



Buckinghamshire County Council

Special Educational Needs
and Disability Strategy
2017-2020



Executive Summary

In 2016 Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) conducted a review into aspects of provision and arrangements for Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). The commissioning of this review was driven by the growing pressures faced by BCC and partner SEND services. During the course of the review the need to rebalance the high needs block funding to eliminate the recurrent overspend became apparent. The review team worked with parents and schools to develop plans to rebalance the budget in order to provide suitable services and provision.

This strategy sets out overarching priorities to address the challenges and opportunities identified during the review.

BCC and partners have a statutory responsibility to assess and plan for any child or young person between the ages of 0-25 year olds with SEND needs. The council also has a budgetary responsibility to ensure funding is available through the high needs block of the Dedicated Schools Grant to schools, parents and settings. Funding is not keeping pace with increased demand in SEND, which is creating significant capacity and affordability challenges for Buckinghamshire. If left unchecked, these pressures will likely have a detrimental impact on the wellbeing of children and families who rely on these statutory services..

BCC and its partners have developed aspirational outcomes to meet these future challenges. They have been designed to put the child, young person with SEND and their families at the centre of what we do. The outcomes will empower children, young people and their families. The previous SEND Strategy spanned the period 2013 – 2016. Over that time, a number of new approaches to working were put in place, following the publication of the new SEND Code of

Practice. The new arrangements are known as the “*SEND Reforms*” and making these happen was the major focus of the previous SEND Strategy.

All state funded schools must explain how they provide for children and young people with SEND. Special educational provision is available for children and young people with SEND between birth and 25 years, for those who need it. The Buckinghamshire Local Offer describes the health, education and social care provision that it expects to be available for children and young people and their families.

Over the past three years, council funded services and partners have worked with parent representatives to shape and influence a new way of working with children and young people with SEND and their families. The incorporation of personalised experiences and feedback from many different stakeholders has led to a delivery design that is more person centred, based on clearer expectations about what mainstream schools and settings will provide for the majority of children and young people with SEND, is better integrated with health and social care services and that is more aspirational – focusing, from at least age 14, on future employability and independent living for young people as they move from education into their adult lives.

Whilst we have not achieved everything that we had hoped to, we have made significant progress in implementing the SEND reforms, working with schools, parent representatives and professionals in health and social care services. We still need to do better in meeting statutory time lines for issuing EHC Plans and completing EHC assessments, and in monitoring the impact of high needs funding that is given to schools for named children and young people.

In 2016 a SEND review took place. The review process involved talking with and listening to a large number of stakeholders and service users, including parents, carers and children and young people with SEND. It identified our areas for improvement over the next three years: 2017 – 2020. In October 2016, we consulted on these, and on a Vision, and were encouraged by the numbers of people who made a response.

The Vision for the new Strategy is:

All our children and young people with SEND will:

- *achieve the very best they can*
- *attend a school or educational setting as close to their home as possible*
- *be taught and supported by skilled professionals who have high expectations for their progress and learning potential*
- *enjoy learning, feel valued and be confident*
- *be actively involved in decisions that affect them*
- *fulfil their potential as confident adults in their chosen community, and*
- *be allocated resources to best effect,*

These are the seven “*Improvement Priorities*” that will guide SEND work between 2017-2020. They are:

1. Improve the experiences of families, children and young people of the statutory SEND processes.
2. Develop greater confidence, competence and skills in mainstream settings, schools and

academies, providing stronger leadership and support for SENDCOs and others, across schools and settings.

3. Refocus specialist SEND provision, such as special schools and Resourced Provisions, on those children with the most significant and complex SEND.
4. Improve the leadership, co-ordination, deployment and collaborative working of specialist SEND specialist teaching, advisory and educational psychology services.
5. Develop and implement improved approaches to planning and securing specialist educational places for those children with the most significant and complex needs.
6. Strengthen the management of the statutory SEND processes and related decision making.
7. Develop improved approaches to monitoring and accountability, especially in relation to the use and impact of High Needs funding in schools and other educational settings.

Over the next three years, the multi-stakeholder SEND Board will play a part in monitoring the progress and implementation of the SEND strategy, as will senior officers in the education, health and social care services.

Each Improvement Priority will be supported with performance indicators that will help us to see the progress that is being made.

Regular updates will be posted on the Local Offer.

Buckinghamshire County Council

SEN and Disability Strategy – 2017 – 2020

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1 Introduction

1.1 Buckinghamshire Children and Young People's Partnership has agreed a Vision of what it aspires to deliver for all children and young people who live in Buckinghamshire.

'Children and young people are healthy and safe, feel valued and value others, are treated fairly, have lives filled with learning, achieve their potential and are able to enjoy life and spend quality time with family and friends.'

1.2 Our previous SEND Strategy spanned the period 2013 – 2016. It focused on implementing the new SEND Reforms and sought to improve the continuum of educational provision for children and young people with SEND. In particular, it aimed to reduce the need for children to attend school outside Buckinghamshire.

1.3 We have made much progress in the last three years. Significant work has taken place to implement the new systems and approaches needed by the SEN Reforms. Many children and young people who had Statements of SEN or Learning Difficulty Assessments (LDAs) now have Education Health and Care (EHC) Plans. New systems are in place with health and social care services for their part in contributing to assessments and EHC Plans. Our dependency on independent special schools outside Buckinghamshire has reduced.

1.4 We have worked closely with parent organisations in planning for and implementing SEND reforms. However, the volume of new work has meant that we have been challenged at times to complete EHC assessments within the timeline that is expected, but we are improving. Throughout there has been ongoing engagement and joint working with parent representative support and advice organisations.

1.5 Our Local Offer is located on the Council's website ¹ and explains what services are available to children and young people with SEND, and their families, in Buckinghamshire.

1.6 We have worked with schools and early education settings to support them in implementing the new SEND Code of Practice. Schools have restructured their internal assessment, teaching and support arrangements from School Action and School Action Plus, to SEN Support. SENDCOs and other school staff play an active role in the process that transfers Statements of SEN to EHC Plans.

1.7 The previous SEND strategy was monitored through the SEND Board – a group of representatives from schools, specialist professional services and parent / carer organisations. The Deputy Cabinet Member for children and young people also attends, reflecting the importance to the Council of understanding and listening to the views of children and young people with SEND and their families, as well as those of local professionals.

1.8 The new SEND strategy spans the period 2017 – 2021. It has been developed following a detailed SEND Review that took place between January and September in 2016.

¹ www.bucksfamilyinfo.org/localoffer

1.9 We worked closely with FACT Bucks, the Parent Carer Forum for Buckinghamshire, during the review, and in drafting this strategy. We also listened carefully to what Buckinghamshire SEND IAS (Information, Advice and Support) Service told us about the views of parents and young people who had been in touch with them. We met with head teachers and SENDCOs, professional services who work with children, young people and their families at home and in schools and settings, and read responses to web-based enquiries and comments. This has meant that our Vision has benefited from both widespread and personalised perspectives, allowing it to adaptably address extensive and individual needs.

1.10 In October 2016, we consulted widely on our proposals for the building blocks for the new SEND Strategy, and called them Improvement Priorities. This consultation provided an insight into many respondents' personal experiences. Views expressed in the Consultation have contributed to this Strategy.²

² A summary of consultation responses is available from SENDreview@buckscc.gov.uk

Our SEND Strategy for 2017 – 2020 has different sections.

Introduction to the SEND strategy

The Vision

National Context for SEND

Local context for SEND

4 areas of strategic focus

Children, young people and families

Developing provision and supporting schools and settings

Planning ahead

Strategic Leadership and management

7 Improvement Priorities

Improve the experiences of families, children and young people of statutory SEND processes

Develop greater confidence, competence and skills in mainstream settings, schools and academies, providing stronger leadership and support for SENDCOs and others, across schools and settings.

Refocus specialist SEND provision, such as Special Schools and Resourced Provisions, on those children with the most significant and complex SEND.

Improve the co-ordination, leadership, deployment and collaborative working of SEND specialist teaching, advisory and educational psychology services.

Develop and implement improved approaches to planning and securing specialist educational places for those children with the most severe and complex needs.

Strengthen the management of the statutory SEND process and related decision making

Develop improved approaches to monitoring and accountability, especially in relation to the use and impact of High Needs funding in schools and other educational settings

GOVERNANCE AND MONITORING

2 The SEND Vision

2.1 In September 2014, the Children and Families Act became law, and Part 3 of the Act sets out the responsibilities for Local Authorities, schools and health services. Section 19 of the Act sets out the general principles³ that the Council, health services, schools and educational settings must have in regard to their work with children with SEND. These are:

- *the views, wishes and feelings of the child or young person, and the child's parents*
- *the importance of the child or young person, and the child's parents, participating as fully as possible in decisions, and being provided with the information and support necessary to enable participation in those decisions*
- *the need to support the child or young person, and the child's parents, in order to facilitate the development of the child or young person and to help them achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes, preparing them effectively for adulthood*

2.2 This Vision draws together views expressed during a recent SEND Review and consultation in October 2016 from parents, carers and professionals working with children and their families, incorporating respective personal perspectives and responsibilities. It reflects young people's views. The SEND Vision supports and compliments the Vision of the Children and Young People's Partnership, setting down outcomes that we believe are important for children and young people with SEND.

2.3 We will ensure that all professional staff who work with children and young people with SEND in Buckinghamshire are familiar with our Vision and are expected to take account of it in the part they play, in the lives of children and young people. We recognise that parents and professionals want to work together collaboratively. Despite this, it was noted in the consultation that it doesn't always feel as if this has worked. As such, going forward we hope that parents, carers and young people will be empowered and expect that their experience will be as articulated in the Buckinghamshire SEND Vision.

The Vision

Our Vision for all children and young people with SEND is that they will:

- achieve the best they can
- attend a school or educational setting as close to their home as possible
- be taught and supported by skilled professionals who have high expectations for their progress and learning potential
- enjoy learning, feel valued and be confident
- be actively involved in decisions that affect them
- fulfil their potential as confident adults
- be allocated resources to best effect
-

³ S19 Children & Families Act 2014; Ch 1 SEND Code of Practice (DFE2015)

3. The National Context for SEND

3.1 There is a lot happening in education at the moment. The strategic direction of the Government’s proposals reduces the role of local authorities in education support and provision, but continues the role in delivering assessment, planning and provision for children and young people with SEND.

Statutory responsibilities

3.2 The Council’s responsibilities relate to children and young people with SEND who live in Buckinghamshire. A child is between 0 and compulsory school age. At the end of the academic year in which a child becomes 16 years old, he or she is then known as a young person. This is important because a young person with SEND can make their own decisions about their education (rather than their parents) unless the young person does not have capacity⁴.

Strategic planning responsibilities

3.3 The Council has strategic planning responsibilities, as well as its duties to individual children and young people with SEND. The strategic duties include keeping under review the education, training and social care provision made for disabled children or those with SEN, and making sure that there is sufficient financial provision to meet the needs of children and young people.⁵

3.4 The new Children and Families Act was supported with a new SEND Code of Practice, which explains in detail the different roles and responsibilities of all of those involved in planning for, commissioning, assessing and making provision for children and young people with SEND. There are a large number of state funded organisations that have statutory responsibilities. They are:

Local Authorities	NHS Commissioning Board	Hospital education settings
NHS Trusts	Health and Wellbeing Boards	NHS foundation trusts
SEND Tribunal	Early years education settings	Mainstream Schools
Special Schools	Alternative Provision providers	Further education colleges
Pupil Referral Units	Independent special schools	Sixth form colleges
Academies	Independent specialist colleges & providers	Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs)

3.5 The health service also has statutory responsibilities. Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and NHS Trusts must let the Council know if they believe that a child is disabled and has or probably has SEN⁶. Health, education and

⁴ See Mental Capacity Act 2005

⁵ S27 CC&F Act

⁶ S23 C&F Act

social care managers work together on a Health and Wellbeing Board and ensure that there is coherence in the way that services are commissioned, integrated⁷ and delivered for vulnerable groups of people. This includes children and young people with SEND.

- 3.6 The Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014 requires that statutory services in an area will work together co-operatively, including at the transition of young people into adult services. Joint commissioning arrangements must cover services for 0-15 year-old children and young people with SEN or disabilities.
- 3.7 The Council must publish and maintain a Local Offer⁸: information that describes the health, education and social care provision that it expects to be available for children and young people with SEND.

Person Centred approaches

- 3.8 Maintaining a person-centred approach and active engagement of young people with SEND and their parents in their education, and in contributing to decisions that affect their education, all have a significant emphasis in the new national framework for SEND. Local Authorities are expected to develop or co-produce new approaches, policies and plans with parent representatives.
- 3.9 Parent Carer Forums are locally based groups of parents and carers of disabled children who work with local authorities, education settings, health providers and other providers to make sure the services they plan and deliver meet the needs of disabled children and families. They also have responsibilities enabling them to reflect and/or represent the views of parents and carers who they know. SEND Information and Advisory Services (formerly known as Parent Partnership Services), provide independent advice and support to young people and their parents in relation to their education and SEN related matters.

Where do children and young people with SEND go to school?

- 3.10 The Children and Families Act is based on a presumption for mainstream education. In Buckinghamshire, a higher percentage of children go to special school than the national position.
- 3.11 A very small proportion of children and young people have such high needs for support that they need the Local Authority to determine the educational provision they need, by writing down what a school or education setting will do, including the special arrangements. These details are written into an Education Health and Care (EHC) Plan. More information about this is found on the Local Offer site⁹. Nationally 2.8% of the pupil population have EHC Plans. In Buckinghamshire this is 3.1 %.

Education Health and Care (EHC) Plans

⁷ S25,26 C&F Act

⁸ S30 C&F Act

⁹ <https://www.bucksfamilyinfo.org/kb5/buckinghamshire/fsd/localoffer.page>

3.12 Many of the legal requirements for statements now apply to EHC Plans but there are some important differences. EHC Plans:

- can be maintained when a young person is in college, or on an apprenticeship or not in education, employment or training
- can continue up to the age of 25 years
- must include enforceable aspects of health and social care arrangements.

3.13 In order to become the subject of an EHC Plan (or a statement prior to September 2014), a child or young person requires an intensity and level of provision that would not normally be available in a mainstream school. Schools must follow a graduated response approach, demonstrating the work they have done with the child and its impact, prior to asking for an EHC assessment. An EHC assessment is typically requested by parents, schools and settings, and if agreed, will usually, but not always, result in an EHC Plan. An EHC Plan leads to the provision of additional funding to a school, whether a mainstream or special school. The additional funding is called “Top-Up” funding and varies according to the provision needs of the child

The SEND Code of Practice

3.14 Schools must have a SENCO. It is a statutory post. Schools must operate a graduated response known as APDR (Assess, Plan, Do, Review). Most children and young people with SEND do not have EHC Plans and a SEN Support and are following a graduated response approach, supported with approaches, interventions and support that are part of the school’s provision for SEND.

3.15 All state funded education providers must have regard to the SEND Code of Practice. In addition to making information available about how they make arrangements for children and young people with SEND, they must show how they make their own arrangements for children and young people with SEND but for who an EHC Plan is not necessary – these are children and young people provided for by the school or setting, and who are at “SEN Support”. Most children with SENDs do not have a statement of SEN or an EHC Plan and are at SEN Support.

3.16 Nationally the population of children at SEN Support is 13.4% of all primary aged pupils and 12.7% of all secondary aged pupils. In Buckinghamshire there are lower percentages than the national position, with 10.5% of primary aged and 8.8% of secondary age pupils¹⁰. The overall % in Buckinghamshire is 8.2% (at January 2016) compared to a national average of 11.6%, and with only 4 local authorities with a smaller proportion of pupils at SEN Support.

¹⁰ SFR29-16(DFE)

- 3.17 A SEND Ofsted / CQC Local Area SEND Inspection¹¹ has commented on a similar scenario, on a shire county with a low, but not as low, SEN support profile¹²:

“The local area identifies relatively low numbers of pupils needing school support for their special educational needs, while identifying relatively high numbers requiring statements or EHC plans. Leaders have rightly identified that this indicates weaknesses in the early identification of special educational needs.”



Buckinghamshire schools identify lower numbers of pupils needing provision at SEN Support than would be expected.

National Inspection Framework

- 3.18 Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC), with local authority officers, are responsible for carrying out Local Area Inspections where they will look at the effectiveness in the area of how new SEND duties are fulfilled. Areas of focus include the experience of parents and young people with SEND and the arrangements that are in place for them, and how children and young people are supported to get the best possible educational and other outcomes.¹³

4. The Local Context

Facts and Figures

- 4.1 In Buckinghamshire, one quarter of the population is under the age of 20. There is less poverty and homelessness than the national average. The health and wellbeing of Buckinghamshire children is better than the England average. The rate of hospital admission for young people under 18 who have self-harmed, has reduced.¹⁴
- 4.2 Changes to the education system nationally are reflected locally. For example, most secondary schools and a small number of primary schools and two special schools are now Academies. The Council, in its role as champion for children, continues to build on established relationships with schools and other education providers to make sure that as changes happen, all Buckinghamshire children and young people have the opportunity to reach their potential.¹⁵
- 4.3 The Children and Young People’s Plan 2014-18 emphasises the need to support children and young people with SEND in its Priority4: “Provide

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-area-send-inspection-outcome-letters>

¹²

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575666/Joint_local_area_SEND_inspection_in_Surrey.pdf

¹³ The framework for the inspection of local areas’ effectiveness in identifying and meeting the needs of children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities – Ofsted/CQC 2016

¹⁴ Buckinghamshire CYP Plan 2014-18

¹⁵ CYP Plan 2014-18

opportunities for children and young people to realise their full potential'. A strong local relationship with schools and other education providers will be increasingly important not just to raise overall levels of achievement but also to ensure a special focus on those pupils who are underperforming and close the gap between the attainment of all children and those with SEND.

- 4.4 We know that the majority of children and young people with SEND perform academically at a level lower than their peers. So we need to be sure that the progress that all children with SEND make, is their best and that they are receiving the right teaching and following the right curriculum programmes. The move away from national Curriculum levels appears may have created difficulties for parents and at school level in communicating levels of attainment and progress relative to other children.
- 4.5 When requests for EHC assessments are refused, a mediation process is available.

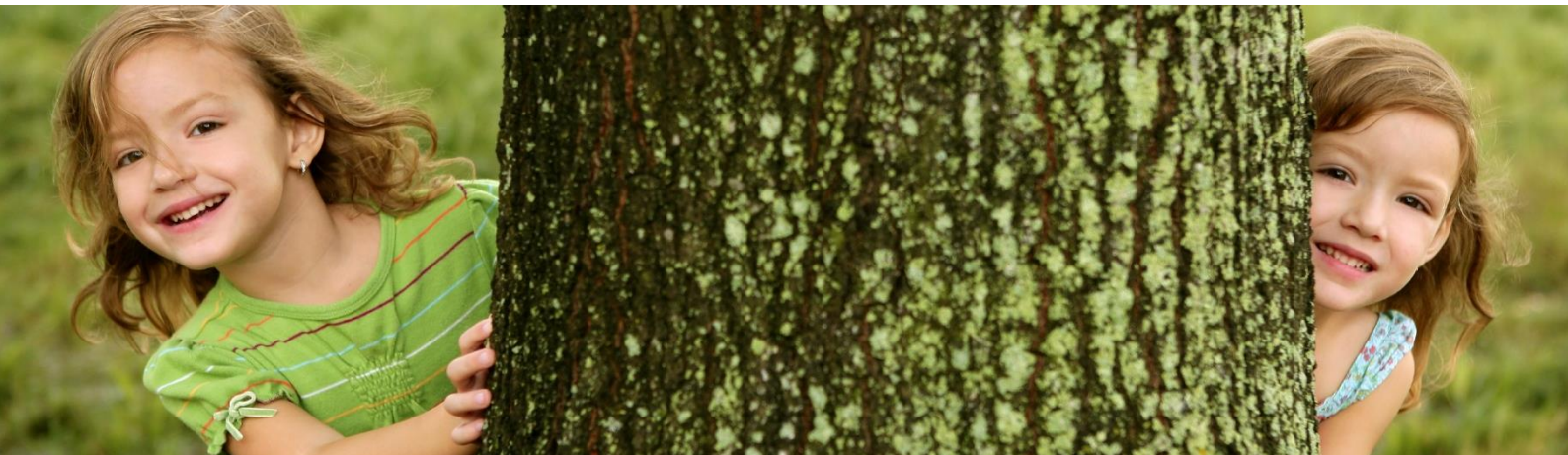
Where do children and young people with SEND go to school?

- 4.6 The SEND Review looked at how specialist SEND services were supporting children and schools. It found that we can do better in our co-ordination of the specialist education support services, and that the services can and should intervene earlier and work with schools to include as many children as possible in their local schools.
- 4.7 The SEND review found that more children who go to school in Buckinghamshire go to special schools than other local authorities. The review did not find a higher level of need in Buckinghamshire than elsewhere.
- 4.8 It also found that twice as many Buckinghamshire children attend special schools in other Local Authority areas, than children from other local authorities who attend Buckinghamshire special schools. So Buckinghamshire has a higher dependency on special schools than would be expected.
- 4.9 In Buckinghamshire, the numbers of children leaving mainstream schools during their school career to attend special schools is increasing – from 84 in school year 2013-14 to 139 in school year 2015-16. Also, the numbers of Buckinghamshire children and young people who are being permanently excluded from their local schools is increasing and most of these are recorded as having special educational needs.
- 4.10 The number of Buckinghamshire children with EHC Plans and statements is bigger than would be expected, and in particular, the number of first time EHC Plans is increasing. Between March 2011 and March 2016, the total number of Buckinghamshire resident children with statements or EHC Plans increased by 12%, when the pupil population increased by 8%.¹⁶ There are 3,355 pupils¹⁷ with statements of SEN or EHC Plans. They do not all go to school in Buckinghamshire.

4.11 The SEND Review found that this unusual profile of the identification of SEND and where children with SEND go to school, was most likely to relate to:

- funding pressures in mainstream schools,
- inconsistent approaches from external specialist input to support SEND in mainstream schools
- lack of parental confidence in the ability of mainstream schools to provide for SEND, and
- an established culture in mainstream schools that children and young people with more complex needs were better placed in special schools.

4.12 Whilst there are more pupils with statements and EHC Plans than would be expected, there are fewer children and young people (7,510)¹⁸ identified at SEN Support. This is where mainstream schools engage external advice and construct personalised programmes for children and young people, so that they can receive targeted interventions and support. Mainstream schools are funded to provide this according to a funding approach that applies to all schools nationally.



4.13 Also, the percentage of the overall population of children with statements and EHC Plans who attend special schools has increased from 41% of all statements in 2013 to 44% of all statements and EHC Plans in 2016.

4.14 More Buckinghamshire resident children and young people with EHC Plans go to school in other authorities, than children and young people who live in those authorities coming to school in Buckinghamshire. This means we have a higher dependency on other local authority schools than they do on Buckinghamshire schools. This can make planning for the future complicated.

4.15 In the Autumn Term of 2016, 187 pupils attended independent special schools. This is 8 more than the year before.

Types of SEND

4.16 The profile of types of SEND and where children with those needs go to school, is also different to most authorities. In Buckinghamshire there is a

lower proportion of children with moderate learning difficulties in mainstream schools and a higher proportion in special schools. This is the opposite to most local authorities and may again suggest a lack of parental and professional confidence in mainstream settings.

Costs and affordability

- 4.17 It usually costs more for a pupil to attend a special school than to attend their local mainstream school, especially when the pupil lives beyond the statutory walking distance and is entitled to transport. It almost always costs more for a pupil to attend an independent special school than a state funded special school. The higher numbers of children with EHC Plans and statements, who attend special schools and the lower numbers in mainstream probably account for the very high spend on specialist provision, which is increasing year on year.
- 4.18 The cost of top-up funding statements and EHC Plans in mainstream schools and settings is also increasing. More recently the amount of extra funding provided to schools and settings for pupils without statements or EHC Plans has also increased significantly, where increasing numbers of individual allocations have been made.
- 4.19 All of this has led to a position where Buckinghamshire spends almost one and a half times more on provision and support for SEND (above the funding that is already in mainstream schools) than the national average. In the past the budget for all schools, known as the Schools Block, has made good recurrent overspends on the High Needs Block. This is no longer possible, and national legislative change is expected to confirm this. The Government has indicated its expectation that all Local Authorities look at this over 2017-18. Buckinghamshire has already done significant work on this through the SEND review which will assist its planning for 2018-19.¹⁹

5. The Future – Strategic Priorities for 2017 - 2020

- 5.1 Following the SEND Review, a consultation took place in October 2016. The results of this have led to a framework of four Strategic Priority areas and seven Improvement Priorities. These are:

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES	
Priority 1	Improve the experiences of families, children and young people of the statutory SEND processes.
DEVELOPING PROVISION AND SUPPORTING SCHOOLS AND SETTINGS	
Priority 2	Develop greater confidence, competence and skills in mainstream settings, schools and academies, providing stronger leadership and support for SENDCOs and others, across schools and settings.
Priority 3	Refocus specialist SEND provision, such as special schools and Resourced Provisions, on those children with the most significant and complex SEND.
Priority	Improve the leadership, co-ordination, deployment and collaborative

¹⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-needs-strategic-planning-fund>

4	working of specialist SEND specialist teaching, advisory and educational psychology services.
PLANNING AHEAD	
Priority 5	Develop and implement improved approaches to planning and securing specialist educational places for those children with the most significant and complex needs.
STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	
Priority 6	Strengthen the management of the statutory SEND processes and related decision making.
Priority 7	Develop improved approaches to monitoring and accountability, especially in relation to the use and impact of High Needs funding in schools and other educational settings.

5.2 The outcomes that we seek are set out under each Improvement Priority. Some activities overlap, and that is why some outcomes appear against more than one Improvement Priority.

5.3 For each Improvement Priority, the way it will be implemented and monitored is through:

- Describing the outcomes we commit to seek
- Explaining how we will monitor progress and performance, through
 - specifying milestones and outputs
 - setting performance indicators

6. Keeping you informed

6.1 The Local Offer web-site will have a page where the SEND Strategy will be published and termly reports of progress will be published. It will be the route for you to ask questions or make suggestions.



Improvement Priority Framework

Improvement Priority 1

Improve the experiences of families, children and young people of statutory SEND processes

The outcomes that we commit to seek are:

1. Children and young people with SEND know they are at the centre of processes that assess their special educational needs and plan their provision.
2. All reviews of their provision and progress involve children and young people directly. This practice will allow for personalised feedback to be incorporated into decision making processes, and will help keep children and young people at the heart of all our SEND policy decisions.
3. Early education settings, schools and colleges will listen carefully to what children and young people at SEN Support and with EHC Plans communicate about their experiences, respecting their personal responsibilities to contribute towards SEND decision making processes.
4. That children and young people who are moving between phases of education will have been supported through collaborative planning between both educational settings and relevant specialist professionals.
5. Professional staff who work to support and advise educational settings, and those who make final decisions that affect the child and young person, will ensure that they understand the views of children and young people, and their parents. This will help empower all involved to fulfil their personal responsibilities towards carrying out SEND policies and contributing towards decision making processes, ensuring the policies remain child, young people and family centred.
6. That professionals will explain processes, procedures and practice clearly and with empathy and patience, including when it may not be possible to provide all that a family hopes for.
7. That professional staff who administer or take part in the statutory SEND process to keep in regular contact with parents and young people who are going through the EHC assessment, planning or review process, and explain what will happen next and when it will happen, and if they can't do it by the expected date, will let them know so that they are not waiting and wondering.

IMPROVEMENT PRIORITY 1: EXPECTED IMPACT

The above would lead towards a more personalised service that develops SEND policies that are centred on children, young people and family needs.

IMPROVEMENT PRIORITY 2

Develop greater confidence, competence and skills in mainstream settings, schools and academies, providing stronger leadership and support for SENDCOs and others, across schools and settings.

The outcomes that we commit to seek are:

1. The majority of children and young people with SEND are fully included into their mainstream school or settings.
2. All mainstream schools, early education settings and colleges of further education provide high quality assessment, planning, review processes and teaching for children and young people at SEN Support ensuring they are effectively identifying children and rigorously putting strategies, support and interventions into place.
3. Mainstream schools and colleges of further education undertake a self-review of their arrangements for SEND, using an approach validated by the Local Authority and supported with comparative data from the LA.
4. A SENDCO support programme will be put in place, and will reach every SENDCO in Buckinghamshire, preparing a County wide programme of mentor and training support.
5. SENDCOs know where they can go for specialist support and advice, and that this will be high quality, and available within specified timeframes.
6. Every school and setting will be able to plan their SEND priorities for support on an annual basis through one co-ordinated dialogue or meeting with representatives from specialist support services.
7. Children and young people with moderate learning difficulties will increasingly have their needs met in their local mainstream school or college of further education.
8. There will be opportunities for special schools and mainstream schools to work together to sustain mainstream placements.
9. Parents and carers will have increased confidence in mainstream schools and local colleges of further education for meeting their personalised special educational needs of their children and young people. This will help ensure each teaching and learning establishment provides an individualised approach

IMPROVEMENT PRIORITY 2: EXPECTED IMPACT

The above would lead towards the establishment of greater accountability regarding decision making, and stronger relationships between schools and their stakeholders, including parents.

IMPROVEMENT PRIORITY 3

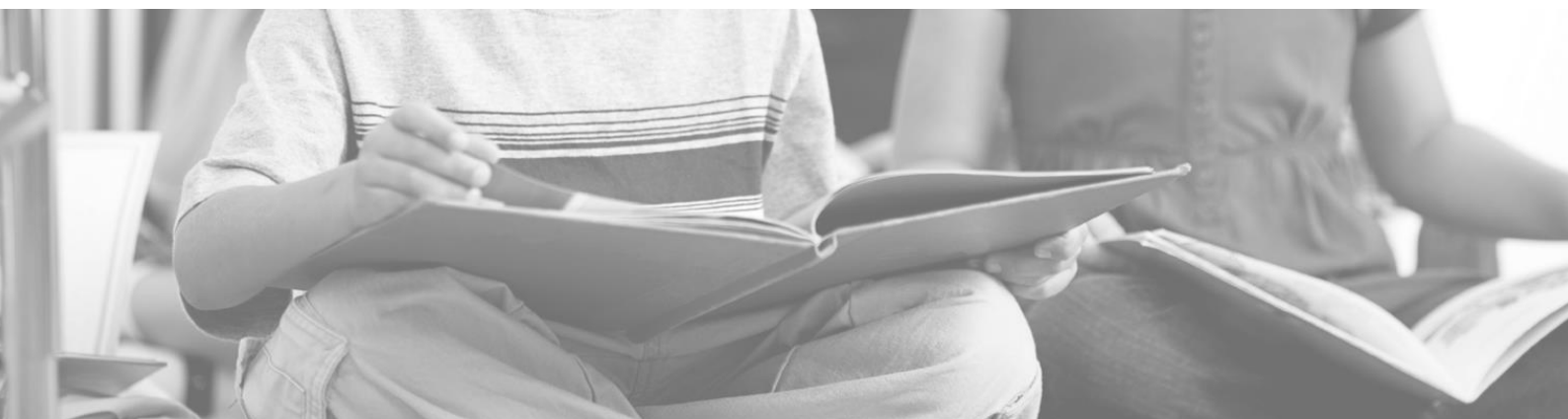
Refocus specialist SEND provision, such as Special Schools and Resourced Provisions, on those children with the most significant and complex SEND.

The outcomes that we commit to seek are:

1. The number of specialist places that are commissioned each year from special schools, special academies and resourced provisions, will match with predicted placement needs.
2. Mainstream schools, early education settings and colleges of further education can deliver integrated SEND provision where the work of therapists, psychologists, specialist teachers and others is effectively co-ordinated and effectively used for those children and young people whose programmes require it.
3. Specialist SEND staff and advice from special schools will enable the development of improved provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties in mainstream schools and colleges of further education.
4. The range of complexity and severity of need currently provided for in some, but not all, special schools, will include children and young people who are currently placed in the non-maintained or independent special school sector.
5. The future of boarding provision within two Buckinghamshire special schools, and the use of boarding provision in out of county provision will be reviewed, and a related plan put in place for the future.
6. An audit of facilities and staff experience and qualification in resourced provisions will take place.
7. Termly meetings / structured conversations, take place between a nominated local authority lead officer or professional with each resourced provision.
8. A reducing dependency on non-maintained and independent special schools and colleges.

IMPROVEMENT PRIORITY 3: EXPECTED IMPACT

The above would lead towards a more financially sustainable service that has a personalised approach towards addressing the requirements of children and young people most in need.



IMPROVEMENT PRIORITY 4

Improve the co-ordination, leadership, deployment and collaborative working of SEND specialist teaching, advisory and educational psychology services.

The outcomes that we commit to seek are:

1. Improved co-ordination and leadership is put in place across the full range of SEND support services that support and advise mainstream and special schools.
2. SEND support services are available for all children with and without statements or EHC Plans.
3. A "Support around the School" approach is developed so that a more transparent and coherent service is experienced by schools and settings, and so that the targeting and impact of additional resources better managed.
4. A robust structure for identifying schools and settings that need targeted improvement support for SEND, is put in place.
5. Specialist support services can demonstrate enhanced skills and competences, so that their advice, guidance and intervention adds value to the current position in the school.
6. Earlier intervention will avoid escalation of difficulties, including transfers to independent schools, exclusions, placement breakdown and school refusal.
7. A more effective integration of the role and priorities of specialist teaching services with the Local Authority's statutory SEND responsibilities is put in place, so that any related perverse incentive for EHC assessment is removed.
8. The role and contribution of special schools is explored as part of the cross county approach to increase the capacity of mainstream schools and settings for SEND.
9. There will be continuity in the provision of specialist support and advice to children and young people as they move through their early education, to school and then to College or other post 16 options.

IMPROVEMENT PRIORITY 4: EXPECTED IMPACT

The above would lead towards a more financially sustainable service that has a more personalised approach towards addressing the requirements of children and young people most in need.

PLANNING AHEAD

IMPROVEMENT PRIORITY 5

Develop and implement improved approaches to planning and securing specialist educational places for those children with the most severe and complex needs.

The outcomes that we commit to seek are:

1. A dedicated workstream will drive a rolling five year specialist place planning strategy that will forecast numbers; monitor and explore trends and develop systems that link:
 - SEND assessment numbers
 - SEND placements
 - Specialist place availability
 - Post 16 course planning
 - SEND type
 - Year cohort information
 - Place costs
 - Top-up costs
 - Transport costs, including effective management of demand for transport
 - Decision making on the statutory SEND process
2. Higher cost provision will be targeted on those children and young people with the most significant and complex needs.
3. Through continuing commissioning dialogue and case discussion, health, social care and education services will work collaboratively to create and enable local solutions for children and young people with the most significant and complex needs.
4. Improved support to schools and settings will reduce placement fragility and build confidence and skills.
5. Those children and young people who attend school a long way from Buckinghamshire, or outside the public sector, are closely monitored with at least annual visits to check on the provision made by the school, its impact and its value for money.
6. Through proactive planning, post 16 courses at pre-entry, entry level and level 1 will be available for those young people who need them, in a location local to their home, and which will include internships and pathways to employability programmes.

IMPROVEMENT PRIORITY 5: EXPECTED IMPACT

The above would lead towards a more financially sustainable service that has a more personalised approach towards addressing the requirements of children and young people most in need.

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

IMPROVEMENT PRIORITY 6

Strengthen the management of the statutory SEND process and related decision making

The outcomes that we commit to seek are:

1. Parents and carers, and other professionals develop increased confidence about the management of SEND casework and the way in which decisions are made.
2. EHC Plans are issued on time, including those that must be finalised at specific times in years of transition from one phase of education to another.
3. EHC assessments are completed on time, and Annual Review decisions are issued on time.
4. There is a personal discussion between the SEND officer and the parents and carers of every child for whom an EHC assessment is requested.
5. Correspondence with parents, carers and young people is improved, so that where a decision is that an EHC assessment will not take place, or a place in the preferred school is not confirmed, the reasons for the decision will be carefully recorded and explained to the parent and young person.
6. When requests for EHC assessments are refused, a mediation process is available.
7. Parents report a positive experience of their contact with the central SEND team, know the name of their nominated SEND officer and know how to contact them.
8. The content of draft EHC Plans is agreed by the majority of parents and young people.
9. Social care and health information is submitted on time during an EHC assessment or as part of an annual review.
10. Decision making on all aspects of the statutory SEND process is robust, consistent, moderated with stakeholders and explained to parents, carers and young people. Within this, individual decisions are linked to affordability and financial plans, in recognition of BCC's budgetary responsibilities within this area.

IMPROVEMENT PRIORITY 6: EXPECTED IMPACT

The above would lead towards a more transparent, robust, and firm decision making process.

IMPROVEMENT PRIORITY 7

Develop improved approaches to monitoring and accountability, especially in relation to the use and impact of High Needs funding in schools and other educational settings

The outcomes that we commit to seek are:

1. The financial impact of decisions does not lead to an overspend on the High Needs budget.
2. All schools and settings can demonstrate the use and impact of their funding for SEND, including national SEN funding in mainstream settings.
3. There is a reduction in the allocations of High Needs funding to schools, for pupils without statements or EHC Plans.
4. An annual series of sample audits takes place, to explore the use of SEN Funding in:
 - a. mainstream schools
 - b. special schools
 - c. alternative provision
 - d. early education settings
 - e. colleges of further education
5. A review takes place of the way in which top-up values are allocated, to consider approaches that would:
 - a. move away from describing top-ups for mainstream by teaching assistant hours,
 - b. reduce the number of top-up bands to create more stability, less bureaucracy and more flexibility at school / setting level
 - c. allocate funding values that are compatible with salary ranges in different types of settings
6. A review takes place of approaches that allocate enhanced pupil level funding to schools for pupils without EHC Plans, undertaking a thorough audit of a sample of schools and settings.
7. Consideration is given to an approach that simplifies the banding system for Top-Up funding to mainstream and special schools.
8. Regular feedback to school leaders and Schools Forum on the actual and potential financial impact of placement trends and pressures, by phase, geographical area and a short analysis of case features.
9. Termly reports to the Schools Forum and SEND Board on predicted spend against the High Needs Budget.

IMPROVEMENT PRIORITY 7: EXPECTED IMPACT

The above would lead towards the establishment of a more integrated approach to the management of the SEND budget, where possible.

Glossary of Terms

APDR	Assess, Plan, Do, Review – a continuing cycle of assessment, planning, review and doing (action) that schools and settings must show before considering seeking extra help through an EHC assessment.
Buckinghamshire Children and Young People's Partnership	The Children and Young People's Partnership is made up of the Children and Young People's Joint Executive Team supported by three Local Children and Young People's Partnership Boards which operate across the District Council boundaries, with Chiltern and South Bucks combined. Its purpose is to bring agencies together so that they communicate better, jointly plan, commission, deliver and improve services for children, young people and families in Buckinghamshire
CCGs	Clinical Commissioning Groups – created in 2013, replacing primary care trusts and are clinically-led statutory NHS bodies responsible for the planning and commissioning of health care services for their local area.
Children and Families Act	Part 3 of the Act sets out the responsibilities for Local Authorities, schools and health services in relation to SEND. Section 19 of the Act sets out the general principles that the Council, health services, schools and educational settings must have regard to in their work with children with SEND.
CQC	Care Quality Commission - The independent regulator of all health and social care services in England. The Care Quality Commission monitors, inspects and regulates hospitals and care services.
EHC (Education Health and Care) assessment	An assessment of the educational, health and social care needs of a child or young person, where there is evidence that special educational provision may be necessary to be made at a level that is over and above what a school or setting can provide.
EHC (Education Health and Care) Plan	A legal document that describes a child or young person's special educational, health and social care needs. It explains the extra help that will be given to meet those needs and how that help will support the child or young person to achieve what they want to in their life. It is where the child or young person needs provision that cannot be met by what is usually available in a setting, school or college.
FACT Bucks	Families and Carers together in Buckinghamshire – the Parent Carer Forum for Buckinghamshire. It makes sure your views and concerns are heard by those who plan and manage the services you and your child or young person relies on. It used to be known as the Parent Consultative Group (PCG). www.factbucks.org.uk
High Needs funding	The high needs funding system supports provision for pupils and students with SEN and disabilities (SEND), from their early years to 25. It is intended to provide support packages for pupils and students special educational needs (SEN) in a range of settings, taking account of parental and student choice, whilst avoiding perverse incentives to over identify high needs pupils and students. The funding is allocated to schools, settings and colleges, with some being available for personal budgets where appropriate and agreed. It provides for the cost of a place in a specialist setting as well as the pupil related “top-up” allocation for pupils with statements and/or EHC Plans. It can be used, exceptionally, for pupils with high needs for whom an EHC Plan has not been issued. (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-needs-funding-arrangements-2016-to-2017/high-needs-funding-2016-to-2017)
Improvement Priority	One of 7 areas for attention in the next 3 years of the SEND Strategy. Each Improvement Priority is supported with outcomes, outputs and actions and performance indicators to monitor progress and success.
LDA	A Learning Difficulty Assessment – a plan for learning provided for school leavers with SENs who may have had a statement of SEN. Some students who have been the subject of an LDA may be issued with an EHC Plan.

Local Offer	The LA must publish information of about all the services and support it expects to be available for children and young people with SEN and/or a disability for whom it is responsible. This must include details of any schools, colleges or services both within Buckinghamshire and across the borders, that the LA might use or expect to be available for those children or young people. It includes services from health, social care, the voluntary sector and others, as well as information on transport and on support for preparing for adulthood and independent living.
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education – regulates and inspects services that care for children and young people and services providing education and skills for learners of all ages.
SEN Support	A level of intervention and support where schools and settings make their own arrangements from children and young people with SEND from within their own budgets and resources.
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SEND Board	A group of representatives from schools, specialist professional services and parent / carer organisations and an Elected Member, who provide stakeholder contribution to the monitoring of the SEND Strategy and advice and comment on a range of other SEND related matters.
SEND Code of Practice	Statutory guidance to which all those professionals, parents, young people and others must have regard when considering the special educational needs and provision of children and young people.
SEND IAS	Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service - formerly known as Parent Partnership Services), provide independent advice and support to young people and their parents in relation to their education and SEN related matters
SEND Reforms	Changes introduced by Part 3 of the 2014 Children and Families Act.
SENDSCO	Special educational needs and disability Co-ordinator. (A preferred terminology in Buckinghamshire from the previous SENCO). Most SENDCOs are required to have undertaken and passed the National SENCO award.
Statements of SEN	An earlier version of the EHC Plan, but where the entire focus was education and there was no statutory aspect to the inclusion of health and social care needs and provision. Statements are being transferred to EHC Plans for the majority of pupils.
Top-up funding	A pupil level financial allocation to the school or setting, or through personal budget for defined educational provision - mostly for pupils with EHC Plans or statements, that supplements the level of resources already in the school or setting and enables provision specified by the Local Authority to be delivered.
Tribunal	Part of the First Tier Education, Health and Social Care Chamber, and part of Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service. Hears appeals against some decisions made by the Local Authority.