

# UPDATE ON SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY (SEND) AND ALTERNATIVE PROVISION (AP) STRATEGY 2023-2028 - MARCH 2026

<b>Committee name</b>	Children, Families & Education Select Committee
<b>Officer reporting</b>	Abi Preston – Director of Education & SEND Dominika Michalik – Assistant Director of SEND & Inclusion Kathryn Angelini – Assistant Director for Education
<b>Papers with report</b>	<b>Appendix A</b> – Hillingdon Local Area SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy for Children and Young People 0-25 years 2023 - 2028 Strategy <b>Appendix B</b> – The Hillingdon SEND Local Area Partnership Improvement Plan <b>Appendix C</b> – SEPB Highlight Report January 2026
<b>Ward</b>	All

## HEADLINES

The purpose of the report is to provide the Select Committee for Children, Families and Education with an update on Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Strategy 2023-2028 which has been published three years ago.

The strategy sets out how Hillingdon Local Area Partnership continues to develop and strengthen the local SEND and AP offer over the five-year period, delivering our shared vision for Hillingdon to be a place where children and young people with SEND and those accessing Alternative Provision, and their families, are supported to lead happy and fulfilled lives from early years through adolescence into adulthood, within communities that understand and include them.

## RECOMMENDATION

**That the Select Committee notes the update.**

## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### Background information

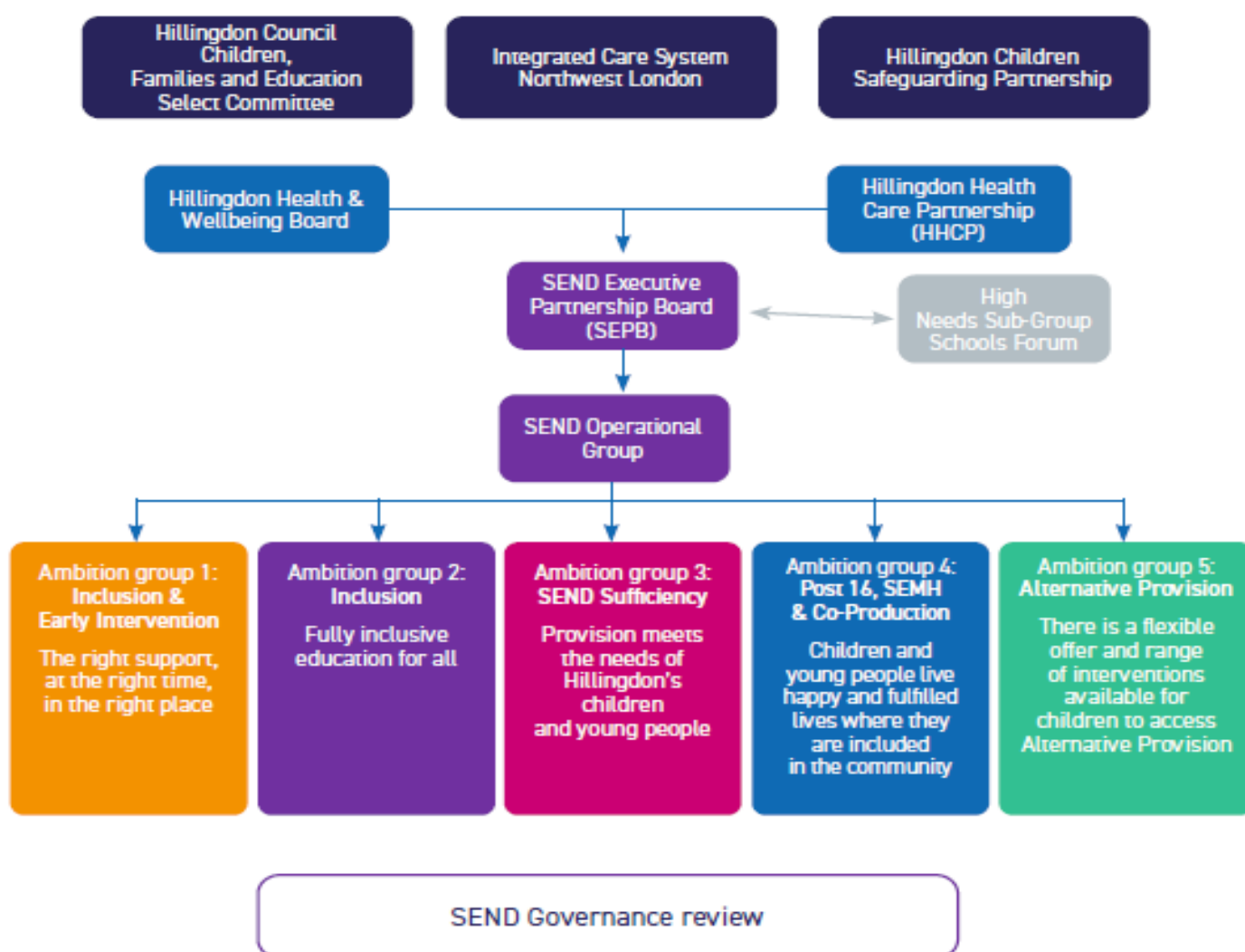
[The Hillingdon SEND and Alternative Provision \(AP\) Strategy 2023–2028](#), launched in December 2023, is now in its third year of implementation and continues to provide the overarching framework for SEND improvement across the local area. The Strategy was coproduced with children and young people, families, schools, the Hillingdon Parent Carer Forum (HPCF), health partners (ICB), voluntary and community organisations, and the Local Authority, reflecting a shared commitment to inclusive practice and improved outcomes.

The vision remains for Hillingdon to be a place where children and young people with SEND and those who access Alternative Provision are supported to lead happy, fulfilled lives in inclusive communities, with the right support provided at the right time and in the right place. The Strategy also supported in the last three years the borough's wider responsibilities, including delivery of the

DSG Safety Valve Agreement, by strengthening early intervention, improving mainstream inclusion and ensuring a more sustainable SEND system.

### SEND & AP Strategy Governance

Governance arrangements for the SEND & AP Strategy are well established and embedded. Delivery is structured around multi-agency Ambition Groups aligned to the Strategy’s five ambitions, supported by dedicated project working groups responsible for driving specific areas of delivery. Clear oversight and challenge are provided through the SEND Operational Group (SOG), with strategic leadership and accountability resting with the SEND Executive Partnership Board (SEPB). This governance model is operating effectively and provides clear lines of responsibility, escalation and assurance. It enables partners to monitor progress of each ambition, address risks and ensure that improvement activity remains focused on outcomes for children and young people. Recent SEPB Highlight Reports, including January 2026, confirm that delivery remains on track, with actions progressing as planned and strong evidence of collaborative system leadership.



Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission undertook a joint inspection of Hillingdon’s Local Area Partnership between 29 April and 3 May 2024. The inspection identified inconsistencies in experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND; however, inspectors also highlighted the partnership’s robust self-evaluation, high ambition and strong multiagency working. Importantly, the inspection recognised that the SEND and AP Strategy had been developed and launched shortly before the inspection and that its priorities were closely aligned with the areas for

improvement identified. This provided a strong and credible foundation for post inspection improvement planning.

The inspection identified four key areas for improvement, relating to:

- Strengthening multi-agency quality assurance of EHCPs and annual reviews
- Improving information sharing and the use of data across the partnership
- Further developing workforce confidence and capability across education, health and social care
- Improving Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) outcomes

These priorities are directly reflected within the Strategy's ambitions and workstreams and are now being taken forward through structured improvement activity.

### Improvement Plan and Ongoing Progress

Following the inspection, the partnership published the Hillingdon Local Area SEND & AP Partnership Improvement Plan 2024–2028 in November 2024. The Improvement Plan operationalises the Strategy, setting out clear actions, milestones and success measures while maintaining the original strategic ambitions.

Implementation continues through existing governance arrangements, with Ambition Groups, project working groups, SOG and SEPB collectively ensuring oversight, pace and accountability. The alignment between the Strategy, the Improvement Plan and national SEND reform provides a coherent and resilient framework for sustained improvement.

### Alignment with the National SEND White Paper (2026)

Hillingdon's SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Strategy is closely aligned with the Government's Schools White Paper: [\*Every Child Achieving and Thriving \(February 2026\)\*](#) and the emerging SEND reform proposals. This alignment is reflected not just in ambition but in delivery, as evidenced through the actions and progress set out in the SEND & AP Partnership Improvement Plan and routinely monitored through the SEND Executive Partnership Board (SEPB).

A central theme of the White Paper is earlier identification and timely intervention, particularly in the early years. In Hillingdon, this is being actively progressed through SEPB reported actions including the strengthening of early years SEND pathways, the rollout of the Early Identification Toolkit via LEAP and the Local Offer, and a clearer graduated response supported by SEND reviews and pre-statutory support pathways. These measures are designed to ensure children receive support at the earliest opportunity, reducing escalation and improving long term outcomes.

The White Paper's focus on inclusive mainstream education strongly aligns with Ambition 2 of Hillingdon's SEND & AP Strategy and is a consistent priority within SEPB oversight. Local actions include the development of clearer Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) guidance, the Inclusion Consistency Framework, peer support and challenge through the Inclusion Network, and targeted workforce development. Together, these actions support schools and settings to take greater ownership of inclusion and deliver more consistent practice across the borough.

National reform also seeks to reduce overreliance on EHCPs by strengthening universal and targeted support. In Hillingdon, SEPB has overseen a programme of activity including expanded SEND reviews, early intervention funding, outreach offer development, bespoke advisory and training models, and a strengthened SEN Support offer through PINS Pilot Programme, OAP Workshops, Language Link offer and CAAS (Centre for ADHD and Autism) Transition Support

Project. These actions aim to meet needs earlier and more effectively, reducing unnecessary escalation to statutory processes while maintaining confidence in decision-making.

Improving system navigation and transparency for families is another key feature of the White Paper. Locally, this is being addressed through the redevelopment of the Local Offer (HELLO – Hillingdon Empowering Lives Local Offer), coproduced guidance documents and health directory as well as the continued role of Parent Carer Forum involvement in all Ambition Groups work. These improvements, reported through SEPB, are intended to provide clearer, more accessible information and improve families' experience of the SEND system.

Workforce capability across education, health and social care is a further shared priority. SEPB reported actions include the expansion of the partnership training offer, the Inclusion Network, and strengthened educational psychology and therapy pathways, supporting a more confident and skilled workforce across the local area.

Preparation for adulthood and improved Post 16 outcomes also align closely with both national reform and Ambition 4 of the local strategy. Progress reported to SEPB includes strengthened Preparation for Adulthood pathways, high number of supported internships, improved transitions planning, and continued coproduction with young people to ensure their voices shape services and support.

Finally, the White Paper's emphasis on financial sustainability and system efficiency aligns with Hillingdon's DSG Safety Valve commitments delivery. SEPB continues to oversee key actions including sufficiency planning, reform of the banding framework, expansion of local provision, and a sustained focus on reducing reliance on high-cost independent non-maintained specialist placements, ensuring that improvements to inclusion and outcomes are delivered within a sustainable local system.

Overall, the SEND & AP Strategy, underpinned by effective multiagency governance and strong partnership leadership, provides a robust response to inspection findings and national reform, with demonstrable progress in improving systems, practice and outcomes for children and young people with SEND in Hillingdon.

## **Strategy Implementation through Ambition Groups**

The five ambitions outlined in our SEND and AP Strategy 2023-2028 focus on the delivery of local area services for children and young people with SEND and their families are:

- **The right support, at the right time, in the right place**

We will improve children's and parents' experience of the SEND system by delivering the right support in the right place at the right time.

- **Fully inclusive education for all**

We will support all schools and settings in Hillingdon to be inclusive and welcome children and young people with SEND.

- **Provision meets the needs of Hillingdon's children and young people**

We will deliver a new, ambitious, and innovative provision that enables children and young people with SEND to receive excellent education in their local community.

- **Children and young people live happy and fulfilled lives where they are included in the community**

We will enable all children and young people to achieve independence, take part in activities they want to be part of, build good relationships and have meaningful outcomes in adulthood.

- **There is a flexible offer and range of interventions available for children to access alternative provision**

We will create a 3-tiered model for alternative provision that offers flexible interventions and supports children back into mainstream where possible.

## **Ambition 1 - The right support, at the right time, in the right place**

### Objective 1: Review and refine early intervention offer

- Early Identification Toolkit completed, published on LEAP website for schools and the HELLO Local Offer, with training developed alongside the My Support Plan -positive feedback.
- Support Information Guidance for families awaiting neurodiverse assessments co-produced with PCF input, commissioned via Family Hubs and Children’s Centres, with QR code access through the Local Offer and sharing at first CDC contact.
- Parent information events delivered (second event took place January 2026) with high engagement and multiagency input, responding directly to parent survey. Feedback comments included:
  - *“The event was excellent. I learned about services I didn’t know existed and will keep attending to find the right support for my daughter.”*,
  - *“Very good presentations. Everything was clear and easy to understand.”*,
  - *“The event was very useful in helping me understand how to access services for my son’s needs.”*,
  - *“I really appreciated the event, learned a lot, and will attend future events.”*,
  - *“The information provided was relevant to my enquiry.”*
- Strong progress has been made with PINS 2 project moving from development into commissioning and delivery, informed by shared materials and joint work with four partner boroughs.

### Objective 2: Review and refine approaches to early identification, assessment and reviewing of EHCPs

- QA Framework for EHCPs in final draft stage, developed through co-production, with robust templates in place and monthly audit cycles using Invision 360.
- New Annual Review templates co-produced with schools, families and young people and moving into implementation.
- SEND EHC Team workforce strengthened, including recruitment of additional Annual Review Coordinators and EHC Coordinators as well as Data Information Management Officer and additional Resolution Officer.
- EYES system being implemented, supporting improved data capture and monitoring for SAS and EPS as well as other educational teams.
- Improved processes for early years tracking and health notifications, reducing risk of children falling through the net (robust monthly EY Tracking Panel in place).

### Objective 3: Develop clear pathways for support and promote inclusive practice

- Inclusion Network (formerly SENCO Forum) redesigned and embedded, with consistently positive feedback and increased peer mentoring. Inclusion Network sessions fully co-produced and themed in response to school feedback.

- SEND Reviews and revisits expanded, with more schools participating and progress towards increased coverage.
- *Waiting Well* pathways implemented, supported by the Care and Support Directory from health now live on the Local Offer.
- Data sharing and dashboards progressed, including SEPB dashboard being in final draft stage and improved monitoring of statutory processes.

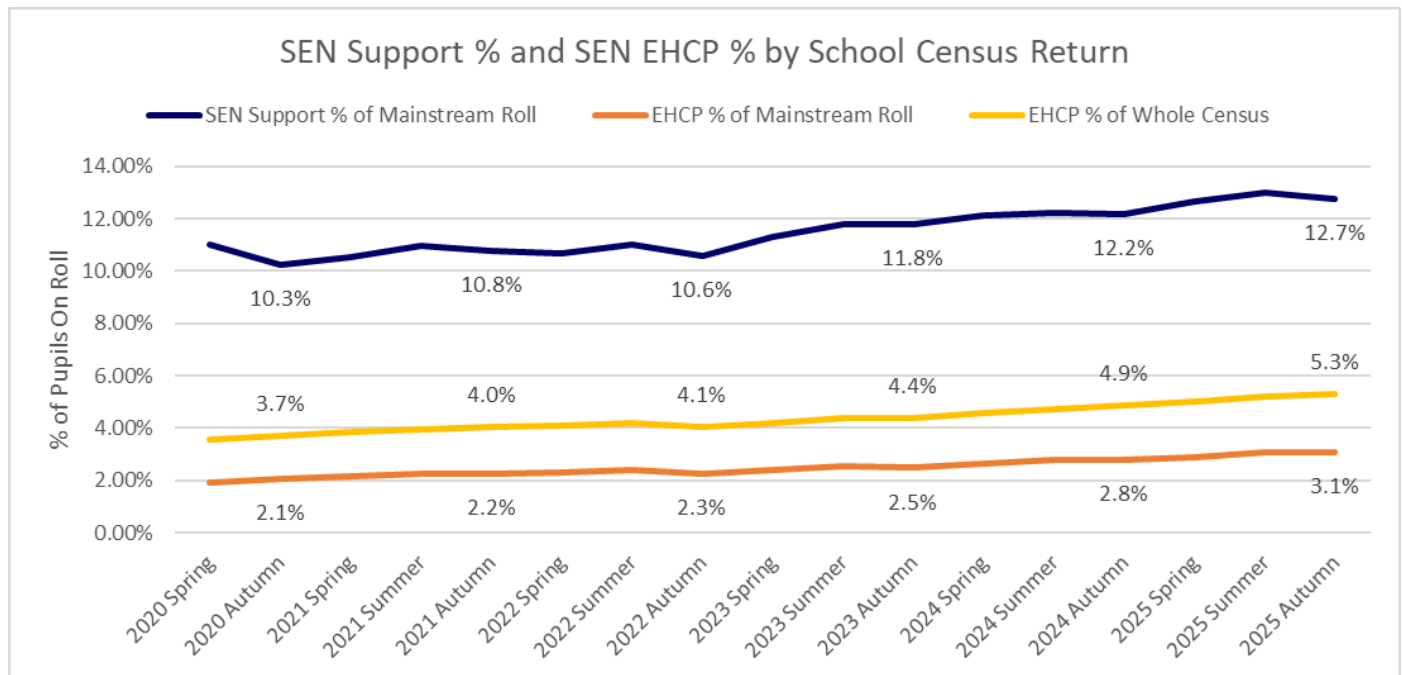
**Objective 4: Develop new collaborative agreement for Children’s Integrated Therapies**

- CITS collaborative agreement signed and in operation, with ongoing monitoring and joint problem-solving around delivery challenges (therapist shortages).

**Objective 5: Improve outcomes for children with EHCPs and SEND Support.**

- EHCP outcomes tracking configured in EHM database (met / partially met / not met).
- My Support Plan for CYP on SEN Support reviewed and finalised collaboratively with settings to ensure it is fit for purpose.

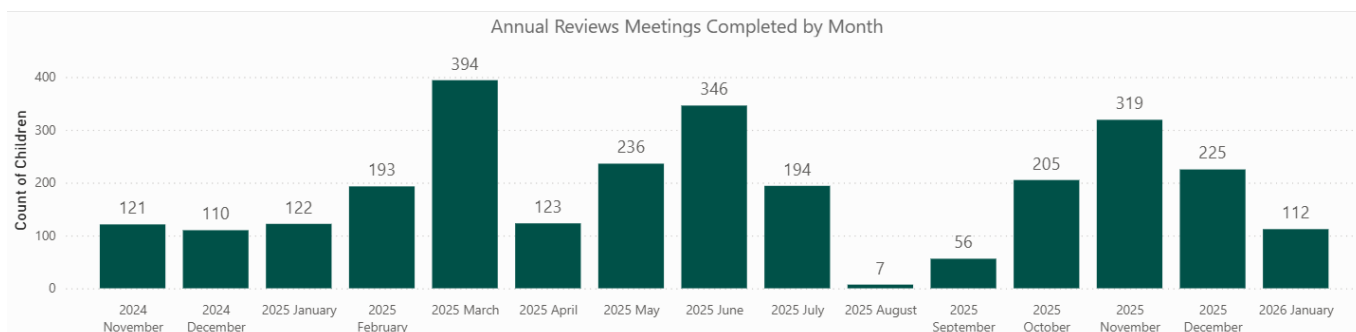
*Graph 3. SEN Support % and Sen EHCP Support % by Census Return*



Children with SEND Support and EHCPs in mainstream have increased term on term since we launched the strategy. In Autumn 2024, 12.2% of our children and young people in mainstream settings were receiving SEND Support, and 2.8% of our children and young people in mainstream settings were in receipt of an EHCP. In Autumn 2025, 12.7% were in receipt of SEND Support (national – 14.2%), up by 0.5%, and 3.1% were in receipt of an EHCP in mainstream schools, up by 0.3%. This evidences that more children and young people on SEN Support and with EHCPs are being educated in mainstream schools. There is still a significant difference between primary and secondary SEND children attending mainstream schools across the borough – primary children with EHCPs are currently at 3.3% (national – 3.5%) and secondary is 2.7% (national – 3.1%).

*Changes in SEND Support and EHCP levels in mainstream schools (based on Autumn census data for each year):*

	2022-23		2023-24		2024-25		2025-26	
	SEN Support	SEN EHCP	SEN Support	SEN EHCP	SEN Support	SEN EHCP	SEN Support	SEN EHCP
<b>Primary Phase</b>	11.8%	2.4%	13.0%	2.6%	13.4%	3.0%	14.1%	3.4%
<b>Secondary Phase</b>	9.1%	2.2%	10.3%	2.3%	10.7%	2.5%	11.4%	2.7%
<b>All Through</b>	7.5%	1.5%	7.8%	1.9%	8.4%	2.2%	7.6%	2.5%
<b>Mainstream Total</b>	10.6%	2.3%	11.8%	2.5%	12.2%	2.8%	12.7%	3.1%



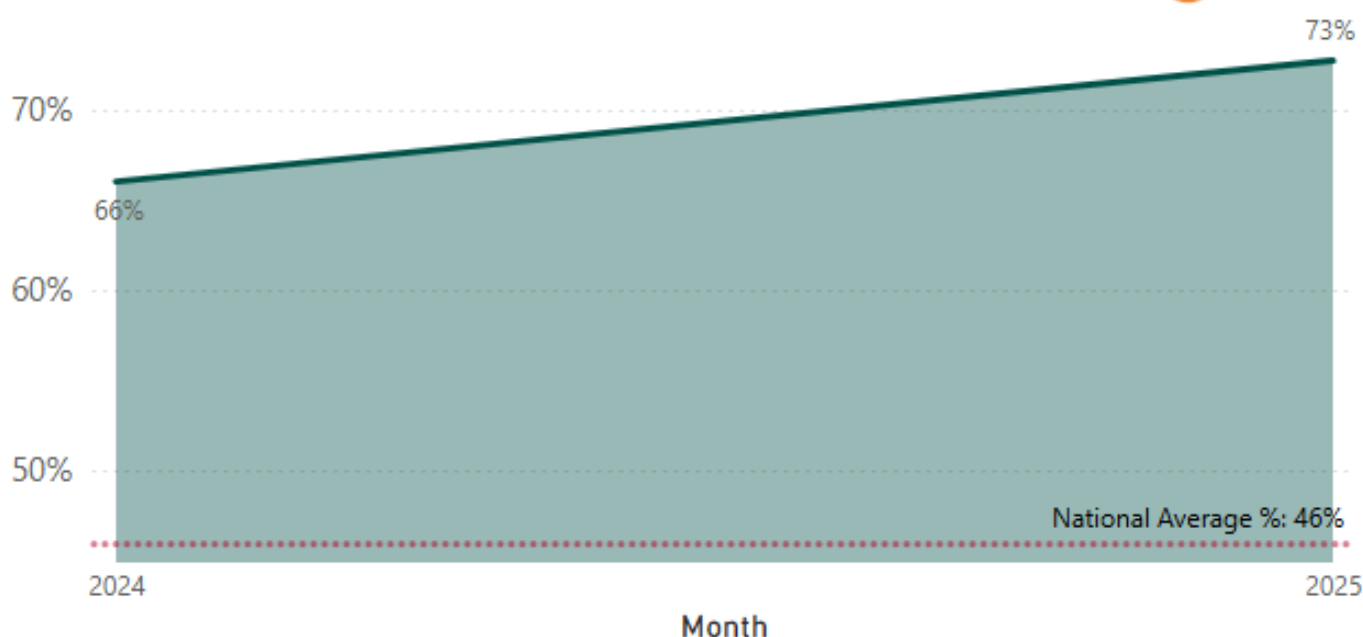
(Source - Annual Review v2. PBI report)

### 20-week timeframe:

Following a refinement in methodology to closely align to SEN2 methodology, by excluding cases subject to mediation and tribunals, Hillingdon has demonstrated continued improvement in timeliness. 20-week performance increased from 66% in Calendar Year 2024 to 73% in 2025 for new EHCPs issued within 20 weeks. Hillingdon continues to perform significantly above the national average, where only 46.4% of new EHCPs were issued within 20 weeks in calendar year 2024.

This positive position has been maintained despite a 9% increase in new assessment requests from last year and ongoing staffing challenges arising from vacancies, alongside a robust managerial approach to spend that has limited the use of agency cover.

### % 20 week compliance for finalised EHCPs (incl exeptions)



## Objective 6: Develop training opportunities across the partnership

- Partnership training programme developed and rolling out, including OAP training, SEND finance workshops and EHCP/Annual Review processes. SAS and EPS training offer for schools refreshed, aligned to outcomes, banding and inclusive practice.
- Designated Social Care Officer has been in post since October 2025 and working across agencies to support SEND social care function as well as developing the training offer across various social care teams, educational teams and educational settings.

## **Ambition 2 - Fully inclusive education for all**

### Objective 1: Promote Hillingdon's approach to inclusion, including increasing uptake of SEND Reviews

Hillingdon continues to promote a strong, systemwide approach to inclusion through the SEND Advisory Service (SAS), supporting schools to strengthen early identification and inclusive practice. The SEND Advisory Team works closely with schools to deliver SEND Reviews and the Inclusion Commitment programme, enabling settings to reflect on their SEND practice, identify areas for development, and implement timely, needs led support at SEND Support level.

In line with the ambition focused on early intervention and reducing escalation to statutory processes, the Council is actively increasing the number of schools undertaking SEND Reviews, to an additional 12 schools. Schools proactively engaged through their linked SEND Advisor and Education Improvement colleagues, with targeted recommendations provided to support improvement.

Schools that have completed SEND Reviews are encouraged to share learning and best practice through peer mentoring, the Inclusion Network, and wider partnership forums. This peer led model supports consistency, shared ownership, and collective improvement across the system.

In addition, SAS training offer includes bespoke whole school training tailored to a setting's identified needs, alongside universal training offers linked to ordinarily available provision and inclusive practice.

The impact of SEND Reviews and associated training is monitored throughout the year, ensuring continuous improvement and alignment with SEND & AP Strategy ambitions for inclusive, sustainable practice.

#### SEND Reviews:

<b>April 2024 – March 2025 School SEND Reviews completed</b>	
Primary	11
Secondary	1

#### **Top 3 next steps themes:**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>%</b>
OAP/QFT/Adaptive Teaching	88%
Co-production with parent/carers	50%
Meta-cognitive strategies	25%

### Progression towards next steps:

0 = None 1 = Partial progress 2 = completed

- At the start of the SEND Review, schools scored an average of 0.16 out of 2
- At the midterm review settings scored an average of 1.21 out of 2
- At the one-year review settings scored an average of 1.4 out of 2.

This indicates that SEND reviews are supporting the identification of school development needs and ensuring attention is directed towards making changes, thus resulting in positive progress scores.

Data from 2024/25 shows that the services continue to have a positive impact. 44 permanent exclusions were issued, of which 11 were rescinded, leaving 33 upheld. This is the lowest number ever recorded in Hillingdon since 2017/18, including during the pandemic year. Of the upheld exclusions, 12 involved pupils with SEND (36%). Although this is a slight increase from the 11 SEND exclusions recorded in 2023/24, it remains broadly in line with the overall downward trend seen over recent years.

Among the 12 pupils with SEND excluded in 2024/25, one had an EHCP and one was undergoing an EHC Needs Assessment (EHCNA), mirroring the profile seen in 2023/24, when one pupil with an EHCP was excluded. Improved multidisciplinary working continues to help prevent exclusions through earlier and more coordinated intervention.

However, limited alternative provision especially for primary aged children remains a significant challenge, restricting early preventative options at a time when primary exclusions are rising locally and nationally. Work is under way to expand access to high-quality alternative provision, particularly for younger pupils, supported by enhanced trauma-informed practice and targeted interventions to help children remain successfully in mainstream settings.

### Objective 2: Improve functionality of the Local Offer

The Hillingdon Empowering Lives Local Offer (HELLO) was fully rebranded and launched in September 2025 following co-production with young people and their families as well as with professionals, creating a clearer, more accessible single point of information for children, young people, families and professionals.

An evaluation and improvement plan for the Local Offer is in place, informed by Parent Carer Forum and Young People's feedback, which has been published and shared publicly. A Local Offer steering group has been established to oversee continuous improvement and ensure regular updates to content.

All key guidance documents (including Ordinarily Available Provision, banding related guidance and inclusion resources) have been reviewed, branded and published on both HELLO and LEAP website for schools, improving consistency and ease of access for settings.

### Objective 3: Support and empower settings to play their part in a fully inclusive system

An Inclusion Consistency Framework is being co-produced with schools to establish a shared understanding of inclusive practice across Hillingdon. This is supported by a suite of aligned initiatives rather than a single intervention.

Key inclusion projects under this objective include:

- Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance- (EBSNA) Response and Outreach Service

(EROS) pilot following successful LIIA grant funding (£25,000). The initiative focuses on early psychological insight, outreach consultation, and capacity building within mainstream education, with the aim of sustaining engagement in school and preventing escalation into more specialist provision. The EBSNA and attendance workstream links closely with AP and early intervention activity, supporting earlier, more coordinated responses to prevent escalation to exclusion or specialist placement.

- Parttime timetables protocol, implemented to promote lawful, time limited use with clear reintegration expectations
- Adaptive Teaching Framework is being coproduced supporting schools to strengthen inclusive classroom practice and mainstream teaching.
- Accessibility Strategy, under development to clarify expectations on reasonable adjustments and access across the local area.
- A self-evaluation and QA tool aligned to the new Ofsted framework is being developed to support schools in evidencing inclusive practice and identifying areas for improvement.
- Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) guidance and checklists have been fully reviewed, updated and published, with training workshops taking place to support consistent implementation across schools and partners.

#### Objective 4: Review and refine support for SEND children with transitions, attendance, exclusions and vulnerable groups

The CAAS Transition Pilot supporting pupils with ADHD/ASD transferring to mainstream secondary schools has been extended for a further year and expanded to every Hillingdon secondary mainstream schools, reflecting positive early impact on inclusion and transition stability. This should support families and children to feel more confidence in their transition to a local secondary school as specialist support will be available before and after the transition for children with ADHD and ASD.

Fair share arrangements continue to be used during phase transfer to support inclusive placements in line with parental preference, alongside direct engagement with mainstream schools to challenge and support consultation responses and identify training needs.

Annual Review guidance has been reviewed in response to stakeholder feedback and will be aligned further with SEND reforms. The updated templates for Annual Review have been coproduced with schools and all agencies and moving towards republication.

SEND Youth Forum (Aim High) contributes directly to this ambition through participation in projects such as Dragon SEND, SEND version of *Walking in Our Shoes* Training ensuring young people's experiences inform inclusion, transition and attendance work.

This year Ambition 2 has moved from policy and guidance development into system-wide implementation, with a strong emphasis on consistency, inclusion and prevention.

The focus is on equipping mainstream settings with clear expectations, practical tools and ongoing support, while embedding co-production and young people's voice across all strands of work.

### **Ambition 3 - Provision meets the needs of Hillingdon's children and young people**

#### Objective 1: Review SEND funding approach

- The mainstream banded funding framework has been implemented, with learning from early delivery incorporated into updated guidance, now published on LEAP and the HELLO Local Offer.
- A structured process to convert existing EHCPs to the new banding framework is being completed, ensuring consistency and equity across cohorts.
- The Special Schools Banded Funding Framework has been fully implemented, with:
  - All pupils allocated a band under the new descriptors.
  - Termly moderation panels established with special schools to consider new admissions, changes in need and in year adjustments.
- Early Support Funding (ESF) and SEN Inclusion Funding (SENIF) methodologies have been coproduced with settings, finalised and published, aligning pre-statutory funding with the wider banding model. Following Schools Forum consultation and the Minister's decision on Schools Block transfer for the new financial year 26/27 the ESF funding has been paused however the Local Authority is committed to inclusive practice, early identification, and meeting all statutory SEND duties, and continuing to work with schools on longer-term solutions while awaiting SEND reform details.
- In-year adjustment processes are operational, providing a clearer, more transparent route to respond to changing need.
- Funding decisions are now clearer, more consistent and transparent, supporting confidence across mainstream and special settings.
- Alignment between SEN Inclusion Funding and EHCP funding strengthens early intervention and sustainability.

#### Objective 2: Develop new SRPs, Designated Units and assessment provision with appropriate quality assurance

- The SRP/DU Quality Assurance pilot has concluded and informed the implementation of a co-produced QA model across SRPs and Designated Units.
- QA templates and review documentation have been updated to reflect the new banding framework and feedback from the pilot.
- A new SRP/DU network group has been established, providing:
  - Peer support between provisions,
  - A forum to share practice,
  - Ongoing quality assurance oversight.
- Audit activity has commenced, with:
  - One SRP/DU audit completed,
  - Further audits scheduled for Summer Term 2026 to ensure consistency across settings.
- Admission guidance for SRPs, DUs and special schools has been extensively coproduced and is nearing publication, with final amendments following engagement with schools. There is now a clear QA infrastructure in place to ensure specialist provision is consistent, accountable and aligned to local expectations. Improved confidence that specialist places are being used appropriately and effectively.

#### Objective 3: Create additional places in local special school provision

- Pinn River School opened in January 2026, providing additional local special school capacity and supporting children to be educated closer to home.
- Meadow High satellite provision is under construction, with completion scheduled for August 2026.
- Progress continues on specialist FE provision, including developments at the Barra Hall HRUC campus, with opening planned for Summer 2026.
- The SEND Sufficiency Strategy has been published, providing a clear, evidence-based framework for future place planning and investment.

- Ongoing development of the SEND Power BI dashboard, enabling improved reporting on:
  - Cohorts and trends,
  - Refusals to assess and outcomes of mediation/appeals,
  - Placement types, age and primary need.
- Increased local capacity reduces reliance on independent non- maintained provision.
- Strategic planning is now underpinned by live data and forward-looking sufficiency analysis.

#### Objective 4: Develop a SEND school outreach offer

- Outreach and in reach models from SRPs and specialist settings to mainstream schools have been initiated.
- Outreach has been embedded as a standing agenda item within the SRP/DU network, ensuring it develops consistently.
- The Local Authority is working with special schools to develop more established Outreach offer to all schools to provide support, expert advice and guidance.
- Early evidence of specialist expertise being used preventatively, supporting mainstream schools to meet needs and reduce escalation.

The Centre for ADHD and Autism Support (CAAS) Transition Project is a targeted, borough-wide initiative led by the Centre for ADHD and Autism Support to support children and young people with ASD and ADHD who have EHCPs as they move from primary into mainstream secondary education. The project provides early, structured and proactive transition support to reduce anxiety, prevent placement breakdowns and help pupils remain successfully engaged in mainstream settings during a known point of vulnerability. Building on evidence from an initial successful pilot, the expanded programme now works across all Hillingdon secondary schools, strengthening mainstream capacity, promoting placement stability and contributing to wider SEND and inclusion priorities set out in the SEND and AP Strategy.

## **Ambition 4 - Children and young people live happy and fulfilled lives where they are included in the community**

#### Objective 1: Develop further opportunities for children with SEND to take part in clubs and activities

The Care and Support Directory has been completed and launched, providing a single, accessible source of information on SEND related activities, services and community support. SEND Youth Forum (Aim High) is actively contributing to identifying gaps in activities and shaping priorities, ensuring opportunities reflect the lived experience of children and young people. Activities and services are now being regularly updated on the Local Offer, improving visibility and participation.

Engagement with young people has included direct dialogue with senior leaders, allowing CYP to share experiences, successes and barriers relating to participation, education and employment. Children and young people have improved access to information and opportunities, with their voices directly influencing what is developed and promoted. Community participation is increasingly shaped by coproduction rather than service led design.

#### Objective 2: Development of Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) outcomes

The Preparation for Adulthood Strategy is being developed working with young people on accessible version, coproduced with the Aim High Youth Forum.

PfA has been embedded into revised Annual Review templates, ensuring consistent focus on adulthood outcomes from Year 9 onwards.

Multi-professional co-production workshops (November–December 2025) have shaped PfA content within EHCP processes.

The Transition Panel has been reviewed, involving a Transition Nurse, strengthening multiagency representation and improving operational pathways for young people approaching adulthood. Young people’s aspirations are increasingly central to planning, review and transition decisions.

### Objective 3: Further develop post-16 pathways, employment and supported internships

Based on the latest DfE NEET by characteristics data, 6.5% of all young people with an EHCP in Hillingdon are recorded as NEET. This is 21% reduction from the last year.

The Supported Employment Forum (SEF) and Supported Internship (SI) work continue to function very effectively, with promising initiatives. Opportunities have been created through collaborative efforts to support further pathways. The SEF has benefitted from increased representation from businesses, health and several new schools. The forum has regularly more than 35 representatives meeting in person with the aim of ensuring improved pathways to employment for young people with SEND. As a result, the borough now has 6 large businesses hosting a supported internship/ Project SEARCH with capacity for at least 50 young people for the upcoming academic year 2026/2027 and recruitment is underway. For academic year 2024/2025 approximately 45% of Hillingdon young people achieved paid employment following their SI/ Project SEARCH programme. As a result of Hillingdon’s success in delivering Supported Internships, the LA was approached by the DfE to deliver on their behalf a supported internship pilot for young people of Hillingdon with SEN who do not hold an EHCP. This pilot is funded in full by the DfE with no cost to the local authority and it is hoped to continue into 2026/2027. Once the DfE complete their evaluation of the pilot programme, findings will be shared.

The Pathways Guide has been co- reviewed by Project SEARCH interns to ensure it reflects lived experience and has now been published on the HELLO Local Offer.

Careers related activity includes:

- Careers Leads Network established and meeting termly.
- Training delivered to Careers Leads and SENCOS focused on CEIAG for SEND learners.
- Supported internship delivery and outcomes are being monitored and evaluated, including through independent research.

This resulted in:

- Post16 pathways are more diverse, inclusive and employment focused.
- Young people without EHCPs now have new routes into supported employment, addressing a previously unmet need.

### Objective 4: Regularly gather feedback from SEND children and embed co-production

SEND Youth Forum (Aim High) is established and embedded within local area SEND governance. Young people have contributed to:

- PfA strategy development,
- SEND training (e.g. “Walk in Our Shoes”),
- Autism strategy consultation materials.

A Co-production Charter has been developed and formally launched at the Inclusion Conference (March 2026). Mechanisms are being developed to evidence and evaluate co-production across services. CYP voice is increasingly embedded in governance, strategy and service design, not

limited to consultation. Co-production is moving towards systematic monitoring and accountability.

### Objective 5: Improve support for children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs

EBSNA Protocol is being developed and expanded through the EROS (EBSNA Response and Outreach Service) following successful LIA funding (£25,000). EROS is a multiagency, early intervention outreach model that supports children and young people experiencing emotionally based school nonattendance by strengthening schools' existing inclusive practice. Through early psychological input, consultation, training, and family support, it helps prevent escalation into specialist provision, sustain engagement in mainstream education, and promote coordinated, preventative responses across the system.

EROS pilot launched, with:

- Dedicated induction period
- Joint training with partner services (e.g. P3),
- Strong collaboration between education and health.

SEMH Educational Psychologist appointed to the EHCP Plus Team (since January 2026). Thrive Directory development progressing, improving clarity of SEMH pathways.

Initial multi-agency "Pathways in Place" meetings held, producing actionable next steps for individual CYP.

SEMH support is shifting towards earlier, coordinated intervention, particularly for EBSNA.

The Local Area Partnership is working to develop support system to ensure that schools have clearer pathways and specialist support for complex SEMH needs.

## **Ambition 5 - There is a flexible offer and range of interventions available for children to access alternative provision**

### Objective1: Create a three-tier alternative provision system

Development of the three- tier alternative provision (AP) model is ongoing, with different components progressing at varying stages. Time- limited AP is developing steadily and is beginning to be used more consistently across the local area. Other aspects of the model, including early intervention and targeted support in schools, are less developed and will require sustained focus to achieve the intended level of consistency and impact. Work is also ongoing to clarify expectations and processes for transitional and longer- term AP placements, recognising that these pathways are not yet fully defined.

Work to establish a central AP Hub within LEAP is also progressing and is intended to support implementation as the model develops. The Hub will provide a single point of access for schools and professionals, bringing together referral routes, guidance, case studies and training materials. Its purpose is to improve understanding of available provision and to support schools in navigating the system more consistently as the AP offer becomes more clearly established.

Progress on the AP infographic and visual guide has resulted in a draft set of materials designed to provide an accessible overview of the emerging AP system. These resources are intended to support greater clarity around expectations, thresholds and pathways once they are finalised. Further refinement is planned to ensure they align with the developing model and input will continue to be sought from partners as the system evolves so that the guidance is effective and fit for purpose.

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Children, Families & Education Select Committee – 14 April 2026

Part I – Public

Vulnerable Learners Clinics (VLCs) are now operating as an early intervention mechanism, with participation from schools continuing to increase. The clinics provide structured, multidisciplinary problem-solving at an earlier stage, helping to identify needs before they escalate. Continued monitoring of their impact will support further refinement as part of the wider AP and early intervention approach.

As these developments progress, schools are beginning to access clearer and more appropriate routes into AP. This is supporting a shift towards earlier intervention and more purposeful use of AP as a short-term, targeted support mechanism, rather than as a default or longer-term placement. Further work is required to embed this consistently, but early signs indicate movement in the intended direction.

A clear, three-tier alternative provision (AP) model has been defined and is now being embedded consistently across the local area. This model sets out graduated pathways of support, ensuring that children and young people are matched to the most appropriate provision at the earliest possible point, based on need and risk.

### Objective 2: Reduce exclusions and suspensions

Updated exclusions and suspensions guidance has been published and made accessible via LEAP, ensuring schools have clear, consistent advice aligned with statutory guidance and local expectations. This has supported greater confidence and consistency in decision-making across the system.

Schools are increasingly making use of preventative support offers, including Vulnerable Learners Clinics, commissioned alternative provision and trauma-informed approaches, to reduce the need for suspensions and permanent exclusions. These approaches focus on addressing underlying need and behaviour proactively, rather than responding only at crisis point.

Exclusion numbers have continued to reduce, with evidence that schools are seeking advice and support earlier. Practice is shifting away from reactive exclusion towards earlier, planned and supported intervention. As a result, children, particularly those with SEND, are increasingly being retained in education with appropriate support in place.

### Objective 3: Increase reintegration into mainstream education

A Team Around the Child (TAC) framework to support reintegration into mainstream education is being developed, providing a structured, multi-agency approach to planning and oversight. This framework supports shared accountability and coordinated support around individual pupils.

Reintegration planning is now a core expectation within AP placements and is embedded within commissioning arrangements. Providers are expected to work actively with schools and professionals to plan for return to mainstream education wherever appropriate, rather than reintegration being treated as an informal or secondary consideration.

Recruitment of Stronger Schools Officers strengthens capacity to deliver reintegration work, ensuring sufficient resource and expertise to support pupils, families and schools through transition back into mainstream settings.

As a result, reintegration is becoming more planned, structured and outcome focused, rather than incidental.

## Objective 4: Improve commissioning and quality of alternative provision

Commissioning arrangements have strengthened further. The Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) has expanded to 39 approved AP providers, widening the number of high-quality, specialist support available.

Standardised Service Level Agreements (SLAs) are now in place, setting clearer expectations for providers around support planning, progress monitoring and reintegration responsibilities. This has improved consistency and transparency in commissioned provision.

A quality assurance framework for AP providers has been implemented, with further refinement planned. This framework supports ongoing monitoring, improvement and accountability, ensuring that provision meets agreed standards and delivers positive outcomes for children and young people.

Overall, AP commissioning is now more robust, transparent and accountable, with improving quality and consistency across the provider landscape.

## Objective 5: Reduce the number of children requiring tuition

Increased AP capacity has reduced reliance on individual tuition, particularly through the development of new in borough AP offer and the expansion of the DPS provider base. This has enabled more children to access structured provision rather than isolated, short-term tuition.

Providers are working closely with the local authority to develop age-appropriate pathways, including for primary aged children, ensuring that provision is developmentally appropriate and aligned with longer-term educational outcomes.

As a result, more children are accessing purposeful, planned provision with clearer learning and reintegration objectives. AP pathways are increasingly aligned to reintegration into mainstream education and improved long-term outcomes, reducing dependency on tuition as a default response.

## **Challenges**

1. Neurodevelopmental demand and capacity
  - ASD and ADHD waiting times remain the most significant system pressure, with waits of up to three years.
  - This persists despite additional assessments, “Waiting Well” approaches and planned AI diagnostic tools and pathway reforms.
  - Demand continues to exceed capacity, impacting children and families and placing additional pressure on schools to meet needs without timely diagnoses.
2. Mainstream inclusion and placement patterns
  - Reliance on specialist provision remains high, with around 35% of children with EHCPs educated in special schools, above London and national averages.
  - Some mainstream schools report lower confidence in supporting complex SEMH and EBSNA needs, contributing to attendance issues, placement instability and increased parental requests for Alternative Provision.
3. SEMH complexity and workforce development
  - Rising SEMH need, alongside delayed diagnoses and fragmented pathways, places sustained pressure across education, health and social care.

- Delivery of initiatives such as Thrive, EROS and Mental Health Support Workers are constrained by workforce capacity and cross agency availability.
  - Ongoing upskilling and workforce development across education, health and social care remain critical.
4. Data integration and system maturity
- Progress has been made through EYES and local dashboards, improving visibility of trends.
  - Data sharing across the local authority, ICB and providers remains complex, limiting timely insight and system-wide oversight and requiring further coordination and investment.
5. Alternative Provision and reintegration
- Reintegration from Alternative Provision into mainstream remains variable across schools.
  - Capacity constraints, inconsistent practice and parental confidence issues continue to delay reintegration in some cases.
  - Further development of reintegration frameworks and quality assurance for AP providers is planned.

## Summary of achievements

### 1. Strong partnership delivery and embedded co-production

The SEND & AP Partnership Improvement Plan (2024–2028) remains Green, with delivery on track across all five Ambition Groups and strong, visible joint leadership through the SEND Operational Group (SOG). Governance arrangements are well embedded, enabling shared ownership, challenge, and accountability across education, health, social care, and wider partners.

Co-production is now embedded system-wide, extending well beyond strategy development into the operational tools that shape everyday practice. Parents, carers, children and young people, schools, and partners have actively co-designed:

- Annual Review templates,
- Quality assurance frameworks,
- Mainstream and special school banding guidance,
- Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) documents,
- The Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) strategy
- Local Offer content.

The Aim High SEND Youth Forum continues to grow in influence, with young people directly shaping PfA activity, EHCP experience surveys, workforce training content, and broader inclusion initiatives, ensuring lived experience meaningfully informs system improvement.

### 2. Earlier support, clearer pathways and stronger system tools

Significant progress has been made in strengthening early identification and consistency of support. The Early Identification Toolkit is complete and published on both LEAP and HELLO, supported by a developing training programme that has received positive early feedback from schools and settings.

Support for families awaiting neurodevelopmental assessment has improved through the near completion of clear, accessible Support Information and Guidance, coproduced with the Parent

Carer Forum (PCF), commissioned by the ICB, and designed for easy access via QR code at first contact with the Child Development Centre.

SEND reviews and peer support arrangements have expanded, with:

- Increased coverage of SEND reviews across settings, including more revisits and improved consistency of practice.
- Strengthened SENCO peer learning through PINS and Inclusion Network activity.

Quality assurance across EHCP processes has been significantly strengthened. A robust QA framework for draft EHCPs is now embedded, underpinned by monthly audits. New education, health, and social care advice templates have been implemented, including CAMHS and CDC, with social care templates progressing following the DSCO appointment. Co-produced Annual Review templates are ready for implementation.

The EYES system is live, improving data capture, monitoring, and reporting, with further benefits anticipated once the EHCP family portal is implemented.

### 3. Inclusion, mainstream confidence and Local Offer transformation

The refreshed Local Offer, HELLO – Hillingdon Empowering Lives, launched in September 2025 and is now actively managed through a steering group, with continuous improvement driven by Parent Carer Forum feedback and user insight.

The Inclusion Consistency Framework is progressing well, bringing together a coherent set of tools and expectations, including:

- The EBSNA Protocol (now strengthened and expanded through EROS),
- The Adaptive Teaching Framework,
- Part-time timetables protocol,
- Accessibility Strategy, and
- Inclusion self-evaluation aligned to the new Ofsted framework.

Transition support has strengthened, particularly through the extension of the CAAS Transition Pilot to additional secondary schools, the embedding of a fair share approach to mainstream placements, and revised Annual Review and transition guidance to improve planning and continuity.

### 4. Provision sufficiency, funding reform and quality assurance

SEND funding reform has been delivered at pace. New mainstream and special school banding frameworks have been implemented, with all special school pupils re-banded. Termly moderation panels and in year adjustment panels are now embedded, strengthening consistency and financial oversight. ESF and SENIF methodologies have been reviewed and coproduced with settings.

Capital and place planning has progressed well, including the opening of Pinn River School in January 2026, construction underway for the Meadow High satellite site (due August 2026), and approval of secondary SRP expansion alongside further feasibility work. The SEND Sufficiency Strategy has been published and is under active review.

Quality assurance of SRPs and Designated Units has been strengthened through a co-produced QA model, routine audits, and a newly established SRP/DU network, supporting shared learning and consistency across settings.

### 5. Preparation for Adulthood, SEMH and community inclusion

Preparation for Adulthood has moved decisively from concept into ongoing delivery improvement through career pathways aligned to PfA outcomes. Dedicated Local Offer content is in place, the PfA strategy is nearing finalisation, and a young people's version is in development. PfA is now embedded within new Annual Review templates and workforce training offers.

Supported Internships have expanded, building on continued Project SEARCH success and a DfE funded pilot for young people without EHCPs, which is independently evaluated.

SEMH support has been strengthened through the successful launch of EROS (EBSNA Response and Outreach Service) with £25k LiiA funding, recruitment of a dedicated SEMH Educational Psychologist to the EHCP Plus Team, and ongoing development of the Thrive directory alongside Pathways in Place meetings.

## 6. Alternative Provision and exclusion reduction

The Alternative Provision offer has expanded and strengthened, with 39 providers now on the DPS, increasing flexibility and choice for schools. Vulnerable Learners Clinics are increasingly used, supported by improved commissioning arrangements, strengthened SLAs, and a clear QA framework.

Exclusions have reduced year on year, supported by revised exclusions and suspensions guidance, clearer early intervention pathways (including VLCs and TAC), and more effective use of AP to prevent permanent exclusion.

## Next steps

### 1. Maintain focus on system pressures and outcomes

- Continue to monitor neurodevelopmental waiting times and SEMH demand, recognising system-wide constraints and the limits of local control.
- Seek assurance on whether recent interventions are stabilising demand and mitigating risk, even where full resolution is not yet achievable.

### 2. Strengthen oversight of inclusion and placement trends

- Track whether investment in inclusive practice and early intervention is beginning to influence:
  - Placement patterns,
  - Attendance and exclusion trends,
  - Reliance on specialist provision.
- Request clear evidence of impact in future updates.

### 3. Assure delivery of SEND reforms and quality

- Maintain oversight of the implementation and embedding of:
  - Better quality EHCP, Annual Review and QA frameworks,
  - SEND funding and banding reforms,
  - System improvements (EYES, dashboards).

### 4. Monitor sufficiency and future readiness

- Continue to receive updates on new provision and capital delivery, ensuring risks to timescales and interim mitigations are visible.
- Ensure sufficiency planning remains aligned to emerging demand and trends.

### 5. Track effectiveness of Alternative Provision and reintegration

- Seek assurance that improvements in Alternative Provision commissioning are translating into: Reduced exclusions, Improved reintegration outcomes, Reduced long-term reliance on tuition and AP.
6. Champion co-production and lived experience
- Note progress in embedding co-production across the SEND system.
  - Request assurance that the Co-production Charter is influencing decisions and service change in practice, not just policy

## PERFORMANCE DATA

- **Increased Mainstream Inclusion:** There has been an 10.3% increase in EHCP caseloads in mainstream provision (from 44% in 2022/23 to 54.3% in January 2025).
- **Increased Supported Internships:** 45 YP with EHCPs attend work-based learning activity in line with their PfA outcomes which is 7% increase (from January 2025 to January 2026).
- **Reduction in EHCP Growth:** The number of open EHCPs has slightly decreased last year: -1.0% change in January 2025 (*SEN2 data 2025*) and now increased by 8% (*January 2026*) but still below national average at 11% of growth (*SEN2 data 2025*), reflecting improved early intervention and support despite 25% increase in EHCNA requests in Hillingdon since 2022. It is important to note the anticipation of the new SEND reforms has led to a sustained increase in EHCNAs, which other LAs have also reported.
- **Reduced Reliance on Independent Provision:** Placements in Independent, Non-Maintained Special Schools (INMSS) have dropped from 11% to 9.5% (*SEN2 data 2025*) and currently (as of March 2026) is at 7.2%.
- **Reduced number of CYP with EHCP declared as NEET** (Not in education, training or employment aged 16-25): 21% decrease from January 2025 to January 2026.
- **Expansion of Local Provision:** Four new Specialist Resource Provisions/Designated Units have opened, with another school due to open a new secondary SRP from September 2026, and special school capacity is being expanded, despite some initial construction delays.
- **Improved Early Identification and Support:** More children are being identified and supported earlier, with new panels, and an assessment centre ensuring *right support at the right time* for those who need it. There is a 40% increase from last year of children with SEND (SEN Support/EHCP) whose recorded educational placement is an Early Years Provider.
- **Annual Reviews and EHCP Quality:** The backlog of annual reviews has been addressed, and a new quality assurance tool is improving EHCP quality and timeliness. There was a 44% increase (from January 2025 to January 2026) in EHCPs ceased thanks to improved outcomes, with young people's ongoing education or training needs now met without an EHC plan and 55% increase in ceased EHCPs as young people moved to higher education.
- **Inclusive Practice in Schools:** The SEND Advisory Team has increased SEND Reviews in schools, and the Inclusion Commitment programme is widely adopted. New funding models and exceptional funding support highly inclusive schools. The new CAAS project is being rolled out to every Hillingdon secondary school ensuring a more successful transition experience for our families moving to secondary school.
- **Alternative Provision:** A three-tiered AP system is being developed, with new clinics,

improved commissioning, and a focus on reintegration and reducing exclusions.

- **Reduction in Exclusions:** Permanent exclusions for pupils with SEND have dropped by 21% compared to the previous year.
- **Young People’s Voice and Co-Production:** Young people’s voices are increasingly embedded in governance and service design, with the “Aim High” youth forum leading on various forums, training sessions and consultations. The co-production charter is in place with all local area agencies’ commitment to ensure coproduction at all levels.

## RESIDENT BENEFIT

Through the consultation process Hillingdon residents and particularly those with children and young people with SEND and who access AP were given the opportunity to share their views on the identified key priorities and approach. We listened to residents and the Parent Carer Forums and shaped the Local Area SEND & AP Strategy in light of their comments and views.

The strategy outlines the Local Area’s commitment to improving the outcomes for children and young people with SEND and those who access AP and will encourage active engagement and participation from parents, carers, and young people in strategic developments.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Implementing the SEND and AP Strategy has significant financial implications but is demonstrably improving the sustainability of the High Needs system. As at Month 9 in 2025/26, the DSG is forecasting an in- year High Needs overspend of £9.6m, which is £2.9m lower than originally budgeted, contributing to a cumulative DSG deficit of £75.5m. This improved position reflects the impact of strategic reforms set out in the SEND and AP Strategy, including reducing reliance on high-cost independent placements, expanding local maintained and mainstream specialist provision, revising banding and top-up frameworks, and strengthening early intervention. Without these reforms, demand led pressures and provision costs would have continued to rise unchecked, resulting in a materially higher in-year overspend and a significantly larger DSG deficit. The Strategy therefore represents a critical mechanism for cost containment, value for money, and longer-term financial recovery, while maintaining statutory provision and improving outcomes for children and young people.

## LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal impediments to the recommendation set out at the beginning of the report. The strategy assists the local authority with complying with its duty under s27 Children and Families Act 2014. Local authorities must keep their educational and training provision and social care provision for children and young people with SEN or disabilities under review. Local authorities must place children, young people and families at the centre of their planning, and work with them to develop co-ordinated approaches to securing better outcomes.

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL.

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix A – Hillingdon Local Area SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy for Children and Young People 0-25 years 2023 - 2028 Strategy

Appendix B – The Hillingdon SEND Local Area Partnership Improvement Plan

Appendix C – SEPB Highlight Report January 2026