as SEND reform develops.

The eight commitments at the heart of the strategy reflect themes consistently raised through inspection feedback, partnership self-assessment, and engagement with families, young people and professionals.

Continuing to involve people

Oxfordshire is committed to working together and continuing to involve children, young people, parent carers and professionals through:

- public consultation on the draft strategy,
- ongoing partnership with OxPCF and the SEND Youth Forum,
- clear feedback loops that show how views have influenced decisions,
- regular review and refresh of delivery plans in response to learning, data and lived experience.

This approach ensures the SEND Strategy remains grounded in what matters most: improving experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND and their families.

Our eight commitments

This section focuses on outcomes and experience; detailed SEND improvement metrics, baselines and KPIs are reported separately.

1

Inclusive culture

Recognise and value diversity to ensure that every child and young person with SEND feels valued and supported.

“Whether a child gets support is still down to their parents and still feels like a fight.”

What will be different in practice:

- Children and young people with SEND are supported to remain in education wherever possible.
- Inclusive language and expectations are consistent across services and settings.
- Reduced timetables and exclusions are used less and reviewed more robustly.
- Families experience respectful, strengths-based conversations from the start.
- Embedding sufficient time to support meaningful participation from children and young people.

When we get this right, it looks like:

- Children and young people with SEND feel welcomed, respected, valued and included in their education setting and wider community.
- Practitioners working with children and young people with SEND consistently model inclusive language, attitudes and behaviours.
- Families feel their children's needs are understood and supported.
- Children and young people's individual needs, backgrounds and identities are reflected in the support they receive.
- Children and young people feel seen, heard and cared for.

How will we know:

- Feedback from children, young people and families tells us they feel respected, included and supported.
- Staff confidence and inclusive practice improve across education, health and social care.
- Young people and their families lead or take part in training that helps adults understand their experiences.
- A wider range of children, families and communities are actively involved in shaping decisions.
- Fewer children and young people are excluded or placed on reduced timetables and more can access full-time education.

2

High quality provision

Deliver person-centered, high quality inclusive provision that is flexible, ambitious and continuously improves outcomes and experiences for children and young people with SEND.

“Support for SEND pupils needs to be timely, consistent, and tailored — delays or gaps can have a lasting impact on their confidence and progress.”

What will be different in practice:

- Support plans focus clearly on outcomes that matter to the child or young person.
- Provision is personalised, strengths-based and reviewed regularly with families.
- Families can see how support is helping their child make progress.
- Provision adapts as needs change, without unnecessary delay or escalation.
- More children and young people have their needs met successfully in mainstream settings.
- Fewer families feel the need to challenge decisions to secure appropriate support.

When we get this right, it looks like:

- Children and young people with SEND make meaningful progress that reflects their needs, strengths and aspirations.
- Provision and support is personalised, strengths-based and regularly reviewed.
- Families feel confident that the support provided is high quality and makes a positive difference.
- Provision is flexible and responds to changing needs.
- Children and young people have choices and feel confident making informed decisions about their future.

How will we know:

- Children and young people are making progress towards their outcomes set out in their Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), SEND Support, and other support plans.
- Families and young people report confidence and satisfaction with the support they receive.
- More children and young people access the right support in mainstream settings.
- Reviews and audits of settings, schools and post 16 provision, show inclusive, strengths-based practice.
- Children and young people feel confident planning for their future and can access useful information about their options.

3

Proactive engagement

Consistently seek, hear and respect the views of children and young people with SEND, and their families, to inform and enhance how we do things.

“The use of “you said, we did” so the impact of our input can be better measured and shared.”

What will be different in practice:

- Children, young people and parent carers are involved early in decisions.
- Working together is built into planning, reviews and service design as standard practice.
- Families can clearly see how their feedback has influenced change.
- Engagement opportunities are accessible, inclusive and representative of local communities.
- Trust improves as families feel listened to and respected.
- Fewer concerns escalate to formal complaints or disputes.
- More children and young people shape services and priorities through a strengthened and expanded SEND Youth Forum.

When we get this right, it looks like:

- Children, young people and families feel heard, and their feedback is documented and leads to real changes in services and plans.
- Working together is part of how all significant decisions are made at every level.
- Engagement happens early as standard practice.
- Children, young people and families can see how their voice has been heard. The feedback loop is closed as the partnership communicate the change and improvements that have been brought about.
- Children and young people and their families know how to give feedback, what mechanisms are in place and there is a strong feedback loop in place through ‘you said, we did’.

How will we know:

- ▶ Families and young people report that their feedback has influenced services and plans.
- ▶ Participation in engagement activity increases year on year.
- ▶ Feedback shows children, young people and families feel listened to and included in decisions.
- ▶ Regular publishing of ‘you said, we did’ developed in collaboration with the Oxford Parent Carer Forum and SEND Youth Forum.
- ▶ There will be more opportunities for engagement and feedback and regular cycles of feedback loops.

4

Early intervention

Prioritise early identification so that timely intervention leads to better outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

“Schools have a reactionary, rather than understanding and supportive approach”

What will be different in practice:

- Needs are identified earlier, with clearer routes to advice, assessment and support through Family Hubs and the local Early Help offer.
- Families receive timely help without long waits or repeated referrals.
- Practitioners feel confident responding to emerging needs.
- Clear information helps families understand what support is available and how to access it.
- More children and young people receive effective support before difficulties escalate.
- Reduced reliance on crisis responses, specialist placements or statutory processes.

When we get this right, it looks like:

- Children and young people's needs are identified early and the right support is in place when needed.
- Families experience timely and easy access to assessments, referrals, early help and support services.
- Practitioners are confident in recognising and responding to emerging needs.
- More children and young people can access the right support in mainstream settings.
- Families can more easily find clear information and timely targeted support.

How will we know:

- ▶ Children and families report positive experiences of early support.
- ▶ Waiting times for assessments, support and early help are reduced.
- ▶ Practitioner self-assessment demonstrates increased confidence in identifying and responding to emerging needs.
- ▶ Children receive the right support early, reducing the need for alternative or specialist placements.
- ▶ Increased use of early help offers and information services.

5

Working together effectively

Ensure that all partners who work in SEND collaborate effectively and transparently with other agencies and with the children and young people, and the families they serve.

“The system still feels adversarial, slow and non-transparent.”

What will be different in practice:

- Education, health and social care professionals share information and plan together more consistently.
- Families experience clearer communication and fewer repeated conversations.
- Support plans reflect shared goals across services.
- Transitions between services are smoother and better coordinated.
- Families find the system easier to navigate.
- Professionals take shared responsibility for outcomes, not service-specific ownership.

When we get this right, it looks like:

- Professionals work together across services and share information effectively and as standard practice.
- Families, children and young people experience joined-up support and consistent communication.
- Professionals involved are working toward shared goals and takes joint responsibility.
- Schools, settings, post 16 provision, services and professionals work consistently together, so families experience coordinated support rather than having to manage communication between organisations themselves.

How will we know:

- ▶ Services work together to plan and review support where children and young people and families need input from more than one agency.
- ▶ Joint training and shared ways of working are used across services and lead to improved support for families.
- ▶ Strategic multi-agency working strengthens planning, delivery and decision-making across services.
- ▶ Families report that settings, schools, post 16 provision, services and professionals communicate and work well together, providing coordinated support without repetition or delay.

6

A sense of belonging

Ensure children and young people with SEND feel they belong within their school or educational setting and local community, with schools acting as anchor institutions. This creates inclusive environments, fosters strong peer relationships and enables access to activities that support participation and confidence.

“ [There is a] lack of holiday clubs/ extra curricular activities for children with SEND in and around Oxfordshire. Everything has massive waiting lists.”

What will be different in practice:

- Children and young people with SEND participate more in the wider school offer, including school activities and clubs.
- Children and young people feel safe, welcomed and accepted.
- Barriers to participation within school (eg curriculum, environment, extracurricular activity) are identified and removed.
- Transitions between classes, settings and phases (eg primary to secondary, school to post-16) are well planned and support continuity of belonging.
- Children and young people with SEND experience a strong sense of belonging within their school or setting, not just access to it.
- Inclusive education environments promote belonging through the Oxfordshire Education Partnership and the Education & Inclusion Strategy.

When we get this right, it looks like:

- Children and young people with SEND feel part of their school community, with positive relationships with peers and staff.
- Schools, settings and post 16, demonstrate inclusive practice that enables all pupils to participate meaningfully in learning and wider school life.
- Children and young people with SEND have equal access to opportunities, including extracurricular and social activities.
- Transitions within and between settings feel safe, planned and supportive.

How will we know:

- ▶ Children and young people with SEND report feeling part of their school, setting or post 16, including feeling accepted by peers and staff.
- ▶ Schools, settings and post 16 demonstrate inclusive practice through the take up of inclusion initiatives, audits, reviews or quality assurance, including how they support participation and belonging.
- ▶ Feedback from families reflects that inclusive, welcoming and supporting nature.
- ▶ Transitions within and between schools, settings or post 16, (eg between classes, phases or settings) are reported as positive, planned and supportive by children, young people and families.

7

Preparing for adulthood

Empower children and young people with SEND to transition into adulthood with confidence, supported to build the skills and opportunities that are meaningful to them.

“

I was not aware of the Moving into Adulthood team in Oxfordshire County Council and yet I have 2 children that qualify and we were on a Children In Need Plan.”

What will be different in practice:

- Preparation for adulthood starts earlier and is embedded from year 9 onwards.
- Children and young people are actively involved in planning their future.
- Clear pathways exist into education, employment, training and independent or supported living.
- Families understand what options are available and how to access support.
- Transitions feel planned and supported.
- More children and young people move into adulthood with confidence and with meaningful opportunities.

When we get this right, it looks like:

- Children and young people with SEND move into adulthood feeling confident, valued and well supported.
- There are clear and meaningful pathways into education, employment, training and supported or independent living, based on each child and young person's needs and goals.
- Families feel informed, involved and reassured about their young person's future.
- Planning starts early (from year 9) and reflects each child and young person's strengths, needs, and aspirations including those who may need ongoing care or support.
- The Local Offer website is a useful resource and is easy to navigate, with pages co-produced with children and young people and parent carers.

How will we know:

- ▶ Young adults report positive experiences of transition and feel their needs were supported.
- ▶ Increased opportunities and take up of children and young people in supported internships, apprenticeships, employment and supported or independent living.
- ▶ Working together with children and young person, families and services is evidenced through audits and reviews, and families report they felt informed and involved.
- ▶ Children and young people's views and goals are included in transition planning from year 9 onwards.
- ▶ Increased use of the dedicated pages on the Local Offer site and positive responses from those who use it.

8

Skilled workforce

Recruit, develop and retain a high quality, skilled, diverse and confident workforce to deliver excellent services, drive innovation and improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND and their families.

“Not enough provision in secondary school, or more kids needing help than they are able to deal with.”

What will be different in practice:

- All professionals working with children and young people with SEND across education, health and social care feel confident to support.
- Training is consistent, high quality and informed by lived experience.
- SEND and inclusion knowledge is shared across the whole workforce, not just specialists.
- Recruitment and retention improve, increasing stability for families.
- The workforce reflects the diversity of local communities.
- Families experience knowledgeable, confident and respectful support.

When we get this right, it looks like:

- All people working with children and young people with SEND feel confident and well-equipped to support children.
- More skilled professionals are recruited and supported to stay in SEND-related roles.
- There is consistent, relevant and regularly updated training in SEND across the whole workforce, that includes input from young people and parent carers with lived experiences.
- Training is accessible to the wider workforce, including teachers, teaching assistants, health, social care staff and volunteers.
- Access to high quality equality, diversity and inclusion training.

How will we know:

- ▶ The workforce across education, health and social care report increased confidence and better understanding of how to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.
- ▶ Improved recruitment and retention of the local workforce in SEND roles.
- ▶ SEND training is co-produced with children and young people and parent carers.
- ▶ There is an increase in take up of training opportunities, and training is delivered to the wider workforce.
- ▶ Equality, diversity and inclusion principles are embedded across the SEND workforce, including youth-led training, leadership development and quality assurance activity.

Delivering the strategy

This strategy will be delivered through a robust transformation programme management approach and implemented via the SEND Improvement Plan, which sets out the detailed improvement journey, actions and milestones.

Delivery is owned through the four theme groups, each accountable for progressing actions within their remit, with collective oversight through an established governance structure (appendix 1).

All theme groups include representatives from Oxfordshire Parent Carer Forum and partners.

The theme groups report monthly to the Partnership Delivery Group (PDG) and the SEND Improvement and Assurance Board (SIAB), providing assurance on progress, risks and impact.

Progress is reviewed through reporting against SMART key performance indicators (KPIs), alongside qualitative feedback from children, young people, parent carers and practitioners, ensuring clear feedback loops that inform continuous learning, adjustment and improvement over time.

SEND Improvement Plan

The commitments set the direction and expectations for the SEND system. Delivery will be driven through Oxfordshire's SEND improvement journey, which translate the commitments into clear actions, milestones and measures

This sets out:

- What will be different in practice
- When we get this right, it looks like
- How we will know

This approach ensures the strategy remains outcome focused and practical, while allowing detailed actions to be updated over time without rewriting the strategy itself. Detailed SEND improvement metrics, baselines and KPIs are reported separately.



Theme 1: Inclusion and early intervention

Accessible, inclusive settings and services

Targeted school support

Professional development

Communication, voice of the CYP & working together

Measuring impact to drive continuous improvement



Theme 2: Quality plans and timely processes

Timely assessments and reviews

Quality improvements

Communication, voice of the CYP & working together

Measuring impact to drive continuous improvement



Theme 3: Access to additional support

Specialist provision

Specialist support for settings

Joint commissioning infrastructure

Communication, voice of the CYP & working together

Measuring impact to drive continuous improvement



Theme 4: Preparing for adulthood

Education, employment and training opportunities

Health transitions

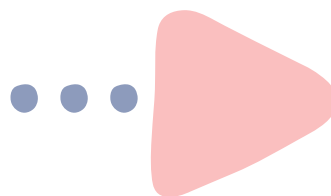
Transitions to adult social care

Communication, voice of the CYP & working together

Measuring impact to drive continuous improvement

Through this strategy, the Oxfordshire LAP commits to working openly with children, young people, families and partners to deliver sustained improvement, measure what matters, and continually learn and adapt to achieve better outcomes for all children and young people with SEND.

The LAP will work together according to the principles laid out in our Memorandum of Understanding.



Looking ahead

This SEND Strategy demonstrates our shared aim of improving outcomes for children and young people in Oxfordshire with SEND. It sets out a shared direction for Oxfordshire's SEND system, aligned to national reform, grounded in local learning and supported by clear delivery through the improvement journey, with children and young people at the heart of this.

By building on our strengths, addressing known challenges and remaining flexible to future reform, Oxfordshire is committed to improving experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND, now and into the future.

Appendix

LAP Governance

