

Annex A: Local SEND Reform Plan

Developing a Local SEND Reform Plan is an important first step for local areas to set out how they will lay the foundation for reform, and design an approach tailored to their local context. A shared plan which focuses on co-designing the local approach as system partners and with children, young people and families will help foster collective responsibility for delivering the reforms.

It is critical that all system partners, including health, education and childcare settings, work together to design and deliver the Local SEND Reform Plan, under the local authority's leadership. It is also crucial that representative family carers e.g. the local Parent Carer Forum, are involved in the development of the plan.

The expectation is that this plan is discussed, agreed, and signed off at your relevant SEND Governance Board. As a minimum, the plan must be formally signed off by the Local Authority Chief Executive (CEO), the Integrated Care Board (ICB) Chief Executive – **Jonathan Higman**, the Local Authority Director of Children's Service (DCS), the Integrated Care Board NHS Place Director **Dr Dean Spencer /Lucy Baker**, and the Local Authority Chief Financial Officer (CFO/Section 151 Officer). We encourage other colleagues and partners who have contributed to also review and sign-off the plan, particularly early years, school, college and trust leaders.

Name of Local Authority: Dorset Council

Name of Integrated Care Board: BSW, Somerset and Dorset ICB

Local SEND Reform Plan SRO: Paul Dempsey, Director of Children's Services (DCS)

Signatories

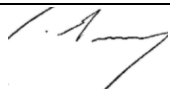
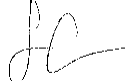
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Appendix

The appendices are provided as separate attachments to accompany and support the SEND Reform Plan.

Appendix #	Document name	Description
Appendix 1	Glossary	This document provides an overview and definition of key terms and acronyms used throughout Dorset's SEND Reform Plan.
Appendix 2	Core Minimum Requirements key	This document sets out the Core Minimum Requirements from the SEND Reform Plan guidance. Each requirement is assigned a reference number, which is used throughout the plan as an orange superscript to indicate the most relevant section where each requirement has been addressed.
Appendix 3	Dorset's strengthened Universal Offer	This appendix provides additional detail on Dorset's strengthened Universal Offer, expanding on the ambition set out in the main SEND Reform Plan to give a fuller picture of how the offer will work in practice. It covers the core components of the offer alongside the practical detail of what settings can expect, how the offer connects to Dorset's Expertise Offer and how impact will be monitored and evidenced.

Appendix 4	Dorset's Expertise Offer	This appendix provides additional detail on Dorset's Expertise Offer (the local delivery model for Experts at Hand) expanding on the ambition set out in the main SEND Reform Plan to give a fuller picture of how the Expertise Offer will work in practice. It covers the design principles of the offer, the proposed menu of support, how the offer will be delivered and accessed by settings and how impact will be measured and evidenced.
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Executive Summary

A brief summary of your local system 'change story' – your local context, where you are now, where you want to get to in the next 3 years, how you know you are succeeding and how you will know you have achieved your vision for the next 3 years. Please include a brief qualitative summary. This summary should also include your assessment of current and forecast performance against the headline metrics.

Please structure your 'change story' using the following aims:

- *Build a 0-25 system where children and young people receive support to achieve and thrive through (a) more inclusive settings and (b) stronger local partnerships*
- *Improve capacity and capability of the mainstream and specialist workforce to identify and meet need*
- *Improve confidence of children, families, and stakeholders in reform and readiness of the system*
- *Stabilise finances and improve value for money*

500 words

- **Dorset enters this reform programme from a strong position**, with foundations in partnership working and inclusive practice, strong Early Years provision, capital investment and a history of co-design with children and families. The latest Area SEND Inspection awarded the highest grading, Children's Services were rated outstanding in the 2025 Ofsted ILACS inspection, and Dorset was a Wave One Pathfinder in the Families First programme.
- **Dorset's rural character brings real pressures that directly shape the SEND challenge**. With 49% of schools classed as rural against 18% nationally, many children begin their education in small, close-knit primary settings where needs are closely supported. The move to larger secondary settings can be a significant step, with both settings and families seeking the reassurance of statutory support in response to uncertainty about how needs will be met in a different environment. This is a significant factor in Dorset's EHCP growth of 136% since 2015/16 against 93% nationally, with the proportion in secondary settings rising to 33% against 24% nationally.
- **Local sufficiency gaps and limited local market competition drive reliance on high-cost independent placements**, while uneven inclusive practice across mainstream settings contributes to escalation into specialist provision.
- **Dorset's Local Partnership Maturity Assessment reinforces these pressures**: unintegrated data limits need identification; uneven mainstream capability, particularly for school moves, is contributing to EHCP growth and loss of parental confidence; neurodevelopmental and mental health pathways face capacity pressures; and value for money analysis is not consistently embedded.
- **Dorset has already begun to shift the system**. Phase 1 of the Inclusion Bases programme is complete, Phase 2 is underway, an inclusive classrooms pilot is active, and the Valuing SEND tool is supporting earlier identification of need. Outcomes for children with an EHCP at Key Stage 2 rose by 8-9 percentage points last year.
- **Over the next three years, Dorset will build a stronger 0-25 system anchored in locality-based Family Help and underpinned by Dorset's Expertise Offer (our local Experts at Hand)**. Mainstream settings will meet a wider range of need, Inclusion Bases will expand, AP will operate as an intervention rather than a destination, and early identification will be strengthened through Family Hubs, Valuing SEND and the Reception Ready model. Dorset's Birth to Settled Adulthood service provides an important foundation, and the reform programme will build on this existing infrastructure.
- **By 2029, EHCP growth is expected to slow to 2%, resulting in 5,559 EHCPs** – over 800 fewer than the unmitigated trajectory. New EHCNAs are expected to reduce to 609 from 632 and HNB growth will reduce significantly as the new model embeds.
- **Dorset's Expertise Offer will build capability** through consultation, training and outreach, supported by clear career pathways, agreed standards and a refreshed sufficiency strategy.
- **Confidence, co-production and value for money will be core measures of success**. We'll know reform is succeeding when families report clearer pathways, settings show greater confidence, more children are supported locally, and data shows a more sustainable HNB. The key measure of financial success will be reduced reliance on independent and out-of-area placements.

Section 1 – Vision and Goals

1. What the local area partnership is trying to achieve?

Please set out your goals for your local system. These should be clear, aligned to the vision set out in the Schools White Paper, small in number and measurable. These goals should include clear reference to:

- Outcomes for children
- Confidence of parents, carers and young people in the system
- Management of finances to secure value for money

250 words

Our Vision:

In Dorset, we want children and young people to be healthy, happy and safe, feel valued and understood, and achieve meaningful outcomes that enable them to lead fulfilling, independent lives. Through inclusive education, high-quality support and a strong partnership, we will ensure all children and young people are empowered to reach their full potential.

Dorset will deliver this vision by establishing a more inclusive, preventative and locally responsive system, underpinned by Dorset's Expertise Offer (our local Experts at Hand model), building confidence and capability across settings to identify and meet needs earlier.

Our goals are to:

- **Identify needs earlier and deliver timely support in the right setting:** increasing the proportion of children with SEND whose needs are met through SEN support, measured by a reduction in EHCNA requests, slowing EHCP growth and improved attainment and attendance.^{3.3}
- **Strengthen inclusive, local provision:** education settings meeting a wide range of needs confidently and consistently, evidenced by reduced variation in inclusive practice, increased access to key practitioners and fewer children in out-of-area or high-cost placements.
- **Improve outcomes and experiences for children, young people and families:** measured through co-produced parental confidence metrics, reduced disputes, improved school move experiences and direct feedback from children and young people.
- **Ensure long-term sustainability and effective use of resources:** evidenced by reduced spend on independent and distant placements, a stabilising High Needs Block and improved cost-effectiveness of early intervention.

*Progress will be owned by the **Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education**, providing accountability for delivery and improvement.*

Section 2 – Strategy

2. Where the local area partnership expects to be in the next 3 years

A description of what your local system would look like in the next 3 years in line with the national vision set out in the Schools White Paper and set within the context of where you are starting from as a local system.

In particular, as commissioning system partners, you should reflect on and agree what your fully fledged **Experts at Hand Offer** model should be and how this will be deployed via mainstream settings and providers (including those not based in your area – e.g. further education colleges attended by your young people) to build their capacity as well as identify and meet the needs of children and young people earlier and without the need for a statutory assessment for Education, Health and Care.

To help you fully consider the scope and scale of change required, you may find it useful to structure your response using these 4 building blocks of an inclusive system, reflecting on what is working well in your system, what you are most worried about, what needs to change, and how the enablers will help you achieve your 3 year vision.

When summarising where your local area partnership currently is, please include an assessment of where you are in reference to the core minimum requirements above and how you bridge the gap, making reference to and attaching additional documents that provide underlying evidence for your summary.

Strengthening inclusion across education settings– organising places and provision to meet as many needs as possible, as close to home as possible, with all settings and providers moving towards a shared understanding and consistent practices around inclusion.

System leadership, local partnership collaboration and co-production – putting in place the enabling conditions across a local area that ensures planning and provision reflects the local area & is joined up, including strategic co-production with parent carers and children and young people.

Access to specialist support and local placements – improving collaboration between settings and deploying expertise from a range of specialist and expert sources, to support schools and settings to meet the needs of children and young people earlier and locally.

Encouraging inclusive culture & behaviours – using funding and shared accountability towards a system that works for children and families while achieving value for money.

Overview

Note: superscript numbers in orange refer to the Core Minimum Requirements, as set out in Appendix 2, and show where the plan addresses each requirement. The roadmap in Q5 provides the primary audit trail for CMR coverage, with Q2 setting out the strategic rationale and Q6 showing how relevant Year 1 actions will be delivered.

Dorset starts from a strong base for SEND reform, with established accountability, governance and performance arrangements across the council and wider partnership^{4.1}. The proposed three-year blueprint below builds on the Dorset SEND Strategy 2024 to 2027 and the partnership vision that was agreed with children, young people, families, Education, Health and Care partners. It is also aligned to the Council Plan and our Babies, Children, Young People and Families Plan 2023-2033, ensuring that SEND reform is part of Dorset's wider commitment to children thriving, inclusive communities and effective use of public resources.

There is clear political and corporate support for this work: Ofsted recognised that "ambitious, family focused and child-centred senior leaders, including political and corporate leaders alongside multi-agency partners, have demonstrated an unwavering commitment to children." It also found that senior leaders have a "robust understanding" of practice and performance through strong management information, sophisticated reporting and multi-agency oversight.

This commitment is further reflected in Dorset Council's emerging North Star vision, which places better co-production with communities, prevention at scale and deep modernisation of practice at its heart, alongside a commitment to becoming a more inclusive and adaptive organisation. This SEND reform plan is a direct expression of those principles in action: shifting the system towards earlier support, stronger mainstream inclusion and more genuine partnership with families and communities. Specifically, the reform programme will benefit from, and contribute to, three corporate enablers that are central to the North Star vision: a council-wide move towards data-led decision-making, which will strengthen how Dorset plans, commissions and evaluates SEND provision; the developing corporate landlord model, which will support more strategic and joined-up oversight of property and asset development to enable the expansion of Inclusion Bases and specialist provision across place; and the council's commitment to locality and place-based delivery, which directly underpins the design of Dorset's Expertise Offer and the wider ambition to ensure children and young people receive the right support closer to home.

Dorset's delivery model will be LA-led and jointly governed with the ICB, with delivery integrated through existing locality Family Help arrangements. This is the optimal model for Dorset because it builds on established local relationships, reflects the county's rural geography, avoids creating a parallel service, and enables specialist education and health expertise to be targeted through shared data on need, setting readiness and local pressure points.^{1.1, 1.9, 1.10}

Over the next three years, these foundations will be built upon through the newly formed Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education, which will hold the partnership to account for delivery, outcomes and financial sustainability. Regular progress updates will be provided to our political leadership through existing democratic accountability. Dorset will also build on its strong Children's Services performance and quality assurance framework, clear commissioning arrangements and recognised workforce development approach to deliver reform with grip, pace and shared ownership.

Since 1st April 2026, NHS Dorset Integrated Care Board has been clustered with Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire (BSW) ICB and Somerset ICB, ensuring that improvements for children and young people with SEND are embedded within the future operating model of the system. As the ICB strengthens the role of place-based partnerships and transitions toward a strategic commissioning function, SEND services will increasingly be shaped and delivered through neighbourhood level, multidisciplinary teams^{1.1}. This alignment enables more consistent decision making, clearer accountability and earlier, more coordinated support for families. By situating SEND within the emerging place architecture and neighbourhood model, we will create a more responsive, integrated system that delivers the right support at the right time, closer to home.

Local blueprint for the next 3 years

Building blocks	Where we are <i>(a short summary of where you are now including a reflection on what is working well, what needs to change and the status of the enablers that underpin your system)</i>	Where we will be in the next 3 years <i>(a short summary of the vision for your local system in the next 3 years including the system enablers, reflecting how your Experts at Hand Offer model will underpin this vision, helping you scale and enhance what is working well and change what is not working so well)</i>
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Strengthening inclusion across education settings

What are we currently achieving?

Dorset has a clear and system-wide commitment to strengthening inclusion across educational settings, with strong foundations across all phases of education:

- **The Early Years sector is particularly strong**, providing high-quality provision that prepares children for the compulsory stages of education, underpinned by strong professional oversight and a well-functioning Best Start in Life dashboard. Best Start in Life Advisors, working as part of Dorset's Birth to Settled Adulthood service, play an important role in early identification and family support, working closely with families of pre-school children with complex needs to reduce barriers, promote inclusion and connect families to the right support at the earliest opportunity. In addition, the SEND Lead roles and health roles within the Best Start programme are well embedded within local 0-19 and SaLT teams and were highlighted in the BCP Inspection as great examples of our ability to evidence the early identification of SEND need.^{3.6} This provides a strong platform for Dorset to strengthen 0-5 childcare sufficiency for children with SEND, including a clearer understanding of place availability, gaps for children with complex and emerging needs, and the role of Best Start Family Hubs in supporting inclusive access to early education and childcare.
- **The Dorset Families First model also provides an integrated, locality-based approach** across six local areas, with well-embedded team structures and matrix management supporting consistent practice closer to communities. Furthermore, the Families First model also informs our Children and Young People's Mental Health Transformation Programme developing an integrated consultation and conversation based front door and integrated locality-based support.
- **A comprehensive proposition for mainstream staff is in place as part of Dorset's Ordinarily Available Provision offer, which includes training and workforce development opportunities.** This offer recently moved online to improve reach and engagement, and early evidence shows that this is helping to build inclusive practice across settings, with bespoke offers such as Therapeutic Thinking already showing clearly visible individual impact. However, take-up is varied and the system-wide impact on inclusive practice will need to be monitored going forward.
- **There is a growing outreach offer from Learning Centres and Special Schools who deliver research-led, high-quality provision**

What is our ambition for strengthening inclusion across education settings?

Dorset's ambition is for every education setting to be resourced and confident to meet the needs of its pupils, and clear on escalation routes for those with the most complex needs, so that children and young people with SEND can learn close to home and alongside their peers. By the end of the plan period:

- Every education setting will be able to clearly articulate the support available at universal level and confident in recognising appropriate access routes where more targeted support is required
- A shared, co-produced definition of inclusion, reflecting the government's seven principles, will underpin practice, expectations and accountability across all settings and system partners
- Early identification and intervention will be consistent and equitable across all education settings
- School moves at key stages and into adulthood will be well-planned and consistently delivered.
- Post-16 pathways to adulthood will be clearly articulated, consistently navigated and supported by timely specialist input with more young people accessing further education, training, employment and supported internships in mainstream settings close to home, and fewer requiring independent or non-maintained specialist placements.^{3.9}

System enablers

- **Workforce:** Dorset's existing workforce (including EP, SALT and OT services) already operating without significant waiting list pressures, which provides a strong foundation on which to strengthen inclusion across settings through the new Expertise model. This, alongside additional investment in workforce sufficiency and development, will further support mainstream settings to have the confidence and capability to deliver inclusive practice consistently.
- **Data and digital solutions:** the Valuing SEND tool, already demonstrating strong impact in Early Years, will enable further support to mainstream practice, a stronger grip on our inclusion baseline among settings, and robust monitoring and evaluation processes. This will integrate and complement additional local data indicators and processes.
- **Capital:** investment through the Inclusive Classroom programme will ensure the physical environment of mainstream settings actively supports inclusive practice, complementing the skills and confidence being

	and play an important role within the wider continuum of support, with a growing opportunity to expand and strengthen their outreach role to further develop mainstream inclusion across all phases, shifting the focus from individual pupil support towards whole-setting capacity building that develops mainstream inclusion across all phases. • The Valuing SEND tool and approach is providing an innovative digital way for educational settings to self-assess their provision and better understand the needs of pupils at the individual and cohort level. Launched in summer 2025, it is already demonstrating strong impact in Early Years, supporting more children to remain in mainstream settings and providing a useful mechanism for targeting support. There is now a clear opportunity to expand its use across more settings to support system-wide improvements, particularly to support school moves, in recognition of this growing challenge across Dorset and in alignment with the intention that from 2029/30 children with EHCPs will be assessed against the new threshold before moving to the next phase of education. • Monitoring arrangements are starting to be strengthened, supported by changes to Ofsted inspections and local quality assurance of funded provisions. • Early Years and school-age data dashboards provide a detailed and comprehensive view of need, supporting evidence-based practice and planning. Additionally, our Dorset Intelligence & Insights service includes a SEND report that enables broader health and care data, strengthening our understanding of children and young people's needs and partnership planning alongside our health SEND datasets available at Place level. • The Children and Young People's Public Health Nursing Service (CYPPHNS), commissioned by Dorset Council through the Public Health grant, delivers the Healthy Child Programme across Dorset – including Health Visitors and School Nurses. While a universal service for all children and families, the CYPPHNS plays an important role in the early identification and support of emerging needs, particularly in the early years before school. Health Visitors are already well-connected to early years teams on the ground, acting as trusted professionals who support families, advocate on their behalf and link them into the wider system. This existing infrastructure provides an important foundation for the early identification and intervention ambitions set out in this plan and aligns closely with Dorset's Best Start in Life plan. • Dorset's Preparation for Adulthood team, operating within the	developed across the workforce. How will we achieve our ambition over the next 3 years? Achieving this ambition will require coordinated action, building on Dorset's strong existing foundations and the distinctive advantages of its locality-based Family First model: 1) Strengthening our Universal Offer for all settings A strengthened Universal Offer will address the variation in inclusive practice identified in the Local Partnership Maturity Assessment, ensuring every mainstream setting has the confidence, capability and shared expectations needed to meet a wide range of needs – reducing escalation, building parental confidence in mainstream provision, and enabling more children and young people with SEND to be successfully supported locally, with a particular focus on key school moves.^{3.3} • Building on the National Inclusion Standards and an early version of the Inclusion Charter developed by school leaders including MAT CEOs, Dorset will further develop and agree an ambitious, system-wide Inclusion Charter in partnership with school leaders, MAT CEOs, health and care partners, post-16 and further education providers, and the Dorset Parent Carer Council^{3.1, 3.2}. The Charter will establish clear and shared expectations for inclusive practice across the full 0-25 range – from Early Years through to further education and the move into adulthood – ensuring that the commitment to inclusion does not diminish as young people move through and beyond the education system. Involving the Parent Carer Council centrally in this process will ensure the Charter reflects family perspectives and builds trust in what the whole system is committed to delivering. • A quality inclusion framework will be introduced alongside a clearly articulated Universal and Ordinarily Available Provision Offer – including pathways, support available and access routes – with gaps identified and addressed and existing good practice shared and scaled across the system. The framework will incorporate a broader set of inclusion indicators, including attendance, exclusions, EBSA, EHE, placement stability and parental confidence, used consistently at whole area governance and locality cluster levels to understand the impact of the Universal Offer, identify variation and inform decision making. • The Universal and Ordinarily Available Provision Offer will be reviewed and refreshed, anchored in the National Inclusion Standards as the shared framework for what mainstream settings are expected to provide, informed by robust local needs analysis to ensure it is explicitly targeted at the most commonly occurring and growing areas of need. This will include embedding and scaling well-evidenced early intervention
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	Birth to Settled Adulthood service, supports young people aged 14-25 to develop independence and access the right information, advice and planning as they approach adulthood – including Care Act assessments and Preparation for Adulthood Plans^{3.9}. This existing offer, alongside Dorset's Birth to Settled Adulthood service's Outcomes Framework, developed in partnership with young people and families, provides a strong foundation for the system-wide ambition to embed preparation for adulthood as a consistent expectation across all settings from the earliest stages. What are our current challenges in strengthening inclusion across educational settings? Building on these strong foundations, Dorset's local data and Local Partnership Maturity Assessment have identified some clear areas where focused development will help us drive further improvement in strengthening inclusion across educational settings as part of this reform programme: • There is an opportunity to develop a shared, co-produced local definition of inclusion across the system. This will underpin consistent expectations, practice and accountability across all education settings. • There is also a need to develop a more systematic view of 0-5 childcare sufficiency for children with SEND. While Dorset has strong Early Years practice, the partnership needs a clearer locality-level picture of inclusive childcare availability, specialist support, gaps for children with complex and emerging needs, and the actions required to ensure families can access suitable early education and childcare close to home.^{3.6} • There is evidence of strong inclusive practice across mainstream settings, but this is still too varied, with confidence and capability still uneven in places, contributing to differences in the experiences of children and families and a rise in statutory requests and escalation to specialist provision. Reducing this variation is a priority. There is also a recognition that post-16 and further education settings are not yet consistently engaged within the inclusion agenda, and there is a clear opportunity to bring them closer into the system, ensuring that the ambition for consistent, high-quality inclusive practice extends across the full 0-25 range and that young people with SEND experience the same quality of support as they move into and through post-16 education. • The primary to secondary school moves are a notable pressure point in Dorset, with data indicating an increase in statutory	approaches across mainstream settings, building on Dorset's existing strong foundations, including the Balanced System approach for speech, language and communication, the Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) programme to support neurodevelopmental needs including autism spectrum disorder, and the practice developed within Learning Centres to support social, emotional and mental health needs.^{3.4} • Strengthening school moves, particularly from primary to secondary and into post-16, will be a central focus of the strengthened universal offer, directly responding to the pressure on EHCP demand identified at these key stages. Building on the strong foundations already established in Early Years, the Valuing SEND tool will be extended to primary and secondary settings and embedded as the consistent mechanism for assessing setting readiness, understanding individual need and sharing information at key stage moves. This will ensure that both the sending and receiving setting have a clear, shared picture of a child's needs ahead of school moves, building confidence across phases and giving families the reassurance they need that support will be in place from the outset, reducing the uncertainty that can drive demand for statutory assessment. The Reception Ready model will be scaled to support early years to primary school moves, with an equivalent approach developed for the primary to secondary and secondary to post-16 stages over the course of the plan period.^{3.8} • The secondary to post-16 transition will be a particular focus, with a new post-16 sufficiency strategy (referenced in more detail in the Enabling Inclusive Culture and Behaviour building block) informing how pathways are clarified, how information flows consistently between settings and how additional support is available in a timely way to support young people and families at this critical stage.^{3.10} • The refreshed offer will also ensure that the learning and expertise from these approaches is accessible to all settings from Early Years to further education, with clear guidance on deployment, supported by Dorset's Expertise Offer and the training and workforce development programme. Settings will be supported to identify which approaches are most relevant to their context through the Valuing SEND tool setting readiness data, enabling a more targeted and evidence-informed approach to early intervention across all phases. • The refreshed universal offer will reflect a whole-system understanding of inclusion, extending beyond education settings to encompass the wider network of universal support available to children, young people and families including Health Visiting, community prevention services and family support. This recognises that inclusion begins long
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	assessment requests around this stage. Dorset's high proportion of small rural primary settings is likely to be a contributing factor: where children with SEND have been successfully supported in close-knit, smaller environments within primaries, there can be uncertainty, among families and settings alike, about whether those needs can be met with the same consistency and responsiveness in a larger, more complex secondary setting. This uncertainty, compounded by the natural complexity of moving between very different educational environments and variation in how needs present across phases, has led to increased demand for statutory assessment as a means of formalising and securing support ahead of (or shortly following) a school move, even where the underlying level of need has not changed. Strengthening cross-phase communication, building shared understanding of need across settings, and ensuring that all parts of the system feel confident and well-supported to meet need at every stage is therefore an important priority within this reform programme. • The take-up of our Ordinarily Available Provision Offer and staff training is varied and the system-wide impact on inclusive practice is not yet monitored. Building on the strong individual impact already visible, the next step is to track and evidence impact more systematically to enable targeted and evidence-based workforce development across educational settings. • The outreach role of Learning Centres and Special Schools, while valued, is not yet consistently embedded or equitably accessed across all localities and phases. There is a clear opportunity to strengthen and extend this as part of a coherent inclusion continuum, and to align this with Dorset's Expertise Offer for educational settings. • Local self-evaluation frameworks can be further developed to identify and address variation in inclusive practice consistently across settings – strengthening these, alongside a shared understanding of what good inclusive practice looks like in Dorset, will support more confident and consistent improvement. • Early Years and school-age data are not yet integrated, limiting their use as a proactive, system-wide planning tool. Combining these strong existing datasets presents a significant opportunity to better understand children's needs and journeys through the SEND system.	before a child enters a formal education setting, and that the conditions for successful inclusion are shaped by the quality of support available across the whole system from the earliest stages. • By the end of the plan period, the system will confidently demonstrate a sustained shift towards mainstream inclusion. All settings will be able to clearly articulate and evidence the impact of universal support, parental confidence in mainstream provision will have demonstrably increased – with families feeling informed, reassured and actively involved in decisions about their child's support – and the data will evidence a reduction in escalation to statutory assessment as confidence in the system grows.^{3.5} Further details about the Dorset's strengthened Universal Offer are included in Appendix 3. 2) Dorset's Expertise Offer (our local Experts at Hand model) Strengthening inclusion across educational settings requires a fundamental shift in how specialist expertise reaches mainstream settings. Dorset's Expertise Offer directly responds to the maturity assessment's identification of uneven confidence and capability across mainstream settings, providing a coordinated, locality-based model that builds school capability from within, reducing reliance on escalation and ensuring that specialist expertise reaches all settings equitably, so that more children and young people with SEND can be successfully supported locally. • The Expertise Offer will support early years settings, mainstream schools and further education providers across the 0 to 25 age range, including out-of-area mainstream FE settings attended by Dorset young people with SEND^{1.11, 4.4}. The offer will focus on whole-setting support, tailored guidance, strategic advice, coaching and some group-level intervention, and will be additional to existing statutory and 1:1 support.^{1.3, 3.3} • The offer will integrate within the existing locality model, ensuring support is delivered in an equitable and coordinated way, based on need and evidence of setting readiness, with the Valuing SEND tool and other relevant integrated datasets directly informing how the offer is targeted and delivered across localities. This means that Early Years data will be fully integrated with school-level data to support proactive, system-wide inclusion planning and ensure the Expertise Offer responds to emerging need across all phases, including post-16 and further education, which are recognised as a central part of the education system.^{1.1} • The Expertise Offer will align with and strengthen the Healthy Child Programme, ensuring that Health Visitors and School Nurses are connected to the locality-based model and that their early identification and
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		family support work is integrated within the wider inclusion infrastructure. • Initial focus will be on aligning the existing offer from across key practitioners to mainstream settings with local analysis identifying priority areas where mainstream settings most need support to strengthen inclusion, including waiting times in neurodevelopmental pathways, growing need in speech, language and communication, social, emotional and mental health, and an increase in emotionally based school avoidance. • The Expertise Offer will be rolled out across all Dorset localities during Year 1, ensuring consistent monitoring, evaluation and iterative improvement as the model embeds^{1.8}. Recruitment to posts across all localities will begin in Year 1, with the full offer operational across Dorset in Year 2. The offer will be integrated within Dorset's multi-disciplinary Families First locality model, building on the trust, professional networks and ways of working already well established across Dorset's communities through the Families First programme. This integration ensures a coherent and joined-up response across SEND and family support, strengthening early identification and intervention across localities. The model will be designed to learn and improve continuously by actively monitoring parental confidence of the offer and using this to inform ongoing development. By the end of Year 2, all localities will have a fully functioning and embedded Expertise Offer, tailored to local need and starting to evidence clear impact on mainstream confidence, escalation rates and outcomes for children, young people and families. • The composition of multi-disciplinary teams across each locality will be informed by a detailed needs analysis and supported by a refreshed SEND workforce sufficiency strategy, ensuring the right mix of expertise is in place to deliver outreach, advisory and specialist input, build mainstream capability through consultation, coaching and training, and make support available without the need for a formal diagnosis.^{1.7} • Alignment with delivery of the Children and Young People's Mental Health Transformation Programme will ensure a no-wrong-door approach to emotional wellbeing and mental health, integrated within localities and Dorset's Expertise Offer, further strengthening early intervention for one of Dorset's most prevalent areas of need in social, emotional and mental health. • Dorset's Family First place-based locality model will be used to ensure equitable access, allocating a notional capacity per locality rather than allowing demand-led pull from the most proactive settings^{1.11}. Each locality multi-disciplinary team will provide a guaranteed universal minimum offer per setting, with additional targeted input triggered by Valuing SEND
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		data, EBSA and attendance indicators, and school move pressure points. Dorset's Expertise Offer will include a dedicated strand of support for post-16 and preparation for adulthood, providing additional expertise to mainstream settings, including schools and FE colleges, to support young people aged 14+ across the four Preparation for Adulthood outcomes: health, employment, independent living and community inclusion. This will include training and coaching for settings, support for improved Annual Reviews and forward planning, guidance on navigating the post-16 landscape, and tools to support risk assessment and family engagement. Building on the expertise of Dorset's Birth to Settled Adulthood service, this element of the offer will make specialist knowledge accessible to mainstream settings supporting young people with less complex needs, ensuring more young people can access and sustain mainstream further education and supported pathways to adulthood. The Expertise Offer will be commissioned as a shared system infrastructure rather than a traditional service contract, jointly overseen by the LA and ICB with shared outcomes, shared performance oversight and pooled or aligned budgets where possible^{1.1}. It will integrate specialist support, inclusive practice and locality-based working into a single coherent system, avoiding fragmentation between EPs, SALT, OT, Specialist Teachers, mental health inputs and other key practitioners, and align explicitly with the sufficiency strategy, Inclusion Base outreach expectations and the AP three-tier model^{1.3}. Included in this model will be two Advanced SALT Practitioners, expected to be at least NHS Agenda for Change Band 8a and HCPC registered, who will work across the ICB Cluster to provide clinical oversight, support consistent practice and ensure quality of delivery^{1.7}. The roles will be developed by the Local Area Leadership Team during the first half of 2026 and are expected to be in line with the recently received guidance and the four pillars from the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, which are: clinical leadership; enhancing support into education; strategic leadership; leading on research, innovation and improvement. These posts will be hosted in the ICB under the Chief Nursing Officer and will work closely with the DCO team. Commissioning will focus on outcomes and system behaviours rather than volume of activity, with core commissioned outcomes including improved mainstream confidence and capability, earlier identification without statutory escalation, reduced variation in inclusive practice across localities and reduced reliance on EHC needs assessments and specialist placements over time. Aligned to this, the Local Authority and ICB will continue to work closely together to move to outcomes-based strategic commissioning models which include health outcome improvements.
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		• Clear career pathways for the SEND workforce will be defined, alongside well-articulated and agreed minimum standards, supporting development, retention and the consistent quality of practice needed to drive inclusion across all settings. Governance of workforce development will be held by the Children's Workforce Board, reporting to the council's Children's Senior Leadership Team. • The workforce, at all levels, will be supported to interpret and act on inclusion data through targeted development and practical tools, ensuring that data-informed decision making about inclusive practice is embedded across the system rather than concentrated at a strategic level. • The Expertise Offer has been, and will continue to be, co-designed with partners across the system, including health, DPCC, SENDIASS and education settings. A robust engagement plan will ensure continued co-production throughout planning and delivery.^{1,2} Further details about the Dorset's Expertise Offer are included in Appendix 4. 3) Strengthening collaboration between settings Strengthening inclusion across educational settings cannot be achieved by individual schools working in isolation. Building on Dorset's existing locality structures and early positive examples of collaborative working, this workstream will develop a culture of shared ownership and collective responsibility for inclusion across the system, ensuring that expertise, resources and accountability are distributed more equitably. • Building on existing locality relationships and early examples of education setting clusters, Dorset will establish a shared vision and clear principles and expectations for collaboration across settings, supported by the new Inclusion Charter and Quality Inclusion Framework and underpinned by robust governance structures. • Existing resources, expertise and system pressures will be mapped to identify opportunities for more effective joint working and pooling of resources, building on what is already working well across localities.^{2,3, 4,4} • Early collaborative models – including shared specialist staff, pooled resources and cluster-based peer support – will be developed and tested before being scaled into formalised cluster arrangements, fully aligned with Dorset's Expertise Offer and Quality Inclusion Framework. An initial focus of this collaborative work will be on supporting school moves, particularly from primary to secondary, directly responding
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		to the pressure on EHCP demand identified at this stage. By bringing together feeder and receiver settings within cluster arrangements, Dorset will build the shared understanding, relationships and confidence needed to support children and young people more effectively across key stage boundaries – reducing the uncertainty that can drive statutory assessment requests and ensuring that more children move across key stages successfully without the need for an EHCP. • Formalised collaborative models will include pooled funding arrangements, shared services and multi-setting support teams, with regular communication, oversight and accountability mechanisms embedded as routine practice^{2,3, 4,4}. The Valuing SEND tool will be central to this, providing a consistent, shared picture of individual need and setting readiness that travels with the child through school moves. • By the end of the plan period, collaborative models will be embedded as business-as-usual practice across Dorset, with impact regularly evaluated and acted upon, and a consolidated culture of shared ownership and system-wide responsibility for inclusion firmly established.
Access to specialist support and local placements	What are we currently achieving? Dorset has well-established locality arrangements that enable many children and young people with SEND to access specialist support close to home and within their local communities: • Early identification is a particular strength, supported through effective practice across Family Hubs, digital Section 23 notifications and two-year checks, where participation rates exceed the national average. The CYPHNS, including Health Visitors and School Nurses, plays a central role within this early identification infrastructure, providing universal reach to all families in Dorset and acting as a trusted first point of contact for families with emerging concerns, connecting them to the right support at the earliest opportunity. • Dorset's integrated front door, delivered through the Family Support and Advice Line, provides a single point of access for families and practitioners seeking safeguarding support, Family Help and advice on the SEN graduated approach. This model is continuing to evolve through the integration of a dedicated SEND team and with strong collaboration with the Designated Clinical Officer for SEND and health partners, strengthening county-wide approaches to new assessment requests and improving access to SEND expertise through close links with Family Hubs and the Early Support offer.	What is our ambition for strengthening access to specialist support and local placements? Dorset's ambition is for every child and young person with SEND to receive the right support at the right time, as close to home as possible, within a joined-up and efficient inclusive ecosystem where expertise is shared across settings and specialist provision is used earlier, more flexibly and more effectively. By the end of the plan period: • Support and Specialist Inclusion Bases, Special Schools and Learning Centres, will play a clearer, more connected role within the system, with outreach and capacity-building to mainstream settings embedded as a core expectation • Alternative Provision will be firmly repositioned as a time-limited intervention rather than a destination, with clear and consistently applied reintegration pathways • Local sufficiency will have improved significantly, with fewer children and young people relying on out-of-area or high-cost independent placements • A culture of shared responsibility will be established, where education settings collaborate consistently to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND. • Dorset's Expertise Offer will ensure specialist expertise is coordinated,

	• At a locality level, Dorset has embedded multi-agency working across Inclusion, SEND, Youth Work, Best Start in Life Advisors, Educational Psychologists, Specialist Teachers, Education Challenge Leads, the Virtual School, Social Workers and Family Workers, enabling coordinated support for children, young people, families and education settings, supporting earlier problem-solving and more joined-up access to specialist advice and intervention. • Dorset's Birth to Settled Adulthood (B2SA) service also provides a joined-up, multi-agency offer for children and young people with complex additional needs, bringing together Best Start in Life Advisors, locality social care teams, paediatric occupational therapy, short breaks, a Preparation for Adulthood team and a keyworker service. Co-designed with families, B2SA provides a single point of contact and consistent, coordinated support from birth through to adulthood. For those with the most complex needs, the B2SA Keyworker Team supports children and young people with a learning disability and/or autism on the Dorset Dynamic Support Register or at risk of mental health hospital admission, reducing unnecessary hospital admissions and ensuring care takes place in the community wherever possible. Together, B2SA represents a strong existing platform on which the reform programme will build, directly complementing the ambition to strengthen local specialist capacity and reduce reliance on high-cost and distant provision. • Unlike many areas, established Educational Psychology, Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy services are already operating without significant waiting list pressures, alongside specialist teachers and education advisers^{1,7}. Speech and Language Therapy pathways are timely, with the Balanced System approach fully embedded in Dorset, helping to build capability within education settings alongside direct specialist input. Educational Psychologists and Specialist Teachers work closely alongside Dorset's Family Offer to provide regular locality-based support for schools and settings. • Learning Centres and Special Schools deliver high-quality specialist support for children and young people with more complex needs, while contributing outreach expertise to mainstream settings to strengthen inclusive practice across the system. • Analytical and sufficiency work has been undertaken to understand current and future demand, particularly to support the implementation of Inclusion Bases, including detailed demand and cost modelling, locality-level analysis, travel impact assessment and	consistently accessible and equitably deployed across all localities, building mainstream capability and reducing the need for formal escalation into specialist provision. System enablers • Workforce: existing workforce and multi-agency work arrangements provide a strong platform for the expanded specialist offer. Additional investment in workforce sufficiency and creative role design will ensure that as local provision grows, the right practitioners are in place to staff, sustain and extend it. • Capital: investment through the Capital Programme will enable expansion of Specialist Inclusion Bases, directly reducing reliance on out-of-area and independent placements. • Data and digital solutions: local data and insights will be our basis for building, updating and strengthening the existing sufficiency analysis. This will enable us to ensure that investment is targeted on where it will have the greatest impact on local access, outcomes and value for money. How will we achieve our ambition? Achieving this ambition requires coordinated action across the system, building on Dorset's strong existing foundations while addressing the sufficiency, capacity and consistency challenges identified in the Local Partnership Maturity Assessment. 1) Dorset's Expertise Offer Dorset's Expertise Offer will act as the connective tissue of this building block, ensuring that specialist input is coordinated, consistently accessed and equitably delivered across all localities, directly addressing the maturity assessment's finding that local provision does not yet consistently meet demand across all pathways and phases. • The Expertise Offer will integrate specialist support, inclusive practice and locality-based working into a single coherent system, reducing duplication and strengthening clarity of roles across the partnership. • It will be commissioned to build capability, not replace responsibility, specifying that experts deliver consultation, coaching, modelling and joint problem-solving rather than take-over interventions, with time-limited involvement, clear exit points and explicit links to the Inclusion Charter, Quality Inclusion Framework and SENCO professional development pathways. • Special Schools and Learning Centres will have a clearer and more
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	identification of priority areas for development, providing a strong evidence base for future investment decisions.^{2.8} • Significant work has also been undertaken to strengthen system infrastructure, including clear specifications for Inclusion Bases, strengthened admissions criteria, workforce training and support arrangements and quality assurance frameworks, creating a more consistent and scalable foundation for future development. What are our current challenges in ensuring access to specialist support and local placements? Building on these strong foundations, Dorset's self-assessment and Local Partnership Maturity Assessment identify several areas requiring focused development: • Dorset faces significant sufficiency pressures, with EHCP demand projected to grow by 33% to around 1,964 plans requiring specialist provision by 2032^{2.1}. Support gaps, particularly in Cognition and Learning, are driving "mis-pathwaying" into higher-cost provision, with around £31 million spent annually on independent placements at an average of £63,000 per pupil and only 174 Inclusion Base places currently commissioned across Communication and Interaction and SEMH. Dorset's rural geography compounds these pressures through higher transport costs and reduced local access to timely support.^{2.7} • Dorset's rural context also shapes the local specialist provision market in ways that create additional cost pressure. With fewer special school places available locally than in more urban areas, there is limited local market competition, which can contribute to higher placement costs and fewer alternatives available to the local authority when seeking to meet complex needs. Developing a stronger and more diverse local sufficiency offer is therefore not only an inclusion priority but an important lever for achieving better value from the High Needs Block. The opening of Osprey Quay special free school in 2029 will begin to address this, providing much-needed additional local capacity, but in the meantime this market dynamic continues to place pressure on both placement decisions and high needs expenditure. • Increasing demand for specialist provision, particularly across neurodevelopmental and mental health pathways, is creating pressure on capacity and timeliness in some areas, limiting early intervention and affecting the system's ability to sustain mainstream placements.	consistently embedded outreach role integrated with the Expertise Offer, with outreach expectations embedded within commissioning arrangements to ensure system-wide rather than site-based impact.^{1.6} • Workforce design will move away from a narrow focus on hard-to-fill posts towards a more flexible and creative approach, commissioning roles and skill mixes that strengthen both specialist and mainstream capability, including assistant and associate roles working under qualified practitioners, and rotational posts across specialist and mainstream settings to strengthen shared understanding and workforce flexibility. • Investment in training and development will support the expansion of Inclusion Bases, strengthen the outreach role of Special Schools and Learning Centres, and embed the Expertise Offer across the system by the end of Year 2, ensuring a skilled and adaptable workforce is in place across all tiers of provision. • Investment in workforce training and development will be a critical enabler of this building block, equipping Inclusion Base staff, specialist setting workforces and Expertise Offer practitioners with the skills and confidence needed to build mainstream capability across all localities. A refreshed SEND workforce sufficiency strategy will underpin this, mapping current strengths and gaps to ensure that the training and development offer is targeted and aligned to the new model, and that it sets out clear career pathways, agreed minimum standards and a creative approach to workforce design (including assistant and associate posts and rotational opportunities across specialist and mainstream settings). Together, this will build sustainable system-wide capacity and ensure the workforce is ready to support the growth of local sufficiency over the plan period. 2) Inclusion Bases Expanding and strengthening the Inclusion Base network directly addresses the maturity assessment's finding that local sufficiency does not yet consistently meet demand, resulting in ongoing reliance on out-of-area and independent placements. As part of the Dorset SEND reforms, two distinct types of Inclusion Base will be developed, reflecting different commissioning arrangements and levels of need. • Specialist Inclusion Bases (LA-commissioned): These will be commissioned and funded by Dorset Council and will deliver specialist, high-intensity support for children and young people with more complex needs. They are designed for those who can continue to access aspects of the mainstream curriculum but require a stable, bespoke combination of specialist provision and mainstream inclusion. These bases form the initial priority in the delivery plan, addressing current sufficiency gaps and reducing reliance on high-cost placements. LA colleagues are
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	• Post-16 data in Dorset indicates increasing use of independent and non-maintained specialist settings, growing NEET figures and high levels of AP use for young people with SEND, pointing to a significant opportunity to strengthen mainstream inclusion and local pathways for young people as they transition into adulthood. The post-16 landscape is complex and multi-faceted, and mainstream settings reporting that they lack the capacity and expertise to navigate it confidently with young people and families. • While Dorset has established local infrastructure and specialist expertise, local sufficiency does not yet consistently meet demand across all pathways and phases, resulting in ongoing reliance on out-of-area and independent placements driven by both need and parental preference. • The outreach role of Learning Centres and Special Schools, while valued, is not yet consistently embedded or equitably accessed across all localities. There is a clear opportunity to strengthen and extend this reach as part of a coherent inclusion continuum. • While strong sufficiency data and analytical work exists, demand and cost modelling and long-term scenario planning are not yet fully embedded as core planning tools across the partnership. • Value for money analysis across inclusion interventions, AP and external placements is not yet consistently informing investment decisions, making it harder to demonstrate the impact of local provision and make the case for further investment in local sufficiency. Reducing reliance on out-of-area placements and strengthening local sufficiency is therefore a key strategic priority for the partnership, ensuring more children and young people can be supported effectively within their local communities.	collaborating with MAT leaders on the specialist inclusion base programme with the 6 bases proposed for 2026/27 being planned and delivered in partnership with 4 of Dorset's largest MATs.^{2,3} • Support Inclusion Bases (school-commissioned): These will be developed, commissioned and delivered by mainstream schools and MATs and will provide targeted support for commonly occurring SEND, including small group work, evidence-based interventions and reasonable adjustments. These bases will support children whose needs go beyond the Universal Offer but do not require specialist placement. The development of this model will be phased across the plan period, building on the capacity, expertise and confidence generated through the initial rollout of specialist bases. • The LA and local MATs will continue to work collaboratively by sharing data on local need, available estates and projected pupil demand to jointly identify the most appropriate sites for inclusion bases. Building on the strategic planning forums and co-produced feasibility work already underway, the LA and MATs will continue to seek opportunities to align resources, expertise and long-term sufficiency plans to design provision that meets local inclusion priorities and supports earlier intervention. • A finalised and agreed SEND Sufficiency and Inclusion Base Delivery Plan, aligned to SEND reform and the capital programme, will provide a clear framework for this phased expansion, setting out the sequencing from specialist to broader mainstream-led provision, alongside established governance, delivery oversight and partnership engagement mechanisms. • Inclusion Bases will be expanded in phased tranches across localities and phases, with Phase 2 already commissioned and early phases prioritising LA-commissioned specialist bases to address immediate gaps in Cognition and Learning and SEMH provision. Subsequent phases will increasingly support mainstream schools and MATs to develop Support Inclusion Bases, ensuring a sustainable system-wide model of graduated support.^{2,3} • The network will provide high-quality, cost-effective provision closer to home, with existing and new Inclusion Bases operating as stable, predictable provision embedded within locality planning and school improvement conversations. • Inclusion Bases will increasingly function as centres of expertise, outreach and system leadership for inclusion, with specialist inclusion bases and Learning Centres supporting workforce development, and support bases strengthening inclusive practice across mainstream settings.
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		• The Inclusion Base network will ultimately cover all Dorset localities and key phases, including post-16 pathways where appropriate, with robust quality assurance mechanisms in place and impact on inclusion, placement stability and outcomes regularly evaluated and shared across the system.^{2.4} • A post-16 sufficiency analysis (referenced in more detail in building block 'encouraging inclusive culture and behaviour') will inform where and how Inclusion Base capacity extends into post-16 pathways, ensuring the network covers the full 0-25 range and that young people do not face a cliff-edge in local provision as they move beyond secondary education. 4) Align AP practice and provision to the three-tier model Recommissioning Alternative Provision to align with the three-tier model responds to the maturity assessment's finding that the role of AP as part of an inclusion continuum is not yet fully articulated, embedded or consistently understood by all partners.^{1.4} • A dedicated strategic lead for AP will be in post and embedded within the AP system, with clear system-wide expectations for the three-tier model established and understood across all settings. • Learning Centres will sit at the centre of this approach, recognised as central to the delivery of inclusive AP – providing targeted intervention, a robust outreach offer as part of Tier 1 and a clear expectation of reintegration into mainstream as part of routine practice. • The shift to the three-tier model will be actively supported, with a focus on promoting short-term placements and strengthening reintegration pathways, so that AP is no longer seen as a "destination" by settings, families or children and young people. • Commissioning of AP will be strengthened, with stable, aligned and routinely reviewed delivery arrangements, underpinned by robust governance and joint working between the local authority and AP providers.^{1.5} • By the end of the plan period, the three-tier model will be embedded as a core element of Dorset's inclusive ecosystem, with Learning Centres' outreach role firmly established and the system able to demonstrate clear impact on inclusion, reintegration and outcomes.
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System leadership, local partnership collaboration and co-production

What are we currently achieving?

Dorset has strong system leadership foundations, with well-established governance, a shared vision across partners and effective multi-agency arrangements that consistently lead to good outcomes for children and young people:

- **The recent creation of the Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education** – merged from the SEND and Inclusion Partnership Board and Dorset Education Board to simplify system leadership and bring inclusion to the centre – reflects Dorset's vision for mainstream inclusion and provides a stronger foundation for strategic oversight and joined-up working. At a strategic level, the Alliance brings together education (including MATs and post-16 settings), health, care, parent carers, voluntary and community sector and youth voice groups to set shared priorities and ensure joint accountability.^{4.2}
- At an operational level, **multi-agency delivery groups lead co-design and implementation across key workstreams**, with locality forums and community networks enabling continuous feedback and supporting consistent inclusive practice at a local level – providing a clear golden thread from strategic leadership to frontline practice.
- **These arrangements have strong external validation:** the most recent Ofsted inspection evidence reflects effective multi-agency working and positive outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
- **Co-production is a recognised strength at a strategic level**, with the Dorset Parent Carer Council embedded across governance and delivery at all levels, and SENCO networks and termly partnership forums providing established mechanisms for engaging settings, maintained schools and MATs in co-owning the inclusion agenda.^{5.1}
- **Dorset's Birth to Settled Adulthood service was co-designed in direct response to feedback from families**, who asked for a single point of contact, earlier planning for adulthood, practitioners who listen and work together, and less repetition of their story. This is a strong existing example of co-production translating into genuine service redesign, and provides a model for the co-production approach that will underpin the wider reform programme.

What is our ambition?

Dorset's ambition is for education, health and care services to work in genuine partnership with one another, alongside families, children and young people and other system partners, to deliver better outcomes for children and young people with SEND. By the end of the plan period:

- System leadership will operate with clarity, consistency and trust across all levels – from strategic governance to frontline practice – with education fully represented alongside health and care partners
- Educational settings (including schools, MATs, further education providers and early years settings) will play a more active and consistently embedded role in system leadership, moving beyond operational delivery to shared strategic ownership of the inclusion agenda, with educational leaders regularly engaged in governance, commissioning decisions and system-wide accountability for outcomes.
- Co-production will be embedded as a standard part of service design and review, with clear and evidenced impact of participation on commissioning decisions and strategic priorities
- Joint commissioning arrangements will be refreshed and underpinned by high-quality shared data, supporting more responsive and sustainable decision-making across the partnership
- A robust communications and engagement strategy will have built trust and transparency across the system, ensuring all partners, families and young people understand their role and what they can expect

System enablers

- **Workforce:** development at leadership level will build on Dorset's already strong track record of multi-agency working, deepening data literacy, co-production skills and collective confidence to drive reform consistently across the system.
- **Data and digital solutions:** existing datasets and the development of the integrated data dashboard will enable us to move to a more robust shared evidence base that makes genuine joint accountability and commissioning possible across all partners.

How will we achieve our ambition to further strengthen system leadership, local partnership collaboration and collaboration?

Achieving this ambition requires coordinated action across all partners, building on Dorset's strong existing governance foundations while addressing the

	Dorset is committed to transparency about the nature of involvement at each stage, distinguishing clearly between engagement, co-production and collaboration so that partners, families and young people understand their role and what they can expect. Dorset has well-established mechanisms to support early resolution of concerns. The Family Support and Advice Line provides a strengthened front door through which families can seek advice and support, as well as raise concerns, at the earliest opportunity through a conversational model, incorporating the Dorset Education Advice Line for parents, carers and professionals supporting children with SEND. In addition, the Family Information Service signposts families to the wider network of support including SENDIASS (Family Action), which together reduce the likelihood of concerns escalating to formal processes such as EHCP assessments or tribunal. Early resolution pathways are already embedded, including mediation, disagreement resolution and 'next steps' meetings with locality SEND workers for decisions relating to EHC needs assessments. A robust performance management framework is already in place, with a comprehensive SEND performance dashboard tracking timeliness across EHCP processes, dispute resolution rates and outcomes, reviewed weekly at operational level and monitored monthly through the Children's Services performance board and partnership governance forums. What are our current challenges with regards to system leadership, local partnership collaboration and co-production? Building on these strong foundations, Dorset's self-assessment and Local Partnership Maturity Assessment have identified a set of areas that can help us further strengthen practice across this building block: - While the system leadership architecture is strong, there is a recognised need to bring education more fully into strategic governance – particularly MAT CEOs and school leaders, whose consistent engagement at system leadership level will be essential for driving inclusion as a shared priority across all settings. The new Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education is starting to address this at strategic level, but further efforts are required to ensure engagement is strong across the board. Joint commissioning arrangements need refreshing in light of ongoing ICB restructures, to ensure that the renewed partnership	consistency, participation and data challenges identified in the Local Partnership Maturity Assessment. 1) Strengthening system leadership and partnership Strengthening system leadership and partnership directly addresses the maturity assessment's finding that while governance structures are strong, education is not yet fully embedded at a strategic level and joint commissioning arrangements need refreshing – both of which are essential for driving inclusion as a genuinely shared system-wide priority. The Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education will provide strategic leadership and challenge, bringing together education, health, care, parent carers and youth voice to oversee progress, risks and outcomes across the system – with school leaders and MAT CEOs consistently engaged at this level, ensuring education is fully represented alongside health and care partners. Post-16 and further education providers are formally represented within the Alliance, ensuring that the post-16 agenda is embedded within system leadership and governance. The Dorset Every Child Achieving and Thriving (ECAT) Partnership Group will provide regular operational leadership, coordinating delivery across workstreams and using shared performance, demand and financial data^{4,3} to support responsive decision-making, with all commissioned elements, including Dorset's Expertise Offer, Inclusion Base outreach and AP reform, required to demonstrate contribution to cost avoidance, demand reduction and inclusive outcomes, provide data to support return on investment analysis, and participate in shared evaluation rather than stand-alone reporting. Multi-agency delivery groups will lead implementation across key reform workstreams, with locality arrangements embedding inclusive practice at community level and ensuring that insight from practitioners, children, young people and families feeds directly into continuous improvement and strategic decision-making. Joint commissioning arrangements will be refreshed to reflect the new partnership architecture, ensuring leadership, co-production and accountability are experienced consistently across all levels of the system, underpinned by an integrated SEND dashboard bringing together financial data (High Needs Block, placements, AP, transport), demand data (EHCNAs, EHCP trends), Valuing SEND intelligence (setting readiness, child profiles), outcomes (attendance, exclusions, placement stability) and experience (parent and practitioner confidence). Return on investment and value for money will be reviewed through local democratic scrutiny processes, the ECAT Partnership Group for
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	architecture is reflected in how services are planned and delivered together across education, health and care. • While co-production is a strength at a strategic level, participation approaches are not yet consistent across all areas of delivery, and there is a recognised opportunity to strengthen contributions from seldom-heard groups – including children and young people who do not attend an educational setting. • System-wide data on the reach and impact of co-production and participation is not routinely collated, making it harder to evidence progress and identify gaps – particularly for those groups least likely to engage through traditional participation routes. • While strong datasets exist across the partnership, these are not yet consistently used to inform joint commissioning and strategic decision-making, and workforce confidence in interpreting and acting on data for inclusion planning remains variable.	operational grip and the Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education for strategic assurance, with an annual value for money statement produced as part of the SEND reform review. Headline value for money indicators will include: spend on the Expertise Offer per locality against reduction in EHCNA growth, EHE and EBSA, and escalation to specialist provision; cost per child supported without an EHCP; cost variance between local and independent placements; and change in transport spend per pupil with SEND. Decisions to scale, continue or stop initiatives will be explicitly linked to value for money evidence. • Dorset will strengthen its approach to dispute resolution by improving the consistency of early resolution pathways across all localities. This will include ensuring mediation and disagreement resolution opportunities are clearly communicated and consistently offered, and that 'next steps' meetings with locality SEND workers are standard practice for all EHC needs assessment decisions. Relationships and communication with families will be improved through a consistent conversational approach, working in close partnership with the Dorset Parent Carer Council to ensure concerns are heard, addressed and responded to consistently, reducing the likelihood of escalation to formal processes and tribunal. Partnership decision-making will be further strengthened through locality forums and multi-agency resource panels, with the Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education holding an explicit responsibility within its Terms of Reference to strengthen strategic governance, assurance and local accountability, monitoring system performance, risks and pressures, and escalating key issues to Dorset Council and national partners as required.^{4.5} • The SEND performance dashboard will be refreshed and expanded to incorporate the full suite of performance measures identified through the SEND Reform Plan, including dispute resolution rates, timeliness across EHCP processes and outcomes. Performance will continue to be reviewed weekly at operational level with clear escalation processes and monitored monthly through the Children's Services performance board and partnership governance forums. Data will be used proactively to identify trends, drive improvement and support earlier intervention – providing clear and transparent accountability across the partnership and enabling continuous improvement over the plan period.^{5.6} • The workforce at all levels will be supported to interpret and act on data through targeted development and practical tools, ensuring data-informed decision-making is embedded across the partnership rather than concentrated at a strategic level. 2) Strengthening co-production and participation Strengthening co-production and participation responds to the maturity
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		assessment's finding that while co-production is a strategic strength, participation approaches are not yet consistent across all areas of delivery and qualitative insight from families and young people is not yet consistently embedded in planning and commissioning decisions. • Building on existing good practice in co-production and participation across SEND and Best Start in Life services, shared co-production principles will be agreed and socialised across partners and stakeholders, providing a clear and transparent framework that distinguishes between engagement, co-production and collaboration so that all partners, families and young people understand their role and what they can expect at each stage. • Dorset will draw on the NHSE co-production guidance and agree a local co-production benchmark in partnership with families, children and young people, self-assessing against it in year one to identify priority improvement actions and establish a baseline against which to measure progress across the plan period.^{5.4} • Current feedback mechanisms and participation activity will be mapped across services, with gaps, duplication and opportunities for improvement identified – particularly in relation to seldom-heard groups – ensuring that participation reach is expanded to ensure diverse and representative voice across the system. • Family Hubs and SENDIASS will play a strengthened role in capturing and acting on lived experience, with SENDIASS properly resourced and able to evidence adherence to the National Minimum Standards, including how independence and perceived independence are understood by families, supporting families with a confidential, impartial and accessible service which provides information, advice and support in relation to SEN.^{5.3} • Dorset will develop more innovative approaches to engagement that meet children and young people where they are – including through social media, with a potential work experience placement for a young person to help shape an engagement strategy that genuinely speaks to young people's experiences and perspectives.^{5.2} • Building on the mature relationship with the Dorset Parent Carer Council and existing participation groups, co-production will be embedded as a standard part of service design and review, with a "you said, we did" approach in place as routine practice. • A robust communications and engagement strategy will build trust, confidence and transparency across the system, ensuring that reform is
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		understood and owned across all levels of the partnership. By the end of the plan period, children, young people and families will recognise their active role in shaping and improving services, with clear and evidenced impact of participation on commissioning decisions and strategic priorities – and lived experience demonstrably informing how the system plans, commissions and delivers support.
Encouraging inclusive culture and behaviours	What are we currently achieving? Dorset has strong cultural foundations for inclusion, with clear commitment across the council and partners to listening to and acting on the voices of children, young people and families: Children and young people report high levels of trust, safety and encouragement from the practitioners who support them, reflecting a system built on strong relational practice. - Co-production is well embedded across the education system as reflected in our Dorset partnership agreement, with the council's Youth Voice team playing a key role in facilitating meaningful participation through well-established mechanisms including Let's Talk events. Participation approaches are grounded in the Lundy Model, ensuring children have space, voice, audience and influence within decision-making processes – in line with Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Education settings are increasingly engaging with inclusive practice through initiatives such as the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award, reflecting a growing culture of rights-based, relational practice across the system. Dorset is actively building workforce understanding and capability around inclusive culture, co-production and children's rights, supporting schools and partners to adopt and embed the principles of the Lundy Model into everyday practice. Families are supported to access independent advice and guidance through Dorset's SENDIASS service, commissioned through Family Action, with locality-based SEND staff available for regular face-to-face sessions through Best Start Family Hubs and the Dorset Parent Carer Council working alongside the local authority to capture and respond to parent carer views. Where concerns escalate, Dorset uses Global Mediation as part of a South West partnership to	What is our ambition? Dorset's ambition is for inclusion to become a consistent expectation across the whole system – embedded in how services are commissioned, how the workforce is developed and how settings are held to account – so that every child and young person with SEND experiences the same high quality of inclusive practice regardless of where they live or which setting they attend. By the end of the plan period: - Inclusive design principles will be embedded across commissioning, workforce development and service design, with a shared and co-produced definition of inclusion underpinning practice and accountability across all settings and partners. The principles will be developed with partners and will include: starting with strengths and needs, not labels; planning early and prevent escalation; making support easy to access and understand; designing with children, families and practitioners; using evidence and data to improve. - The lived experience of children, young people and families will routinely shape how services are designed, delivered and evaluated, with co-production embedded in everyday operational practice rather than isolated examples of good work. - Clear accountability and funding levers will actively incentivise inclusive behaviour across settings, with a robust framework for measuring return on investment and demonstrating the value of inclusive practice. - The system will be able to confidently evidence a sustained shift towards inclusive culture across all settings and localities. - Dorset will have a clear and regularly updated 0-5 childcare and specialist SEND sufficiency picture, with priority gaps identified, actions agreed with Early Years, health and Family Hub partners, and progress tracked through sufficiency planning and the integrated data dashboard. System enablers Data and digital solutions: Dorset's growing evidence base including the

	provide independent mediation, giving parent carers and young people a direct opportunity to reach mutual decisions – with the local authority continuing to work with families to find solutions beyond the formal process where needed.^{5,5} What are our current challenges in encouraging inclusive culture and behaviours across Dorset? Dorset's Local Partnership Maturity Assessment has identified that there are opportunities to strengthen inclusive culture and behaviour, whilst building on the strong foundations and enablers already in place: • There is a recognised need to revisit and agree a shared definition of inclusion and what it means across the system – without this, it is difficult to establish consistent expectations, hold the system to account or measure progress meaningfully. • Inclusive culture, while strong in pockets, is not yet experienced consistently across all settings and localities – there remains variability in how inclusion is defined, reinforced and prioritised at an operational level. • There are currently no consistent accountability or funding levers that actively incentivise inclusive behaviour across settings – developing these will be important for driving culture change beyond willing early adopters. • Participation approaches, while strong at a strategic level, are not yet consistent across all areas of operational delivery, and there is no consistent system-wide approach to measuring how inclusion is experienced across settings. • Workforce development around inclusive culture and children's rights is developing but not yet consistent across all settings, and shared expectations for inclusive practice have not yet been clearly articulated or embedded across the workforce.	integrated dashboard, co-produced parental and children and young people confidence metrics and Valuing SEND data will enable culture change to move from aspirational to evidenced, measurable shifts demonstrating return on investment in a way that is credible and compelling. • Workforce: Dorset's existing commitment to workforce development around inclusive culture and children's rights provides a strong foundation for the workforce to become the primary vehicle through which the shared definition of inclusion is embedded into everyday practice. How will we achieve our ambition for further encouraging inclusive culture and behaviours? Achieving this ambition requires us to address the cultural, structural and financial conditions needed to drive consistent inclusive behaviour across the system – directly responding to the maturity assessment's findings around uneven practice, the absence of consistent accountability frameworks and the need for stronger value for money analysis. 1) Refreshing the sufficiency strategy A refreshed sufficiency strategy will provide the structural foundation for inclusive culture and behaviour – ensuring that the system's investment in places, provision and capacity is explicitly aligned to inclusion outcomes and actively drives more equitable access to local, high-quality support. • The sufficiency strategy will be refreshed and aligned to the reform programme, ensuring that decisions about where and how provision is developed are explicitly linked to inclusion outcomes, local need and transport impact.^{2.1, 2.2, 2.7, 2.8} • Sufficiency planning will be underpinned by medium to long-term demand modelling, embedded as a core planning tool across the partnership and used to inform capital investment, workforce planning and commissioning decisions. • The strategy will ensure that the expansion of Inclusion Bases, the recommissioning of AP and the development of the Expertise Offer are coherently aligned, creating a planned and sustainable continuum of provision that reinforces inclusive behaviour across the system. • As part of the refreshed strategy, a dedicated assessment of 0-5 childcare sufficiency will be undertaken, examining the availability of early years places across Dorset's localities, the availability of specialist SEND early years places, and any gaps for children with complex and emerging needs.^{3,6} This assessment will be co-produced with Early Years,
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		health and Family Hub partners, with Best Start Family Hubs playing a central role in identifying where provision is absent or inaccessible for families with the most complex needs. A clear plan to address identified gaps will be agreed across partners, with actions, responsibilities and timescales confirmed and progress tracked through the integrated data dashboard and sufficiency governance arrangements. • As part of this work, a dedicated post-16 sufficiency analysis will be undertaken, examining current and projected need across mainstream, targeted and specialist provision including pathways into education, training, employment and supported internships^{2.6, 3.9, 3.10}. This will produce a full commissioning proposal, including procurement arrangements, provider specifications and quality standards aligned to the national reforms set out in the post-16 Education and Skills White Paper. The analysis will be co-produced with young people, families, practitioners and providers, and will address the full range of sufficiency considerations including quality, quantity, value for money, geographic accessibility and the dependencies that affect young people's ability to access and benefit from the right provision. • Progress will be tracked through regular performance monitoring and programme governance, with sufficiency data informing commissioning decisions, scaling and prioritisation across the partnership. 2) Developing an integrated data dashboard Dorset has strong datasets and a growing evidence base that already supports effective planning and decision-making. This workstream will build on these foundations to bring data together into a single, integrated picture that gives the whole system a shared and trusted evidence base, enabling more confident, consistent and transparent decisions about how to strengthen inclusive practice across all settings and localities.^{4.3} • An integrated dashboard providing robust data at child and setting level will be developed, beginning with merging the current Early Years and SEND and inclusion dashboards and Valuing SEND data to create a more coherent, system-wide picture. • The dashboard will bring together financial data, demand trends, Valuing SEND intelligence and lived-experience measures, enabling the system to triangulate evidence and make more informed decisions about where to target support and investment. • The workforce at all levels will be supported to interpret and act on inclusion data through targeted development and practical tools, ensuring data-informed decision-making is embedded across the system rather than
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		concentrated at a strategic level. This will be overseen strategically by the Children's Workforce Development Board. • The dashboard will be used routinely through performance monitoring and programme governance to inform commissioning decisions, track progress against inclusion metrics and provide transparent evidence of system-wide improvement 3) Return on investment and accountability levers Dorset has strong cultural foundations and a clear commitment to inclusion. This workstream will build on these to establish the accountability frameworks, funding levers and return on investment measures needed to embed inclusive behaviour consistently across the system, ensuring that the values already evident in Dorset's culture are reflected in how resources are deployed and how the system holds itself to account. • A shared, co-produced definition of inclusion will be developed in partnership with educational settings, health and care partners, families and children and young people through a structured programme of engagement workshops and co-design sessions. This will underpin practice and accountability across all settings and partners. Once agreed, inclusive design principles will be embedded across commissioning frameworks, service specifications, workforce processes and induction programmes, ensuring that inclusion becomes a clear and consistent expectation across the whole system. • Funding flows and commissioning arrangements will be actively aligned to inclusion outcomes, shifting investment towards earlier intervention and away from reactive, high-cost escalation^{3.5, 4.3}. All commissioned provision – including Inclusion Bases, the Expertise Offer and Alternative Provision – will be expected to demonstrate impact on sustained mainstream placement, reintegration and reduced escalation, with commissioning decisions increasingly linked to evidence of effective inclusive practice rather than activity volumes. Schools and partners will be supported and incentivised to participate in the two-tier Inclusion Base system, with specialist bases providing high-intensity support and system leadership, and support bases enabling earlier intervention within mainstream settings. Inclusion expectations will be embedded within MAT and school governance arrangements, ensuring that accountability for inclusive practice is shared consistently across all types of providers and that MAT CEOs and school leaders have a clear and explicit role in driving inclusive behaviour across their settings. • Dorset will operate a high-support, high-challenge model. Through Dorset's Expertise Offer, the strengthened universal offer and the collaborative working arrangements set out in this plan, mainstream
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		settings will be actively supported to build confidence and capability to meet a wider range of needs. In alignment with the direction of Ofsted's new inspection framework, the local authority will also work transparently with educational settings and Ofsted to identify and address non-inclusive practice where it exists, ensuring that high support is matched by clear expectations across the system. • Dorset will assess value for money and return on investment through a balanced framework that considers financial impact, system efficiency and outcomes for children and families. Value for money is not defined as lowest cost – it is evidenced where earlier, coordinated support improves inclusion and outcomes, reduces escalation and instability, and avoids higher future costs. Dorset will not claim return on investment where costs fall but outcomes and confidence deteriorate. • Direct financial return will be monitored through cashable impacts – including reduction in independent and out-of-area placements, emergency AP placements and transport costs – and non-cashable but attributable impacts, including reduced repeat EHCNA requests, tribunal and mediation costs, and fewer short-term exclusions leading to escalation. • System efficiency will be tracked by measuring the average cost per child supported without an EHCP, the proportion of children whose needs are met at universal, targeted and targeted-plus levels, and the cost per sustained mainstream or local placement – with the expected signal being increasing support at lower tiers, with flat or falling cost per child, while outcomes improve. • Prevention and demand management will be evidenced through leading indicators, including rates of EHCNA and EHCP growth, EBSA and EHE levels, and exclusions and persistent absence for pupils with SEND, recognising that slowing demand growth is a measurable return on preventative investment, even before budgets reduce. • Quality and outcome return will be measured through co-produced parental confidence metrics, SENCO and setting confidence, placement stability and attendance, ensuring value for money is only claimed where quality and experience improve alongside financial impact. Inclusion metrics, drawn from the integrated dashboard, Valuing SEND setting readiness data and the Quality Inclusion Framework, will be embedded into performance monitoring at locality cluster and whole area governance level, with transparent benchmarking enabling the system to identify and address variation in inclusive practice, and funding decisions increasingly aligned to evidence of effective inclusive practice and system contribution.
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		• Inclusion expectations will be consistently embedded across workforce processes, commissioning arrangements and service delivery frameworks, with inclusion principles embedded within job descriptions, recruitment processes, induction programmes and ongoing workforce development. • Dorset will draw on NHSE co-production guidance to develop and agree a local co-production benchmark in partnership with families, children and young people, using this to strengthen consistency and accountability across the system. The Lundy Model of Participation will continue to provide the framework for ensuring children and young people have meaningful opportunities to influence decisions. • Engagement and participation will be central to how services are developed and improved, including through the continuation of Let's Talk events, with children, young people and families routinely shaping the design, delivery and evaluation of services and clear mechanisms in place for capturing feedback and acting on lived experience. • Families will be offered information, advice and support at arm's length from the local authority, ICB and host organisation^{5.3}. This will be free, accurate, confidential and in accessible formats and provided through Dorset's SENDIASS service, commissioned through Family Action. Locality-based SEND staff will be available for regular face-to-face sessions through Best Start Family Hubs, and the Dorset Parent Carer Council will work alongside the local authority to capture and respond to parent carer views. Dorset SENDIASS will continue to provide clear, lawful and balanced information, advice and support, helping service users understand their rights, options and next steps so they can make informed decisions, monitored through quality assurance processes and adherence to the National Minimum Standards for SENDIASS services. • By the end of the plan period, the system will be able to demonstrate clear return on investment from its inclusive education approach – with financial data, outcomes evidence and lived-experience measures providing a coherent and compelling picture of the value of inclusion for children, young people, families and the system as a whole.
Success measures	Baseline (outline the baseline for your success measures reflecting where you are now – these should be drawn from the metrics in the data template)	Target Metrics (outline the target metrics that will demonstrate you have achieved the vision summarized above – these should be drawn from the metrics in the data template)
	Dorset's SEND Reform Plan is underpinned by a clear understanding of where the system is starting from. The baseline position, drawn from the most recent data return and additional relevant local indicators, reflects a	Dorset's SEND Reform Plan sets out an ambitious but realistic trajectory for change, that builds on our strong foundations and focuses efforts on a set of clear opportunity areas. This comprehensive programme of reform activities will

	system under increasing pressure but with strong foundations on which to build.	enable us to identify needs earlier, build confidence across settings to see and meet needs and ensure that support for children, young people and families is available closer to home. Dorset has undertaken a modelling exercise to understand the potential impact of the reform programme and set ambitious but realistic targets for improvement. The targets below reflect our assessment of what is achievable over the plan period, grounded in local data and demand projections, and represent a genuine commitment to driving measurable and significant change across the system.
	EHCPs - Number of EHCPs: 4,719 EHCPs in 2025 in Dorset, projected to rise to 5,035 in 2026, an overall growth rate of 6% over two years - EHCP growth rate since 2015/16: 136% in Dorset, compared to 93% nationally and 104% across the South West. Dorset was below the national average in 2015/16 and is now above it. 33% of EHCPs in Dorset are held in state-funded secondary schools, compared to 24% nationally and 27% regionally.	EHCPs EHCP growth expected to slow to 2% by 2029, resulting in 5,559 EHCPs – over 800 fewer than the unmitigated trajectory of 6,360
	EHCNAs 632 new EHCNAs in 2025, with notable pressure at key school move points - EHCNAs are expected to decrease by 1% a year	EHCNAs New EHCNAs expected to stabilise before gradually reducing to 609 by 2029, as a higher proportion of needs are met without escalation to statutory assessment
	EHE and EOTAS 85 children and young people with EHCPs in Elective Home Education (EHE) in 2025, forecast to rise to 90 in 2026 - EHE change over time 180 children and young people in other LA-arranged provision forecast to rise to 191 in 2026 - EOTAS change over time	EHE and EOTAS - Children and young people with EHCPs in EHE reducing from 90 in 2026 to 75 in 2029 - Children and young people in other LA-arranged provision including EOTAS reducing from 191 in 2026 to 175 in 2029
	Attendance 37% (% of persistent absentees – pupils with SEN statement or EHCP (10% of session) 24/25	Attendance 5% reduction in the % of persistent absentees – pupils with SEN statement or EHCP – from 37% in 24/25 to 32% in 28/29
	Suspensions and exclusions 11% of pupils with an EHCP had one or more fixed exclusions in 23/24 30% of pupils with an EHCP have been suspended at some point in 2023/24	Suspensions and exclusions 5% reduction in the % of pupils with EHCPs that have 1 or more fixed exclusions – from 11% in 24/25 to 6% in 28/29 5% reduction in the % of pupils with EHCPs have been suspended at some point in the academic year – from 30% in 24/25 to 25% in 28/29
	Number of children without EHCPs supported by key professionals - SALT: 2,176 - OT: 763 - EP: 344	Number of children without EHCPs supported by key professionals - SALT: 2,869 - OT: 1230 - EP: 539
	Independent placements There are 468 INMSS EHCP placements currently maintained by Dorset.	Independent placements Independent school placements forecast to reduce from 527 in 2026 to 508 in 2029, resulting in a spend reduction of around £1M in 28/29

	• 527 independent special school placements expected in 2026/27 at a total cost of £34.1M, representing 25% of High Needs Block expenditure Parental confidence and feedback A parent carer survey was undertaken in 2023, receiving 399 responses from parents and carers of children and young people with SEND. Key findings included: • 43.1% of respondents reported being happy with the information and communication they received. • 41.5% expressed confidence that their child was receiving the right level of support to meet their needs. • 40.5% agreed that they felt listened to and involved in decisions about their child's education and support. Following the 2023 survey, formal surveys were discontinued at the request of the parental community. Since then, feedback has been gathered through a range of established channels, including the Dorset Parent Carer Council, direct engagement through education settings, Family Hubs, and other participation and co-production activities. While these approaches have provided valuable qualitative insight, partners recognise the need to develop a more coherent and systematic approach to understanding parental confidence and experience across the SEND system. Children and young people confidence and feedback Engagement with children and young people with SEND was undertaken by the Dorset Unstoppables Youth Voice group in 2026, consulting 4 young people across mainstream and specialist settings. Due to the small sample size and qualitative nature of the consultation, findings are not statistically representative but provide meaningful insight into lived experience. Key themes included: • Young people consistently reported inconsistent experiences of feeling listened to and having their needs understood by adults in educational settings. • All participants identified gaps between support recorded in their EHCPs and support received in practice. • Young people expressed a strong desire to be more directly involved in decisions affecting their lives, with needs addressed on a person-led rather than funding-led basis. This engagement demonstrates a strong commitment to youth voice, and partners are committed to building on this foundation to develop a more systematic and measurable approach to capturing children and young people's confidence and experience across the SEND system.	compared to 27/28 estimated. By 29/30 we expect the number of independent school placements to reduce further to 463 (in part due to the opening of Osprey Quay special school), resulting in further cost avoidance. Parental and children and young people confidence and feedback • Following feedback from the parent carer and children and young people community, formal surveys have been discontinued. However, Dorset recognises the importance of maintaining a robust and shared understanding of confidence and satisfaction levels across families and young people, and of being able to evidence this meaningfully over the plan period. • A co-produced set of metrics to holistically measure parental and children and young people's confidence, satisfaction and experience of the system will therefore be developed in partnership with the Dorset Parent Carer Council and Dorset Unstoppables Youth Voice Group, agreed and baselined in Year 1, providing the foundation against which progress will be tracked and evidenced across the three years of the plan.
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INSERT DOCUMENT UPLOAD LINK

3. What is the local area partnership's strategy for delivering on the above?

A brief summary of your local system's theory of change or reform strategy. Reflect on the output of your **Local Partnership Maturity Assessment Tool**, particularly your *Local System 'change story.'*

250 words

Evidence from the Local Partnership Maturity Assessment and the recent outstanding-rated Area SEND Inspection reflects a system with strong foundations and a clear commitment to improvement. Dorset recognises that rising levels of need, pressure on educational settings and over-reliance on specialist provision provide the impetus for reform. Our change story is one of genuine ambition, addressed by building on existing strengths and reshaping system behaviours rather than pursuing short-term fixes.

Dorset's theory of change is built on three interdependent shifts:

- **Building mainstream confidence and capacity** – inputs: a strengthened Universal Offer underpinned by our Inclusion Charter, Dorset's Expertise Offer and cluster-based arrangements to support collaboration between settings; outcomes: settings equipped with skills, tools and targeted support; impact: more children supported locally, reduced escalation and improved parental confidence in mainstream education
- **Moving support earlier and closer to home** – inputs: stronger early identification, integrated locality-based working and expanded Inclusion Bases; outcomes: timely intervention reaching children before needs escalate; impact: more stable placements, improved attendance and wellbeing and reduced demand for crisis responses
- **Ensuring specialist provision is planned, predictable and outreach-facing** – inputs: sufficiency planning, recommissioned AP and clearer roles for Learning Centres and Special Schools; outcomes: specialist expertise flowing back into mainstream settings; impact: reduced reliance on out-of-area placements and improved value for money

Overall ambition: over the longer term, the system will become more inclusive, equitable and financially sustainable, with better outcomes for children and young people, stronger parental confidence and fewer children requiring high-cost or out-of-area provision.

4. Please upload a completed copy of the Local Partnership Maturity Assessment Tool.

INSERT DOCUMENT UPLOAD LINK

5. What is the local area partnership roadmap for the next 3 years?

Reflecting on the broad timescales and expectation for deliverables set out in the Schools White Paper, key documents and core minimum requirements set out in this document, please provide a high-level roadmap for the next 3 years. Please highlight key milestones and a trajectory to the target metrics identified above, including leading indicators.

In the 2026-27 column, in particular, please reference how you plan to meet the core minimum requirements in your narrative, including details and evidence in supporting documents.

You can insert or upload supporting documents including graphics/visuals that illustrate your data trajectory.

Overview					
Dorset's three-year roadmap, as set out below, has been developed in detail to translate the partnership's vision into a sequenced programme of reform. It builds on strong foundations, including locality-based working, established Early Years practice, existing specialist expertise, learning hubs, Valuing SEND, and a clear commitment to co-production with children, young people, families and education settings. The sequencing of the activity has been carefully considered to ensure successful, visible and measured progress over the course of the implementation of the reforms. ▪ Year 1 will focus on establishment and early implementation. Dorset will agree the Inclusion Charter, define in detail and start implementing Dorset's Expertise Offer, strengthen Valuing SEND, expand Inclusion Bases, align AP to the three-tier model, and develop the integrated data dashboard. This first year will put the core infrastructure, governance and delivery capacity in place. ▪ Year 2 will focus on refining and embedding. Lessons from rolling out the Expertise Offer in Year 1 will be used to enhance and embed it further, and the system will begin to show measurable progress through stronger mainstream confidence, improved collaboration, increased local capacity and better use of shared data. ▪ Year 3 will focus on sustained impact. The partnership expects a more consistent, inclusive system, wider access to local support, reduced reliance on independent special placements and stronger parental confidence.					
Local roadmap for the next 3 years					
Building blocks	Activity & enablers	2026/27 milestones	2027/28 milestones	2028/29 milestones	Link to CMR
Strengthening inclusion across education settings	A Strong Universal Offer for Mainstream settings Enablers: • National inclusion standards	• Current Universal and Ordinarily Available Provision offer mapped and reviewed, with gaps identified and priorities agreed with settings including post-16, FE, MATs and the Parent Carer Council. Key areas of focus include school moves.	• Refreshed Universal Offer launched across all settings, with clear pathways, access routes and deployment guidance in place and communicated system-wide	• Universal offer fully embedded across all settings and phases, with all mainstream settings able to clearly articulate the support available and evidence its impact on outcomes	1.11, 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.9, 3.10, 4.4

- Existing Universal Offer and training offer, hosted on the Nexus online platform - Early version of Dorset's Inclusion Charter developed by school leaders - Previous version of Dorset Quality Inclusion Framework, BCP Quality Inclusion Framework and Ofsted Inclusion Framework - Valuing SEND tool - Inclusive Mainstream Fund for Schools - High Needs Provision Capital Allocation Grant	Refreshed Universal and Ordinarily Available Provision Offer drafted, incorporating well-evidenced approaches across speech and language, neurodevelopmental needs and SEMH (e.g. PINS pilot, Balanced System Programme etc.), with clear guidance on deployment for mainstream settings.	Well-evidenced early intervention approaches – including Balanced System Programme, PINS pilot and SEMH approaches from Learning Centres – scaled across mainstream settings, supported by Dorset's Expertise Offer and targeted workforce development.	Well-evidenced early intervention approaches operating consistently at scale across Dorset, with settings confident in deploying the right approaches for their context, informed by Valuing SEND setting readiness data and the Quality Inclusion Framework.	3.1, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5
	A clear articulation of the current universal and targeted inclusion offer, including pathways, support available, and how settings can access it.	Education settings can clearly articulate the available support at universal level, how it is used, and its impact on outcomes for their children and young people.	The system can confidently demonstrate an increase in setting and parental and carer confidence in mainstream provision.	3.1, 3.3, 4.4
	Agreement with settings on the expectations around the Universal Offer, ensuring there is clarity about when and how to access for additional support for children and young people with more complex needs (e.g. Dorset's Expertise Offer).	Settings are clear on the expectations around the universal offer and are increasingly confident in how and when to access additional support.	There is system-wide clarity on the parameters of the universal offer, and settings are confident in accessing additional support at the appropriate time where required.	1.11, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3
	Development and agreement of an ambitious Inclusion Charter and Quality Inclusion Framework in partnership with school leaders	The Inclusion Charter is recognised and adopted across settings. The Quality Inclusion Framework is used to monitor inclusion practice and consistency across settings.	The Inclusion Charter and Quality Inclusion Frameworks are established and routinely used for embedding and monitoring inclusion practice across settings.	3.1, 3.2, 4.4
	Local needs analysis completed, drawing on EHCP data, Valuing SEND setting readiness data and locality intelligence, to identify the most commonly occurring and growing areas of need across all phases	A set of established indicators (including the Quality Inclusion Framework and Valuing SEND setting readiness scores) are used to assess and review variation of practice across settings and help effectively target support where needed.	Established indicators are used as routine practice within operational and strategic discussions to review and monitor inclusive practice and proactively target support.	3.1, 3.4, 4.3
	Training and workforce development programme aligned to the refreshed offer; with Year 1 delivery focused	Training and workforce development programme is expanded further, and uptake and impact monitored.	Established and varied training and workforce programme available, underpinned by strong	1.7, 1.8, 3.3, 3.4

		on the highest priority areas of need.		engagement and impact monitoring processes.	
		The Valuing SEND tool is embedded in Early Years settings and rolled out further to primary and secondary settings to support setting readiness and individual profile assessments.	The Valuing SEND tool offer has rolled out to all settings across Dorset and is used consistently to support setting readiness and individual need assessments.	All settings are trained and confident using the Valuing SEND tool to assess setting readiness and individual need	1.11, 3.3, 3.7, 4.3
		Completed pilot of the Valuing SEND tool to support and strengthen key stage school moves, with focus on primary to secondary, and post-16 school moves.	Clear results from the Valuing SEND school move pilot and agreement on an extension.	Valuing SEND is used consistently across settings to support key stage school moves and is a core method for sharing information consistently between settings.	3.8, 3.10, 4.4
Access to specialist support and local placements	Dorset's Expertise Offer <i>Enablers:</i> - Existing locality structures and relationships - Balanced System & PINS pilots - Experts at Hand Guidance - Experts at Hand Principles and Pathways developed by ICB - Integrated data dashboard	Refined core principles and operating model of Dorset's Expertise Offer, with input from across the partnership. Offer launched across all localities in alignment with existing local initiatives and structures	Expertise Offer fully operational across all localities, with targeted elements tailored to the structures, needs and characteristics of each area	Refined Expertise Offer is embedded as business-as-usual across all six localities, firmly integrated within Dorset's Multi-disciplinary Families First Locality Family Help Services and tailored to the distinct needs and characteristics of each area	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.7, 1.8
		Defined and embedded strategic and operational ownership, jointly held by the LA and NHS Dorset, underpinned by a memorandum of understanding or equivalent agreement, with clear governance, commissioning and accountability arrangements in place	Strategic and operational ownership firmly embedded, with joint LA and ICB oversight functioning effectively	Strategic and operational ownership fully embedded and self-sustaining, with clear accountability, commissioning and performance oversight routinely informing commissioning and governance decisions	1.1, 1.9, 1.10, 4.1
		Recruitment to key priority posts across all localities underway or completed, with the offer on track to be fully operational by the start of Year 2	Full complement of posts recruited across all localities, with any remaining vacancies filled through the creative workforce design approach, including assistant roles	Workforce is stable, sustainable and operating at full capacity across all localities, with clear career pathways and minimum standards embedded in recruitment and development practice	1.7, 1.8

		• Offer integrated within Dorset's multi-disciplinary Families First locality arrangements, building on existing relationships and ways of working	• Delivery model refined based on Year 1 learning, with locality-specific adaptations in place to reflect the different structures, needs and characteristics of each area	• Locality model reviewed and, where necessary, refined to ensure it continues to align with the new support delivery model and meets the needs of settings and communities	1.1, 1.3, 1.7, 3.3
		• Post-16 strand of Expertise Offer developed and launched, with training and coaching for settings on PfA outcomes and the post-16 landscape	• Post-16 strand fully operational, with evidence of improved Annual Reviews, stronger PfA planning and increased uptake of mainstream FE and supported internships	• More young people with SEND sustained in mainstream further education and supported pathways to adulthood, with NEET figures reducing and parental confidence in post-16 provision demonstrably improved	3.9
		• Robust monitoring and evaluation framework in place from the outset, tracking equity of access, reach and early impact	• Use of data strengthened through the integrated data dashboard and Valuing SEND intelligence, enabling more targeted and evidence-informed deployment of the offer across localities.	• Impact evidenced across all key inclusion indicators, with demonstrable improvements in mainstream confidence, reduced escalation, improved placement stability and stronger parental confidence	1.8, 1.9, 1.10, 4.3
		• Y1 evaluation and Year 2 operational plan agreed, informed by early learning and refined in response to locality feedback	• Mid-point evaluation completed, with findings shared across the partnership and used to confirm Year 3 plans	• Sustainability plan confirmed and the offer operating as an integral part of Dorset's inclusive education system	1.8, 4.3
		• Clear and consistent access routes to the Expertise Offer established across all localities, with equitable access mechanisms in place to ensure less proactive settings and out-of-area mainstream FE settings are actively reached and a baseline measure of setting confidence established	• Evidence that the Expertise Offer is being accessed equitably across all settings and localities, with setting confidence scores improving against the Year 1 baseline and less proactive settings demonstrably reached	• All mainstream settings consistently report confidence in meeting a wider range of needs, with evidence of reduced escalation to specialist provision and statutory assessment across all localities	1.11, 4.4
		• Development of a strong communications plan to support engagement across the system, in particular with settings and families.	• Parents and carers understand, and are confident in, how the offer is delivering support. There are consistent measures to monitor confidence.	• Parental confidence metrics demonstrate sustained improvement year on year, with families reporting clear understanding of the support available, trust in mainstream provision and active	1.2, 4.4, 5.1, 5.2

		Neurodiversity tool is developed and piloted to support earlier identification and needs-led support without reliance on diagnosis	Learning from the neurodiversity tool pilot is used to scale and shift towards a needs-led model of care	<i>involvement in decisions about their child's support</i> A needs-led neurodiversity model of care is embedded which supports earlier identification, reduced waiting times and high confidence from across the system, reinforced through embedded co-production	1.7, 3.3, 3.4
		SEND workforce sufficiency analysis completed, mapping current strengths and gaps to inform the training and development offer for Dorset's Expertise Offer practitioners and underpin career pathway and minimum standards development in Year 2	Clear career pathways for the workforce defined, alongside a set of well-articulated and agreed minimum standards	SEND workforce development is embedded as business-as-usual, with clear career pathways, agreed minimum standards and a creative approach to role design sustaining system-wide capacity and reducing reliance on hard-to-fill specialist posts	1.7, 1.8, 3.4
Encouraging inclusive culture and behaviours	Strengthen collaboration between settings <i>Enablers:</i> Existing locality structures and relationships, including early examples of education setting clusters	A shared vision is established, with principles and expectations set across settings, which is supported by clear governance and partnership structures.	Collaborative models in place and aligned to Dorset's Expertise Offer.	Collaborative models are embedded as business-as-usual practice	2.3, 3.2, 4.1, 4.4
		Pilot small-scale collaborative approaches, such as shared specialist staff, pooling of resources and cluster-based support models, are identified and operating.	Pilots have been scaled into formalised collaborative arrangements, including pooling funding models, shared services and multi-settings support teams.		2.3, 3.5, 4.4
		Existing resources, expertise and system pressures mapped to identify opportunities for more effective joint working and pooling of resources, building on existing good practice in Dorset.	Joint working practices have demonstrably strengthened across settings.	A culture of shared ownership and system-wide responsibility is consolidated across Dorset	2.1, 2.3, 4.3
		Governance structures and accountability mechanisms for collaborative working agreed.	Regular communication oversight and accountability mechanisms are embedded.	Impact is regularly evaluated and acted upon to ensure refinement of delivery models	1.10, 4.1, 4.4
System leadership, local partnership		Consolidated and standardised Early Years needs identification tools and	Evidence-based identification and intervention approaches (e.g. Valuing SEND) have been rolled out at scale and a	Recognised consistency and equity of provision across all Early Years settings in Dorset	3.7, 3.8, 4.3

collaboration and co-production	Improve Early Years identification and strategies Enablers: • Best Start in Life, Family Hubs • Integrated data dashboard • Valuing SEND tool	approaches (including Valuing SEND tool)	'Reception Ready' model has started to be embedded across EY settings		
		• 0-5 childcare and specialist SEND sufficiency assessment completed, including availability of places, gaps for children with complex and emerging needs, and the role of Best Start Family Hubs	• System-wide agreement on 0-5 sufficiency gaps and prioritisation is in place, with a clear implementation plan agreed across partners and targeted interventions actively underway. Most pressing gaps will have begun to close over the course of the year.	• Gaps, as set out in the 0-5 sufficiency assessment, are closed and impact evaluated. A new assessment is undertaken to identify newly emerging gaps which can then be prioritised	3.6
		• A targeted training programme delivered as part of the Universal Offer to support earlier identification and trauma-informed practice.	• Assessment of impact of Y1 training and identified additional opportunities to strengthen the early years and prevention workforce development offer.	• Workforce training and development programme is aligned with the wider Dorset offer and embedded as business as usual.	3.3, 3.7
		• 'Reception Ready' model is developed, including through use of the Valuing SEND tool.	• The 'Reception Ready' model is increasingly established across settings, demonstrating early evidence of impact.	• All Early Years settings have adopted the 'Reception Ready' model and are confident in supporting pupil school moves.	3.8
		• Strengthened integration between Family Hubs, Health Visiting and Early Years settings	• Integration between Family Hubs, Health Visiting and Early Years settings is mature.	• Integration between Family Hubs, Health Visiting and Early Years settings embedded.	1.1, 1.2, 3.6, 3.7
		• Agreed and implemented clear pathways, access routes and indicators for further support.	• Pathways, access routes and indicators for further support are clear and embedded across most settings.	• Pathways, access routes and indicators for further support are clear and embedded across all settings.	3.7, 3.8
		• Early Years data is integrated with school-level data.	• Quality and consistency of implementation is being monitored, including through the integrated data dashboard.	• Data is being used consistently to evaluate impact of interventions, and to refine identification and support pathways.	3.7, 4.3
Strengthening inclusion across education settings	Increase and strengthen inclusion bases Enablers: • SEND sufficiency and Inclusion Base Delivery Plan	• Finalised and agreed SEND Sufficiency and Inclusion Base Delivery Plan, aligned to SEND reform and capital programme. Site planning includes existing school premises, falling rolls, rural viability and travel impact assessment, with findings used to inform prioritisation.	• SEND Sufficiency and Inclusion Base Delivery Plan well underway, and strategy reviewed and updated in response to Y1 data and demand trends.	• SEND Sufficiency and Inclusion Base Delivery Plan fully implemented, and strategy routinely reviewed and refined in response to changing demand and emerging evidence.	2.1, 2.2, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8

	- National guidance - Delivery model distinguishing LA-commissioned specialist bases and school-led support bases	Established governance, delivery oversight, partnership engagement and evaluation mechanisms.	Governance structures fully operational and routinely used to oversee delivery and performance. Completed review of Y1 impact, including early evaluation of impact on inclusion, placement stability and outcomes, and alignment to Y2 plan	Governance and accountability arrangements embedded as business-as-usual, with robust quality assurance mechanisms in place and impact on inclusion, placement stability and outcomes evidenced, evaluated and shared across the system.	2.4, 2.6, 4.1
		Initial delivery phase focused on commissioning and opening LA-funded Specialist Inclusion Bases to address sufficiency gaps and reduce reliance on high-cost placements	Delivery plan expands to support establishment of Support Inclusion Bases in mainstream settings.	A fully established two-tier Inclusion Base system recognised and trusted by the system, with specialist bases providing high-intensity provision and support bases embedded across mainstream settings	2.1, 2.2, 2.6
		Early engagement with schools and MATs to define the model, expectations and support offer for developing Support Inclusion Bases in later phases	Structured programme in place to support mainstream schools and MATs to establish Support Inclusion Bases, including funding clarity, workforce development and access to outreach from specialist bases	Mainstream schools and MATs routinely commissioning and delivering Support Inclusion Bases as part of their core inclusion offer	2.3, 2.5
		The second phase of LA-commissioned Specialist Inclusion Bases has been commissioned.	Third phase of specialist bases commissioned continuing expansion where needed while initiating rollout of support school-led Inclusion Bases	Final phase of Specialist Inclusion Bases delivered, including remaining C&L and SEMH gaps	2.2, 2.6
		Clarity across the system on the two-tier model of Inclusion Bases, including the distinct roles of LA-commissioned specialist bases and school-led support bases	Both specialist and Support Inclusion Bases operating as stable, predictable provision, embedded within the graduated response and locality planning	Inclusion Base network fully covers all Dorset localities and key phases, including post-16 pathways, where appropriate. Learning Centres operating as a resource for schools/CYP with acute SEMH needs.	2.4, 2.6, 3.9, 3.10
		Quality standards for ensuring consistency in the quality of provision defined and adopted.	Review of provision against adopted quality standards, with clear plans for changes where needed	Reviewed and updated quality assurance standards and mechanisms in place	2.4, 2.6
Access to specialist support and local placements		Established strategic and operational ownership of AP practice and provision.	A strategic lead for AP is in post and well embedded within the AP system.	Strategic and operational ownership of AP fully embedded and self-sustaining.	1.4, 1.9, 4.1

	Align AP practice and provision to the three-tier model <i>Enablers:</i> - Learning Centres - National guidance and evidence of good practice	Clarified system-wide expectations for a three-tier model of AP across settings.	The plan is defined and the shift to the three-tier model underway across the system.	The three-tier model is embedded across the AP system, and a core element of the inclusive ecosystem.	1.4
		Agreed plan to support the shift to the three-tier model, with a focus on promoting short-term placements and strengthening reintegration into mainstream.	The principles and pathways of the AP three-tier model are well understood by the wider system, and the role of Learning Centres is demonstrably embedded in practice	AP is no longer seen as a destination by settings, families and children and young people, with outreach and/or reintegration forming a core part of AP practice.	1.4
		Clarification of the role and purpose of Learning Centres within this process, and their outreach role to support Tier 1 provision.	Learning Centres' role and purpose within the three-tier model clearly articulated and understood across the system, with outreach to mainstream settings as part of Tier 1 actively being delivered and early evidence of impact on inclusion and reintegration emerging	Learning Centres recognised as being central to the delivery of inclusive AP and provide a robust outreach offer as part of Tier 1.	1.4, 1.6
		Consolidated governance structures and joint working arrangements agreed between providers and the Local Authority	Governance and joint working between the Local Authority and AP providers is seen as robust, underpinned by joint working and decision making.	Governance and joint working arrangements between the local authority and AP providers fully embedded and routinely reviewed, with stable, aligned commissioning and delivery arrangements demonstrating collective accountability across system	1.4, 1.9, 4.1
		Current AP commissioning arrangements reviewed and gaps identified, with a clear plan agreed for strengthening commissioning in line with the three-tier model and documented good practice. AP capacity constraints reviewed, with agreed route for contracting, regional partnership or expertise-sharing where local capacity is insufficient.	Strengthened commissioning of AP is in place	Commissioning and delivery arrangements are stable, aligned and routinely reviewed.	1.4, 1.5
System leadership, local partnership		Identification and consolidation of existing good practice in co-production and	Good practice in co-production consolidated and shared across SEND and Best Start in Life services, with consistent	Co-production and participation approaches consistently embedded across all services, with clear	5.1, 5.2, 5.4

collaboration and co-production	Strengthen Co-production and Participation	participation across SEND and Best Start in Life services	approaches being adopted across delivery	evidence of impact on decision-making and outcomes for children, young people and families.	
	Enablers: • Strong starting point and relationships • Active engagement with participation groups • Family Hubs • SENDIASS • National minimum standards	• Agreed and socialised shared co-production principles across SEND and Early Years partners	• Co-production principles are recognised and routinely adopted	• Co-production principles fully embedded as a consistent expectation across all partners and services, with adherence routinely evidenced through governance processes	5.1, 5.4
		• Building on the mature relationship with Dorset Parent Carer Council and existing participation groups ensures input is robust across decision-making, design and delivery. This includes a completed review of SENDIASS, mediation and dispute resolution arrangements, with metrics agreed for timeliness, resolution rates, effectiveness and family confidence.	• A “you said, we did” approach is developed and embedded as routine practice alongside agreed and measurable mediation and dispute resolution metrics which are being tracked	• Clear impact of co-production and participation in decision-making and outcomes for children, young people, and families, along with reduction in number of mediation and disputes	5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.5, 5.6
		• Mapping complete of current feedback mechanisms and participation activity across services, with identified gaps, duplication, and opportunities for improvement, particularly from seldom-heard groups.	• Co-production is embedded as a standard part of service design and review	• Children, young people, and families recognise their active role in shaping and improving services	5.2, 5.4
		• Strengthened role of Family Hubs in capturing and responding to lived experience	• Participation reach is expanded to ensure diverse and representative voice, and previously seldom-heard groups are better represented	• There is evidence how lived experience directly informs commissioning decisions and strategic priorities	5.1, 5.2, 5.3
		• Research complete on how to make better use of social media to support engagement and co-production, including through a potential work experience placement for a young person	• The use of social media to support young people’s engagement and input is developing	• The use of social media to support young people’s engagement and input is established	5.2
		• Early resolution pathways reviewed and strengthened, with mediation, disagreement	• Evidence of earlier resolution of disputes, with reduction in escalation to formal processes	• Dispute resolution and decision-making processes fully embedded, with	4.5

		resolution and 'next steps' meetings consistently offered across all localities and SEND performance dashboard refreshed to include SEND Reform Plan metrics	and tribunal, and dispute resolution data routinely informing improvement activity	transparent escalation routes consistently experienced across the system and performance data evidencing sustained improvement in timeliness and resolution rates	
Access to specialist support and local placements	Refresh and update SEND sufficiency strategy Enablers: - First draft of SEND sufficiency strategy - Integrated data dashboard	Sufficiency strategy refreshed and aligned to the reform programme, rural viability and locality variation, with provision decisions explicitly linked to inclusion outcomes, local need and transport impact	Sufficiency strategy implementation well underway, with Inclusion Base expansion, AP recommissioning and Expertise Offer progressing in alignment	Sufficiency strategy fully embedded, with investment demonstrably aligned to inclusion outcomes and driving equitable access to local, high-quality support across all phases and localities	2.1, 2.2, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8
		Baseline of current and projected need established across all phases, localities and need types, with demand modelling embedded as a core planning tool.	Demand modelling routinely informing capital investment, workforce planning and commissioning decisions	Inclusion Base expansion, AP recommissioning and Expertise Offer operating as a coherent, planned and sustainable continuum of provision	2.1, 4.3
		Post-16 sufficiency analysis initiated, with current provision mapped (including post-16 pathways into and out of settings) and co-production with young people, families, providers underway	Post-16 sufficiency analysis complete, with full commissioning proposal agreed	Post-16 commissioning arrangements implemented, with young people accessing education, training, employment and supported internships closer to home	2.4, 2.6, 3.9, 3.10, 4.4
		Early evidence of reduced reliance on out-of-area and independent placements, with value for money analysis demonstrating cost avoidance	Reduced reliance on out-of-area and independent placements is becoming visible in placement trends, with value for money analysis used to inform scaling and commissioning decisions	Impact on sufficiency, inclusion outcomes and financial sustainability evidenced and used to refine delivery on an ongoing basis	2.2, 2.8, 3.5
System leadership, local partnership collaboration and co-production	Develop an integrated data dashboard Enablers: - Existing BI dashboards for Early Years and school-age - Valuing SEND data - DiiS, SEND partnership scorecard/reporting	Early Years, school-age and Valuing SEND data integrated into a single dashboard, providing a more coherent system-wide picture of need, provision and outcomes	Dashboard further developed with additional datasets integrated, providing a comprehensive evidence-based view of outcomes, inclusion and progress against reform milestones	Integrated dashboard fully established and embedded as the system's primary shared evidence base, routinely informing commissioning, sufficiency planning and strategic priorities across all partners	3.1, 3.7, 4.3
		Additional system data mapped for future integration, such as from DfE, NHS, HM Courts and Tribunals service etc.	Dashboard is starting to be used routinely at the operational and strategic level to guide evidence-based decision-making	Data is routinely reviewed and acted upon at operational and strategic level	4.3

		- Key inclusion metrics agreed across partners and aligned to the Inclusion Charter and Quality Inclusion Framework, with baselines established - Dashboard socialised with frontline professionals and governance forums, with initial training delivered to support data interpretation and decision-making	- Effectiveness of reform activities – including the Expertise Offer, Inclusion Base expansion and universal offer – actively tracked through the dashboard - Dashboard insight demonstrably informing commissioning decisions and service improvements, evidenced through governance records	- Dashboard used consistently to evidence value for money, cost avoidance and return on investment across the reform programme - Continuous improvement process in place, with the dashboard regularly updated and refined in response to emerging need and system changes	1.8, 1.10, 2.1, 3.1, 4.3 1.10, 4.3, 4.4
Strengthening inclusion across education settings	Embed the Valuing SEND tool across settings Enablers: - Existing and developing Valuing SEND practice across Early Years settings - Evidence from other local areas and settings who have successfully used the tool	- Clear cross-partnership strategic leadership in place to support use of Valuing SEND - Updated needs descriptors which align to the definitions within the White Paper and the three-tier model - Updated insight layer that provides clear understanding of needs and setting readiness, aligned with the integrated data dashboard - Consistent use of Valuing SEND across the majority of Early Years settings - Suite of training documents and case studies in place to show impact and support use of the tool - Impact framework agreed, making it easy to identify children and settings who would most benefit from proactive, focused support	- Strategic leadership for Valuing SEND fully embedded, with consistent oversight and challenge of usage and impact across all localities and phases - Further refinement of needs descriptors based on feedback from settings and use in discussions between SENCOs, parents and carers - Processes updated to make use of Valuing SEND data as part of discussion and decision making, and are understood - Consistent use of Valuing SEND across Early Years, primary and secondary schools, focused on phase / setting transfers - Training and case study suite updated based on Year 1 learning, with uptake and impact monitored and additional development needs identified - Impact framework routinely used to identify and prioritise support, with early evidence of improved outcomes for children and settings receiving proactive input	- Strategic leadership for Valuing SEND embedded as business-as-usual, with usage and impact routinely reported through governance and commissioning processes - Needs descriptors stable, consistently applied across all settings and phases, and routinely reviewed in response to national policy changes and local learning - The Valuing SEND dataset is consistently being used at both an individual (child) and strategic (commissioning) level, informing and supporting decision making based on evidence - Consistent use of Valuing SEND across all age ranges, with profiles being updated on a regular basis - Established and varied training and case study offer in place, underpinned by strong engagement and impact monitoring - Clear, regular feedback from parents and carers show greater confidence in decision making - Regular monitoring shows Valuing SEND data being	3.7, 4.1, 4.3 3.1, 3.7, 3.8 1.11, 3.7, 4.3 3.7, 3.8, 3.10 3.3, 3.7 3.3, 4.3, 5.1

				used to inform and update the other initiatives within Dorset's SEND Reform Plan	
SUCCESS MEASURES <i>Drawing on metrics from the accompanying data template</i> <i>E.g.</i> <i>Improve attendance of pupils in all maintained schools (mainstream and special) with SEN</i> <i>Reduce spend on ISS places</i> <i>Increase # children and young people supported by Education Psychologists/SALT/OT in maintained provision</i> <i>Improve overall effectiveness of provision</i> <i>NEET data</i> <i>Leading indicators</i>		Year 1 (2027) will be a period of establishment and early implementation. The pace of change in the system will be slower as new structures, offers and frameworks are put in place, and we recognise that the system will be navigating uncertainty and adjustments that come with significant reform. Progress against metrics may be limited, but the foundations for sustained change will be firmly in place. • EHCNA rates will begin to stabilise from a baseline of 632 EHCNAs to around 616 • As a baseline, in 2025 we estimate around 3,283 children with SEN but without EHCPs were supported by these key practitioners. By the end of Year 1 we expect this number to increase to 3,706 as Dorset's Expertise Offer comes online. • Parental and children and young people confidence metrics agreed and baselined with the Parent Carer Council, Youth Voice and other key partners, providing a foundation for measuring improvement across the plan period • Independent special placements stabilised at 523 against 527 in 2026 to ensure better value for money and that more children and young people	By year 2 (2028), early interventions will begin to gain traction, and the system will start to see measurable movement against key indicators. Confidence in the reform programme will be growing, and the benefits of earlier intervention and stronger mainstream capability will begin to show in the data. • Rate of EHCP increases slowing to 3% • As Dorset's Expertise Offer is embedded within the local system, we expect the number of children and young people with SEN but without EHCPs supported by key practitioners to increase to 4,172 as more staff are recruited in to post. • First parental and children, young people confidence data available • Independent special placements reducing from 523 to 508, beginning to demonstrate better value for money and an increase in the number of children and young people who are educated close to home and their community. • KS4 Attainment 8 scores for CYP with EHCPs: maintain at 15, with early indicators of improvement emerging	By year 3 (2029), the key elements of the reform will be embedded, and Dorset expects to see a shift towards a more inclusive, sustainable and financially resilient system. The data will begin to reflect the cumulative impact of earlier intervention, stronger mainstream capability and more coherent specialist provision. • Rate of EHCP increases slowing to 2% • By year 3, we expect the implementation of the new Expertise Offer to have increased the number of children in Dorset with SEN but without an EHCP supported by these key practitioners to 4,638. • Parental and children and young people confidence metrics showing sustained improvement • Independent special placements reducing from 508 to 463 and Osprey Quay comes online, demonstrating better value for money and a marked increase in the number of children and young people who are educated close to home and their community. • KS4 Attainment 8 scores for CYP with EHCPs improve from 15 (2024/25) to 16 to remain above National (15) and SW (15).	

	<i>are educated closer to home and their community</i> • <i>KS4 Attainment 8 scores for CYP with EHCPs = 15 (2024/25)</i>		
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INSERT DOCUMENT UPLOAD LINK

6. What will the local area partnership deliver in the first year?

Please outline the key workstreams, milestones and trajectory your local area partnership will deliver and achieve in 2026-27 as well as how you plan to spend the investment allocation that will help fund this year's delivery. Please share key milestones and anticipated dates, success measures, cost breakdown and category. These should incorporate the core minimum requirements, be mapped to the building blocks above and should reflect a more detailed trajectory to the narrative, milestones and target metrics outlined in the 2026-27 column above.

Overview

Our first-year plan will move the reform programme from design into delivery. The focus will be on building the core infrastructure for change, while starting practical work in the areas that will improve inclusion, earlier support, local provision and confidence across the system.

- **Q2 will focus on mobilisation.** The partnership will establish cross-partner delivery groups, confirm accountable leads, develop detailed project plans, agree baselines, map current provision and gaps, and begin engagement with settings, families and wider partners.
- **Q3 will focus on testing and early implementation.** Core models, pathways and frameworks will be developed and socialised, pilot activity will begin, recruitment and workforce activity will progress, and early data will be used to refine delivery.
- **Q4 will focus on evaluation and scaling decisions.** Dorset will review the impact of early delivery, confirm year two priorities, strengthen governance and reporting, and use evidence from pilots, data and stakeholder feedback to adapt the plan.

The partnership expects that, by the end of year one, Dorset will have the delivery grip, shared evidence base and confidence across the broader system needed to move into wider implementation.

2026-27 Local delivery plan		Q2		Q3		Q4	
Workstream outline – mapped to building block	Responsible lead per workstream – accountable for the delivery of the workstream and the identified outcome.	Milestones per workstream What key milestones will enable you achieve your targeted trajectory	Target trajectory per workstream Where do you expect your data to be?	Milestones per workstream What key milestones will enable you achieve your targeted trajectory	Target trajectory per workstream Where do you expect your data to be?	Milestones per workstream What key milestones will enable you achieve your targeted trajectory	Target trajectory per workstream Where do you expect your data to be?
Outcome - what you want to achieve with this workstream Success measures – how you measure progress drawing on metrics from the accompanying data template							
Developing a strong Universal Offer for mainstream settings Building block: strengthening inclusion across educational settings Outcome: there is a shared language and expectations across the system about what universal provision is and what it entails, settings are confident in delivering inclusive practice consistently for all pupils, and parents, carers and children and young people understand and trust the support available at universal level. Year 1 success measures: Core data metrics (linked to metrics outlined in Year 1 success measures as defined in question 5): - Improved parental confidence in mainstream inclusive practice - Reduction in EHC needs assessment (EHCNA) requests <i>Workstream specific targets:</i>	Corporate Director for Education and Learning & Education setting leaders	- Operational working group is formed and established. - Detailed project plan is developed, with clear timelines and ownership of activities. - Local needs analysis is completed, and current Universal and Ordinarily Available Provision Offer is mapped, and key gaps are identified, including training and workforce programme.^{3.1, 3.4} - Engagement plan is agreed and finalised.^{3.2, 4.4} - Plan for developing the Inclusion Charter and Quality Inclusion Framework are agreed, including engagement sessions to ensure widespread participation and co-production. - Work continues to embed Valuing SEND across Early Years settings.	<i>No anticipated measurable progress against core data metrics in Q2, as this quarter is focused on mapping, planning and early engagement activity</i> <i>20 new settings recruited to deliver school move Valuing SEND pilot</i>	- Working group and project plan are finalised and consolidated. - Relevant workstreams are underway to further develop the Universal Offer, following gaps identified in Q2. Training and workforce programme is established and launched. - Targeted engagement underway to ensure clear articulation of the offer across the system - Inclusion Charter and Quality Inclusion Framework are being developed, in partnership with wider system partners. - Work continues to embed Valuing SEND across Early Years settings.	<i>No anticipated measurable progress against core data metrics in Q3 as programmes embed</i> <i>At least 40% of settings report improved clarity on the Universal Offer, access routes and indications for further support</i> <i>Valuing SEND actively used in 75% of Early Years settings</i>	- Working group is established and planning begins for Year 2. - Comprehensive Universal Offer programme is in place and demonstrating early impact. Training and workforce programme is established and impact is reviewed. - There is evidence of a strengthening Universal Offer across settings, with clarity around expectations, access routes and indicators for when further support is required. - Inclusion Charter and Quality Inclusion Framework are finalised and socialised. - Valuing SEND is well embedded across Early Years settings and	<i>Evidence of stabilisation towards the Year 1 target of 616 EHCNAs</i> <i>At least 60% of surveyed parent carers report improved confidence in and understanding of mainstream inclusive practice</i> <i>Valuing SEND actively used in 80% of Early Years settings</i> <i>At least 60% of participating settings report improved clarity on the Universal Offer, access routes and indicators for further support</i>

- Expansion of Valuing SEND use across mainstream settings - Improved confidence of mainstream settings in delivering inclusive practice		- Valuing SEND pilot is planned to expand use of Valuing SEND to primary and secondary settings, with a focus on supporting school moves (including to post-16 and FE). - Governance structures are established and baseline measures for tracking increase in parental and setting confidence are agreed.^{5.1, 5.2}		- Valuing SEND pilot focused on school moves is launched with a select number of settings across primary, secondary and post-16. - Monitoring system is in development to track use and impact of strengthening Universal Offer across settings, with targeted support delivered as required. Valuing SEND data begins to be used to monitor setting readiness and guide the delivery of support. Parental confidence is tracked.		routinely used to support identification of need. - School moves pilot is completed, impact evaluated and plans for Y2 developed. - Monitoring system to track parental and settings confidence begins to be more established, with Valuing SEND setting readiness scores providing a growing picture of confidence to meet needs across settings.	
Dorset's Expertise Offer (our local Experts at Hand model)^{1.8} Building block: strengthening inclusion across educational settings Outcome: to deliver outreach, advisory and specialist input, build education setting capability through consultation, coaching and training, and make support available without the need for a formal diagnosis. Mainstream settings are resourced and confident to meet a wider range of needs and are clear on access routes for additional targeted and specialist input where children have more complex needs. Year 1 success measures: Core data metrics (linked to metrics outlined in Year 1 success measures as defined in question 5):	Corporate Director for Education and Learning	Operational working group is formed and established. Draft LA and ICB governance, commissioning and accountability arrangements agreed in principle, including a proposed memorandum of understanding or equivalent partnership agreement. Core principles and operating model of the offer are refined, based on local need and sufficiency evidence, as well as insights from other areas (e.g. Change Programme trials) and with input from across the Partnership. Existing initiatives and services are aligned to the offer, to ensure effective use of resources and avoid duplication.^{1.3} Post-16 and PfA strand of Expertise Offer scoped and agreed through dedicated working group, with settings	No anticipated measurable progress expected against core data metrics in Q2. This quarter is focused on establishment and planning activity. The baseline position across all metrics will be confirmed and validated during this period. At least 25% of new roles have been recruited to increase the expected capacity to deliver the Expertise Offer	Working group and project plan are finalised and consolidated. Memorandum of understanding or equivalent partnership agreement finalised, confirming joint ownership, deployment, reporting, escalation and review arrangements.^{1.1, 1.9, 1.10} Chosen operating model is consolidated and socialised across the partnership. Clear and consistent access routes are established across localities. Training and coaching programme for settings on post-16 landscape and PfA outcomes launched, with	No anticipated measurable progress expected against core data metrics in Q3, although delivery baselines, recruitment progress, access routes and early reach will be tracked. At least 40% of new roles have been recruited to increase the expected capacity to deliver the Expertise Offer At least 50% of surveyed settings understand what Dorset's	Working group and links to governance are well established. Y2 plan is being developed. Operating model is established and reviewed to align with emerging evidence of impact. Initial impact data collected, including feedback from young people, families and	Number pupils without EHCPs supported by key professionals increases to 3,706 At least 60% of surveyed parent carers report improved confidence in and understanding of mainstream inclusive practice 1% reduction in permanent exclusions of pupils with EHCPs from 23/24 baseline 1% reduction in persistent absence of children with SEN statements or EHCPs from 24/25 baseline

- Increased access to specialist expertise - Improved parent and carer confidence and children and young people satisfaction in mainstream provision Workstream specific targets: - Reduced suspensions and permanent exclusions - Improved attendance - Reduced reliance on out-of-area placements - Improved confidence of mainstream settings in delivering inclusive practice		identified for initial engagement and digital PFA planning tool development initiated		Annual Review support and family engagement guidance available to all settings	Expertise Offer provides, how to access it and when it should be used.	settings on confidence and experience of post-16 planning and provision	2% reduction in travel to out-of-area placements
		Joint mapping session completed between Expertise Offer leads and CYP Mental Health Transformation Programme leads; current overlap, gaps and referral friction points identified		No-wrong-door SEMH referral model agreed across localities; roles of SEMH Specialist Teachers within the Expertise Offer and mental health practitioners clarified and communicated		Integrated model operating in all localities; early qualitative feedback from practitioners on clarity of SEMH pathways gathered and used to refine Year 2 plans	At least 50% of settings across all localities regularly access Dorset's Expertise Offer
		Recruitment is completed for key roles required to deliver the model across localities. ^{1.8}		Recruitment continues for any outstanding key posts.		Recruitment of key roles is completed and continues for additional posts required for Y2 expansion. All localities have an established and functioning offer.	At least 70% of participating settings understand what Dorset's Expertise Offer provides, how to access it and when it should be used
		SWOT analysis of Dorset's localities is undertaken, alongside targeted engagement. Some localities begin rollout of the offer. ^{1.2, 1.7, 1.11}		Work begins to deliver offer across all localities, in alignment with existing initiatives and services.		The training and development offer is consistently accessed and impact is monitored.	
		Training and development offer for practitioners is being planned, informed by SEND workforce sufficiency analysis.		Training and development offer is launched and monitoring arrangements are agreed.		There is clarity about the offer across the system. Engagement plan is reviewed in line with feedback and Y2 plan.	
		A robust engagement and communications plan is developed to ensure system-wide co-production and build confidence in the system about how the model will support strengthened support and inclusive practice. This will support baselining of setting and parental understanding and confidence in the proposed changes. ^{1.2, 5.1}		Communications and engagement are underway across the system with all relevant stakeholders.		Pilot of neurodiversity tool launched across a defined cohort of settings, with a monitoring framework in place to evaluate impact on early identification and needs-led support	
		Scoping work completed, with the purpose, design principles and target cohort for the Neurodiversity Tool agreed across education and health partners		Neurodiversity tool developed and tested with a small group of settings, with initial feedback gathered to refine the approach ahead of wider piloting, aligned to work of Dorset's Expertise Offer		Y1 impact is evaluated. Y2 plan for further rollout and expansion is consolidated.	
		Impact monitoring and governance processes are established to ensure equity of access, reach and early		Early impact is closely evaluated through governance structures to			

		impact, alongside increased system confidence. ^{1,8}		track progress against measures.		Evidence of impact is consolidated and socialised, as part of communications and engagement plan.	
Strengthen collaboration between settings and pooling resources Building block: strengthening inclusion across educational settings & access to specialist support and local placements Outcome: ensuring that there is more effective use of resources among settings, building on existing strengths and expertise to consolidate consistent inclusive practice. Year 1 success measures: Core data metrics (linked to metrics outlined in Year 1 success measures as defined in question 5): - Improved parent and carer confidence and children and young people satisfaction in mainstream provision Workstream specific targets: - Measurable increase in the number of settings within locality clusters - Reduced duplication of effort across settings and services - Increased consistency, effectiveness and confidence of mainstream settings in providing early support	Corporate Director for Education and Learning	- Operational working group is formed and established. Detailed project plan is developed, with clear timelines and ownership of activities. - Clear governance structure is agreed, including maintained settings and MATs. - A Dorset-wide audit of specialist expertise, inclusion resources and existing collaborative practice is completed to identify strengths, gaps and priority localities for pilot delivery. - Initial pilot clusters are identified and confirmed, including agreement on participating settings, locality priorities and targeted areas of focus (e.g. SEMH, C&I, attendance, school moves). - A shared Dorset Cluster Collaboration Framework is developed and agreed, clearly defining the purpose of clusters, expectations for participation, principles for resource sharing, and the role of settings in supporting inclusion locally.	No anticipated measurable progress expected against core data metrics in Q2. This quarter is focused on establishment and planning activity.	- Additional settings and partnerships are identified and engaged to support future phases of cluster expansion and rollout. - Governance groups receive regular progress, impact and risk reporting, with learning from pilot activity used to refine the Dorset Cluster Collaboration Framework and inform wider implementation planning. - Early examples of effective collaborative practice and system impact are captured and shared through the communications and engagement plan to support wider system learning and engagement. - Pilot locality clusters are formally established across identified areas, with participating settings agreeing shared priorities, delivery models and mechanisms for collaborative working, building on existing partnerships and locality structures.	No anticipated measurable progress expected against core data metrics in Q3 as pilot sites begin delivery as collaboration models are tested. At least three pilot locality clusters are active, with participating settings agreeing shared priorities, target cohorts and impact measures At least 10% of Dorset settings are engaged in a pilot cluster, locality collaboration or resource-sharing activity	- Year 2 expansion plans are agreed, including additional localities, participating settings and priority areas of focus informed by pilot outcomes and emerging system need. - Refined operational guidance, governance arrangements and support materials are developed to support more consistent implementation across future clusters. - Evidence of impact from Y1 pilots is consolidated and socialised. - Pilot locality clusters complete their first full cycle of delivery, with evaluation undertaken against agreed measures of impact, including inclusion practice, workforce confidence, access to support and placement stability.	At least 60% of surveyed parent carers report improved confidence in and understanding of mainstream inclusive practice Progress against workstream specific targets: At least 20% of Dorset settings are engaged in a defined locality cluster or pilot collaboration model At least 60% of pilot site settings report improved confidence, more joint working and reduction in duplication, captured through practitioner feedback and evaluation

		- A communications and engagement plan is launched to support awareness, participation and consistent understanding of the cluster model across schools, partners and families. - A monitoring and evaluation framework is implemented to measure the impact of cluster working, including indicators linked to inclusion practice, workforce confidence, sharing of expertise, local placement stability and reductions in escalation to specialist pathways.		- Early impact is shared through the communications and engagement plan, with interest gathered from additional settings that may wish to join later pilots. - Baseline and ongoing monitoring data is collected across pilot sites, including measures linked to workforce confidence, access to specialist expertise, inclusion practice, attendance, and local placement stability.		- Participating settings and partners jointly review pilot learning and agree which collaboration models should be scaled, adapted or embedded as part of Dorset's longer-term locality approach. - A formal impact and learning report is produced and shared across the wider system, highlighting effective practice, implementation challenges and recommendations for wider rollout.	
Improve EY identification and strategies Building block: Strengthening inclusion across educational settings Outcome: Needs are identified and met earlier through consistent and aligned practice across Early Years settings, services and initiatives, with a clearer understanding of 0-5 childcare and specialist SEND sufficiency informing Year 2 commissioning and support priorities. Year 1 success measures: Core data metrics (linked to metrics outlined in Year 1 success measures as defined in question 5): Reduction in EHC needs assessment (EHCNA) requests <i>Workstream specific targets:</i>	Corporate Director for Education and Learning	- Operational working group is formed and established. - Detailed project plan is developed, with clear timelines and ownership of activities. - Baseline of early identification practice and data is reviewed (including with evidence from Valuing SEND tool). 0-5 childcare and specialist SEND sufficiency assessment scoped, including place availability, gaps for children with complex and emerging needs, and links to Best Start Family Hubs.^{3,6} - Early identification pathways are mapped across the system.	<i>No anticipated measurable progress expected against core data metrics in Q2. This quarter is focused on establishment and planning activity.</i>	- Early intervention initiatives operate in a coordinated way, alongside other activities like Dorset's Expertise Offer. - Early identification practice data is more consistently reviewed and monitored. - Assessment completed and reviewed with Early Years, health and Family Hub partners. - Standardised early identification pathways and access routes for further support are formally agreed and communicated.	<i>No anticipated measurable progress expected against core data metrics in Q3. This quarter is focused on agreeing standardised pathways and launching the workforce training programme.</i> <i>At least 40% of Early Years settings confirm understanding of standardised early identification pathways and access routes for further support</i>	- Early intervention initiatives are fully integrated with other aspects of the reform plan. - Improved early identification data systems embedded, with consistent reporting across settings - Priority gaps agreed and incorporated into Year 2 sufficiency and commissioning plans. - Early intervention pathways operating consistently across Early Years settings and partners	<i>Evidence of stabilisation towards the Year 1 target of 616 EHCNAs</i> <i>At least 60% of settings report increased confidence in their understanding of pathways, captured through practitioner survey and feedback</i> <i>At least 70% of practitioners who have participated in training offer report improved confidence in delivering practice, captured through pre and post training evaluation</i>

- Improved timeliness of identification of need and access to support - Increased confidence across EY settings and practitioners		'Reception Ready' model planning gets underway. - Integrated working model agreed between Family Hubs, Health Visiting and EY settings. - Workforce training analysis is undertaken. - Targeted training programme is developed as part of the Universal Offer to support earlier identification of trauma informed practice.		'Reception Ready' model delivery continues. - Integration between Family Hubs, Health Visiting and EY settings continues to strengthen. - Workforce training programme is launched. Uptake and impact are monitored. - Targeted training programme is launched and aligned with wider offer for practitioners.		'Reception Ready' is increasingly embedded. - Integration between Family Hubs, Health Visiting and EY settings is well embedded and recognised across the system. - Workforce training programme is established and impact begins to emerge. - Targeted training programme underway and aligned with Universal Offer and Expertise Offer workforce development programme.	50% of EY settings are confident in Reception Ready model
Increase and strengthen Inclusion bases Building block: Access to specialist support and local placements Outcome: Inclusion Bases are developed into a two-tier network of provision: LA-commissioned specialist bases addressing complex need, and a growing model of school-led support bases supporting earlier intervention within mainstream. Existing capacity is increased as a cost-effective way of delivering specialist provision in mainstream settings, supported by investment in training and workforce development. Inclusion Bases and special schools will offer greater outreach to mainstream settings as part of Dorset's Expertise	Corporate Director for Commissioning and Partnerships	- Confirm and communicate the two-tier Inclusion Base model, including commissioning, funding and placement criteria for specialist and support bases - Specialist Inclusion Bases are mapped and communicated across the system, with admissions criteria, referral pathways and guidance for settings reviewed and aligned to the graduated response, establishing shared understanding of Inclusion Bases as part of a graduated two-tier system: specialist bases for high-intensity support and Support Inclusion Bases for earlier, mainstream-led intervention	No anticipated measurable progress expected against core data metrics in Q2. 1 additional specialist inclusion base established - total number of specialist inclusion bases increases to 19	- Specialist Inclusion Bases begin to be embedded as part of the graduated response, not a specialist escalation route. - Co-design with schools and MATs a clear delivery model for Support Inclusion Bases, including expectations, funding approaches, workforce requirements and links to the graduated response.^{2,3}	No anticipated measurable progress expected against core data metrics in Q3. 2 additional specialist inclusion bases established - total number of specialist inclusion bases increases to 21 At least four MATs or school groups are actively involved in co-designing the Support	- Confirm Year 2 sites and phases for September 2027 openings of Specialist and Support Inclusion Bases. - First tranche of Specialist Inclusion Bases are established. A clear plan for Support Inclusion Bases is agreed with mainstream settings, with initial number of support bases coming online.	Number of INMSS placements limited to 527 2 additional specialist inclusion bases established - total number of specialist inclusion bases increases to 23 1% reduction in permanent exclusions of pupils with EHCPs from 23/24 baseline 1% reduction in persistent absence of children with SEN statements or EHCPs from 24/25 baseline

Offer, with their role clearly articulated. Year 1 success measures: Core data metrics (linked to metrics outlined in Year 1 success measures as defined in question 5): - Reduced reliance on out of area and high-cost placements Workstream specific targets: - Increase in number of Specialist and Support Inclusion Bases - Reduced exclusions and persistent absence - Reduced transport usage, especially to out-of-area placements		- Open first wave of LA-commissioned Specialist Inclusion Bases from September 2026 (as per Sufficiency Plan)^{2,6}, focused on addressing immediate gaps in C&I, C&L and SEMH provision: - Secondary C&I Hub (Chesil) - Primary SEMH (West) - Primary SEMH (North) - C&L First & Middle (Dorchester) - C&L Secondary (West) - Finalise countywide SEND Sufficiency & Inclusion Base Delivery Plan aligned to SEND Reform and capital programme. - Agree governance and accountability for Inclusion Base roll-out through SEND Partnership / Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education. - Align EP, SALT and specialist teacher input to schools hosting Inclusion Bases (ensuring it aligns with Dorset's Expertise Offer).		- Begin structured collaboration with mainstream settings to establish Support Inclusion Bases. This includes mapping of existing good practice. - Year 1 delivery prioritises Specialist Inclusion Bases to stabilise the system, reduce reliance on high-cost placements and establish centres of expertise. Specialist Inclusion Bases begin to be embedded as part of the graduated response, not a specialist escalation route. - Publish clear referral pathways, placement criteria and quality standards for Specialist and Support Inclusion Bases.^{2,4, 2,6} - Specialist Inclusion Bases are aligned to Dorset's Expertise Offer and other specialist input across the system.	Inclusion Base model	- Begin workforce development and outreach from Specialist Inclusion Bases to build capacity in mainstream settings ahead of support base rollout in Years 2–3. - Report impact on transport usage, placement stability and demand for Learning Centre places.^{2,8} - Governance arrangements are established and referral pathways and criteria and quality standards for Inclusion Bases are clear and adopted. - Specialist Inclusion Bases are fully embedded within Dorset's Expertise Offer and other specialist pathways. Support Inclusion Bases begin to align as they come online.	2% reduction in travel to out-of-area placements
Align AP practice and provision to the three-tier model	Corporate Director for Commissioning and Partnerships	- AP strategic lead is recruited^{1,8} - Detailed project plan is developed, with clear	No anticipated measurable progress expected against core	AP strategic lead begins to embed within local system. Delivery of plan is underway.	No anticipated measurable progress expected against core	AP strategic lead is well-embedded and recognised across the system. Year 2 planning underway.	Number of INMSS placements limited to 527

Building block: access to specialist support and local placements Outcome: AP is recommissioned to align with the three-tier model and documented good practice, with clear referral and reintegration pathways. AP is recognised by the system as an intervention not a destination, and pupils are supported to reintegrate into mainstream settings wherever possible and appropriate. AP expertise is shared consistently across the system, reducing permanent exclusions, supporting inclusion and building confidence in settings, parents, carers and young people. Year 1 success measures: Core data metrics (linked to metrics outlined in Year 1 success measures as defined in question 5): - Reduced reliance on out of area and high-cost placements - Improved parental confidence Workstream specific targets: - Improved practitioner confidence and understanding of the AP three-tier model and reintegration - Improved attendance - Reduced exclusions and suspensions - Improved reintegration from AP into mainstream		timelines and ownership of activities. - Ambition and vision for AP in Dorset is agreed and consolidated with key partners. Engagement plan is developed. - Agree governance and accountability structures for this workstream, alongside AP providers. - Learning Centres are involved as key stakeholders in this workstream to review role and outreach offer, including as part of Dorset's Expertise Offer.^{1.6} - Three-tier AP model is locally defined, and engagement activity is undertaken to socialise this across the system.	data metrics in Q2. This quarter is focused on recruitment of the AP strategic lead and establishing governance and accountability structures alongside AP providers.	- Communication and engagement gets underway to build confidence and understanding across the system. - Joint LA/provider governance structure established for AP commissioning. Current AP commissioning arrangements reviewed and gaps identified, with a clear plan agreed for strengthening commissioning. - Role, purpose and offer of Learning Centres is clearly articulated. - Access routes, referral indicators and reintegration pathways mapped and agreed. - Capacity constraints reviewed, with options agreed for contracting, regional partnership or expertise-sharing where local capacity is insufficient.^{1.5}	data metrics in Q3. This quarter is focused on refining the local system's alignment to the three-tier model and delivering engagement activity. At least 30% of surveyed practitioners report improved clarity around AP roles, SEMH pathways and reintegration expectations	- There is a strengthening consensus and understanding of the role of AP across the system, with evidenced improvements in settings and families' confidence in this intervention. - Commissioning and operational alignment between LA and providers in place. - Learning Centres' role, purpose and offer is clear, and outreach is being delivered consistently. - There is consistent application of AP pathways and access routes aligned to the three-tier model, with evidence of Learning Centres providing Tier 1 outreach, AP used as a short-term intervention, and reintegration planning embedded from the point of entry.^{1.4}	At least 60% of surveyed parent carers report improved confidence in and understanding of Alternative Provision At least 60% of surveyed practitioners report improved clarity around roles and pathways for SEMH 1% reduction in permanent exclusions of pupils with EHCPs from 23/24 baseline 1% reduction in persistent absence of children with SEN statements or EHCPs from 24/25 baseline Reintegration from AP to mainstream increases by 5% against baseline
Strengthening Co-production and Participation Building block: System leadership, local partnership collaboration and co-production	Corporate Director for Education and Learning	- Operational working group is formed and established. - Detailed project plan is developed, with clear timelines and ownership of activities.	No anticipated measurable progress expected against core data metrics in Q2. This quarter	Partnership arrangements with the Dorset Parent Carer Council and participation groups formalised, with clear expectations and roles agreed	Limited progress against core data metrics in Q3, as partnership arrangements	Robust working arrangements in place. Y2 planning underway.	At least 50% of parent carers participating in agreed lived-experience activity report that co-production has

& encouraging inclusive culture and behaviours Outcome: enhanced, evidenced co-production and active participation from across the partnership and from critical stakeholder groups, including seldom-heard families, with deliverables incorporating co-produced input as standard. Year 1 success measures: Core data metrics (linked to metrics outlined in Year 1 success measures as defined in question 5): - Improved parental confidence and satisfaction Workstream specific targets: - Expectations of collaboration, co-production and engagement are clear across the system		- System-wide co-production principles are formally agreed and published. - Baseline mapping of current participation and co-production activity completed across SEND and Best Start in Life services, identifying gaps, duplication and opportunities for improvement – particularly for seldom-heard groups. Good practice identified and consolidated. - Scope review of SENDIASS, mediation and dispute resolution arrangements, including independence, family understanding and current performance data. 5.3, 5.5, 5.6 - If possible, planning for social media work experience placement gets underway - Early resolution pathways reviewed across all localities, with mediation, disagreement resolution and 'next steps' meetings confirmed as standard practice and consistently communicated to families	is focused on establishing the working group, agreeing co-production principles and mapping current participation activity.	- Shared co-production principles formally agreed and socialised across SEND and Early Years partners. "You said, we did" approach piloted in at least one governance forum, with early examples of lived experience influencing decisions documented - Co-production benchmark developed, with self-assessment process underway and initial findings shared with partners. Family Hubs and SENDIASS roles in capturing lived experience strengthened and clearly defined - Review is completed with families, SENDIASS, mediation provider and statutory decision-makers; draft improvement actions and metrics agreed. - Social media work experience placement confirmed and underway, with early outputs informing engagement approach - SEND performance dashboard refreshed to incorporate dispute resolution rates, timeliness metrics and SEND Reform Plan performance measures, with weekly operational	are formalised and the "you said, we did" approach begins to establish At least 40% of key delivery stakeholders have adopted the agreed co-production principles and can evidence how lived experience is informing delivery	- Shared co-production principles recognised and routinely adopted across governance and delivery forums, with evidence of consistent application - Co-production benchmark self-assessment completed, with improvement actions identified and agreed. - Participation reach expanded, with early evidence of more diverse and representative voice – including from seldom-heard groups and children and young people not attending a setting - Metrics baselined, reporting route agreed, and family-facing explanation of SENDIASS, mediation and decision-making roles published. - Social media engagement approach agreed, informed by work experience placement, with implementation plan for Year 2 confirmed - First data available on dispute resolution rates and timeliness, with early evidence of consistent application of early resolution pathways across localities and findings	improved, using a method agreed with DPCC and evaluated alongside qualitative feedback At least 60% of key stakeholders report strong understanding of Dorset's co-production principles and how they should be applied
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				review and escalation processes confirmed		used to inform Year 2 planning	
		Dorset Unstoppables Youth Voice Group engaged; scope of CYP confidence metrics agreed with the group, including what good looks like and how it will be measured		Co-design of CYP confidence metrics completed with the Unstoppables group; draft metrics shared with partners for comment		CYP confidence metrics finalised, baselined and agreed alongside parental metrics; reporting route into governance confirmed	
Review and update the SEND sufficiency strategy Building block: Encouraging inclusive culture and behaviours Outcome: enough suitable places, in the right locations and of the right type, to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND across all phases of education, reducing reliance on out-of-area and independent specialist provision. More children access support close to home, within a planned and sustainable continuum of provision that is responsive to changing demand. Year 1 success measures: Core data metrics (linked to metrics outlined in Year 1 success measures as defined in question 5): - Reduced demand for high-cost specialist placements - Children and young people engagement and satisfaction Workstream specific targets: - Increased proportion of children and young people supported locally	Corporate Director for Commissioning and Partnerships	- Full system baseline of current and future SEND need completed and agreed with partners. Provision map and gap analysis signed off, identifying sufficiency pressures by need type, phase and locality – including highest areas of need and spend – to ensure a clear, evidence-based understanding of where effort and resource should be targeted. ^{2.1, 2.7, 2.8} - Post-16 sufficiency analysis initiated, with current provision, pathways into and out of settings, and known locality gaps mapped. - Shared strategic priorities agreed across education, health, and care partners. - Sufficiency strategy governance is developing and commissioning framework is drafted	No anticipated measurable progress expected against core data metrics in Q2. This quarter is focused on completing a full system baseline of current and future SEND need, including provision map, gap analysis, rural viability, locality variation, transport impact and highest areas of need and spend, and agreeing shared strategic priorities across education, health and care partners.	- Immediate pressure points identified with agreed “quick win” mitigations in place. - Co-production with young people, families, providers and post-16 partners underway, with emerging priorities tested through the post-16 partnership group. ^{3.9, 3.10, 4.4} - Implementation plan agreed and signed off across partners. - Sufficiency Strategy governance and commissioning framework formally established.	Post-16 sufficiency priorities are tested with young people, families and providers, with at least 70% of involved young people saying they’ve been genuinely heard Quick-win mitigations are agreed for the highest-pressure areas, with at least two targeted cohorts or localities showing reduced escalation against the agreed Q2 baseline.	- Commissioning activity initiated against identified gaps and pressures - Initial post-16 sufficiency findings agreed, with priority gaps, quick-win actions and Year 2 commissioning requirements identified. - Sufficiency Strategy implementation formally mobilised across the system - Governance structures fully operational, with regular performance and delivery oversight in place	Number of INMSS placements limited to 527 Travel to out-of-area placements reduces by 2% against baseline At least three sufficiency commissioning or capital decisions are demonstrably informed by the refreshed sufficiency analysis

Commissioning decisions are informed by sufficiency analysis							
Develop an integrated data dashboard Building block: Encouraging inclusive culture and behaviours Outcome: a shared, system-wide picture of SEND and inclusion that prioritises monitoring and iterative improvement and enables evidence-informed and reflective conversations across the partnership. Insights inform strategic planning, commissioning and sufficiency and align system partners around a single, trusted evidence base. Year 1 success measures: Workstream specific targets: - A single integrated dashboard providing child-level and setting-level data which supports commissioning decisions - Increase in the number of practitioners actively using the dashboard for planning and decision-making - Increase in workforce confidence in interpreting and acting on inclusion data	Corporate Director for Commissioning and Partnerships	- Operational working group is formed and established. - Detailed project plan is developed, with clear timelines and ownership of activities. - Early Years, school-age BI dashboards and Valuing SEND data are aligned. - Key inclusion metrics are reviewed and aligned with Valuing SEND setting readiness data, the Inclusion Charter and the Quality Inclusion Framework. - Number of practitioners actively using available dashboards baselined, and workforce confidence in using dashboard for planning baselined. - Additional system data mapped for future integration, such as from DfE, NHS, HM Courts and Tribunals service etc. - VFM indicators scoped in partnership with Finance, Commissioning and data leads	<i>This quarter is focused on set up and operationalising the workstream</i>	- New dashboard is socialised with frontline practitioners and governance structures. Training is delivered to support understanding of data insights and decision-making. - Early Years, school-age BI dashboards and Valuing SEND data are integrated into new dashboard. - Additional datasets (including from system partners) are mapped and reviewed to develop integration plan. - Key inclusion metrics are agreed across the partnership in alignment with the locally agreed definition of inclusion. ^{3.1, 4.3} - KPIs agreed against baseline. - Mapping of additional data continues in alignment with plans for integration. - Baseline values established for each agreed VFM indicator; indicators integrated into the dashboard development plan; reporting format agreed with governance forums	<i>At least 50 practitioners and governance users have accessed dashboard training</i>	- Progress is reviewed to support development of Y2 plan. Training is reviewed and updated. - The new dashboard begins to be used routinely by frontline practitioners and governance forums, with evidence of it informing decision making and iterative improvements to services. - Key inclusion metrics are integrated into the dashboards. - KPIs are reviewed as part of Y2 plans. - Proposal for integration of additional datasets is finalised and agreed. - VFM baseline dashboard view live and socialised with ECAT Partnership Group and Alliance; first narrative VFM statement drafted for Year 2 reporting	<i>At least 50% of identified dashboard users are regularly using the updated dashboard</i> <i>Dashboard evidence is used in at least three governance or commissioning decisions</i>
Embedding the Valuing SEND tool	Corporate Director for	Detailed project plan is developed, with clear	<i>Valuing SEND embedded in 70% of all Early</i>	Working group established and	<i>Valuing SEND embedded in</i>	Y1 impact is reviewed and Y2 planning underway.	<i>Valuing SEND embedded in 80%</i>

Building block: Strengthening inclusion across educational settings Outcome: The majority of Early Years and primary settings are using Valuing SEND consistently and confidently to help better understand the strengths and development needs of all settings. Valuing SEND is aligned to the objectives and principles of the reforms, allowing data from the tool's use to inform the decision making required within other workstreams, such as for individual planning and strategic commissioning. Success measures (across the 3 years): <i>Workstream specific targets:</i> - Valuing SEND embedded consistently across the majority of EY settings - Valuing SEND data begins to inform other initiatives across Dorset's SEND Reform Plan - Early evidence of positive impact on school moves and reintegration through small-scale pilot	Education and Learning	timelines and ownership of activities. - Existing needs descriptors reviewed against White Paper definitions and three-tier model - Gap analysis completed between current Valuing SEND insight layer and integrated dashboard requirements - Existing training materials reviewed and gaps identified - Draft impact framework criteria outlined and shared with key partners for feedback - Rollout plan for remaining Early Years / primary settings agreed, with support offer in place (aligned to EY intervention workstream) and school move pilot is launched (in alignment with Universal Offer workstream)	<i>Years settings, with quality and consistency of implementation monitored</i> <i>20 new settings recruited to deliver school move Valuing SEND pilot</i>	embedded into other reform workstreams. - Updated needs descriptors drafted and shared for partner consultation - Revised insight layer scoped and development plan agreed with BI team (aligned to integrated data dashboard workstream) - Updated training materials drafted and piloted with a small group of settings - Case studies from early adopter settings collected, compiled and shared to show impact and encourage further settings to engage - Impact framework drafted and agreed with operational working group - EY rollout continues - School move pilot underway and impact monitored	<i>75% of Early Years settings</i> <i>School-move pilot is active with 10 settings</i> <i>At least 50% of training pilot participants report improved confidence in using Valuing SEND</i>	- Updated needs descriptors finalised, edited within Valuing SEND platform and communicated across the partnership - Revised insight layer developed and integrated into dashboard development plan - Full suite of training materials and case studies finalised and published - Impact framework formally agreed and baselined, with first cohort of priority children and settings identified and aligning to Expertise Offer workstream - Consistent use of Valuing SEND achieved across most Early Years settings, with usage data regularly reviewed	<i>of Early Years settings</i> <i>At least 70% of pilot participants report improved confidence in using the tool to support setting readiness and school moves</i>														
Projected Investment Spend per quarter <i>Please specify funding source for each category</i> <i>Example categories:</i> Programme oversight/additional leadership capacity. Workforce Recruitment Workforce training and development Data/Digital	<table><tr><th colspan="7">LA SEND Transformation Fund – Year 1</th></tr><tr><td colspan="7">Overview - Dorset has been allocated £2,212,875 to spend in year 1 as part of the Experts at Hand & Local Authority SEND Transformation Fund - At least 80% must be spent on Experts at Hand direct delivery for all settings, staff and their children and young people – for Dorset this is equivalent to £1.7703M - No more than 10% of funding can be spent on admin costs for delivering the Experts at Hand offer – for Dorset this is equivalent to £221,287.50 </td></tr></table>							LA SEND Transformation Fund – Year 1							Overview - Dorset has been allocated £2,212,875 to spend in year 1 as part of the Experts at Hand & Local Authority SEND Transformation Fund - At least 80% must be spent on Experts at Hand direct delivery for all settings, staff and their children and young people – for Dorset this is equivalent to £1.7703M - No more than 10% of funding can be spent on admin costs for delivering the Experts at Hand offer – for Dorset this is equivalent to £221,287.50						
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Total Spend	No more than 10% of funding can be spent on local authority transformation costs, including staff or other associated costs – for Dorset this is equivalent to £221,287.50					
	Experts at Hand delivery (80% of LA SEND Transformation Fund)					
	Category	Item	Notes	Q2	Q3	Q4
	Workforce	Specialist Senior Educational Psychologist (1 FTE) Educational Psychologists (2 FTE) Assistant EPs (3 FTE)	Additional capacity to enable delivery of Dorset's Expertise Offer (Experts at Hand)	£101.9K	£101.9K	£101.9K
		Advanced SALT Practitioners* (2 FTE)		£1.5K	£1.5K	£1.5K
		Speech and Language Therapists (2x Band 6 FTE, 2x Band 7 FTE)		£90.8K	£90.8K	£90.8K
		Occupational Therapists (2x Band 5 FTE, 2x Band 6 FTE)		£76K	£76K	£76K
		Specialist Teacher (communication and interaction) - C&I specialist teachers (1 FTE) - C&I Assistants - HTLA or equivalent (2 FTE)		£58.7K	£58.7K	£58.7K
		Specialist Teacher (cognition and learning) - SPLD specialist teachers (1 FTE) - C&L Assistants - HTLA or equivalent (2 FTE)		£59.2K	£59.2K	£59.2K
		Specialist Teachers (Social, Emotional and Mental Health) - SEMH Specialist Teacher (1 FTE) - SEMH Assistant - HTLA or equivalent (2 FTE)		£58.7K	£58.7K	£58.7K
		Additional specialist teacher capacity for Learning Centres' (AP) contribution to Expertise Offer		£71.9K	£71.9K	£71.9K
		Additional specialist teacher capacity for special schools' contribution to Expertise Offer		£71.9K	£71.9K	£71.9K
		TOTAL EAH DELIVERY				
	Administration costs for Experts at Hand (10% of LA SEND Transformation Fund)					
	Category	Item	Notes	Q2	Q3	Q4
	Workforce	Dorset Expertise Delivery Officers (Experts at Hand Offer) (Grade 12, 2 FTE)	Key coordinators for the offer at locality level. Working alongside EPs, SALTs, OTs, other expert practitioners and educational settings they will ensure that the offer is targeted, coordinated and triaged as needed, adapting to the needs of each locality	£42K	£42K	£42K
		Project Officer – SEND Reform Programme (Grade 10, 0.8 FTE)	To support project management and coordination of SEND Reform Programme and Dorset's Expertise Offer	£14K	£14K	£14K
	Recruitment	Agency costs	To support recruitment of key posts for Dorset's Expertise Offer		£25K	£25K

TOTAL ADMIN						£218K
Additional Transformation costs (10% of LA SEND Transformation Fund)						
Category	Item	Notes	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Workforce	Principal Lead – SEND Reform Programme (Grade 16, 1 FTE)	Additional capacity to provide strategic leadership of SEND Reform Programme	£32.7K	£32.7K	£32.7K	
	Finance and Governance	Additional finance and governance support for the SEND Reform Programme	£4K	£4K	£4K	
	Commissioning and Transformation Lead (Grade 12, 1 FTE)	Additional capacity to support commissioning duties related to the delivery of the SEND Reform Programme	£17K	£17K	£17K	
	Integrated data, performance and dashboard operational lead (Grade 12, 2.5 days)	Additional capacity to lead delivery of Integrated Data Dashboard workstream	£8.4K	£8.4K	£8.4K	
	Communications Apprenticeship (Grade 5 or 6, 1 FTE)	Apprenticeship for young person to support wider communications and engagement with the SEND Reform Programme and related initiatives	£12K	£12K	£12K	
Engagement and co-production	Venue costs	Venue hire for training delivery, engagement, conferences etc. related to the SEND Reform Programme	£1K	£1K	£1K	
	Marketing costs	For design and publication of material and outputs related to the SEND Reform Programme		£2K	£2K	
TOTAL TRANSFORMATION						£221.2K
OVERALL TOTAL FOR YEAR 1						£2.211M
Dorset will use this funding to build on and enhance existing local capacity, not to replace current provision, fund provision already named in EHCPs, fund EHC needs assessments or meet support that schools should provide through ordinarily available provision. The proposed Year 1 spend has been structured to comply with the Experts at Hand and Local Authority SEND Transformation Fund conditions, with at least 80% directed to the direct delivery of Dorset's Expertise Offer, and administration and transformation costs each held within the 10% limits. *Two Advanced SALT Practitioner posts (Band 8A) will be established across the NHS BSW, NHS Dorset and NHS Somerset ICBs, with salary costs shared proportionally across the constituent local authorities.						

INSERT DOCUMENT UPLOAD LINK

7. How will the local area partnership deliver the first-year plan?

Please set out how you will ensure the required capacity and capability is in place from organisational corporate functions to support implementation of the plan. This could include reference to how you plan to build or bring in project delivery capability to manage delivery against the plan, support prioritisation, and effective use of resources; and how you plan to build the capacity and capability in data and analytics to support effective tracking against the measures in the plan and reporting that informs decision making.

250 words

Dorset will deliver the Y1 plan through a strengthened programme management approach. The SRO retains overall accountability, supported by the Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education for strategic oversight and the ECAT Partnership Group for implementation, risk management and escalation. Multi-agency delivery groups will lead each workstream, with named leads, milestones, delivery plans and success measures. This governance architecture will ensure strong programme grip.

In 2026/27, Dorset will put in place additional capacity to move from planning to delivery, combining existing and new resource across the workstreams, including strategic leadership and programme management capacity to steer direction, coordinate delivery and manage interdependencies. This mitigates the risk of workforce capacity and ensures that deployment and delivery are actively managed and escalated as needed.

Corporate functions will be aligned to the programme from the outset: Finance and Commissioning to ensure investment delivers value for money; HR to support recruitment and capacity planning; Estates and Capital to support the Inclusion Base programme; and Communications to manage the risk of loss of trust through clear messaging to schools, families and partners.

Data and analytics capacity will be strengthened, bringing together existing dashboards and Valuing SEND data to provide early warning of demand and cost pressures outpacing reform impact, mitigating this risk through timely identification of emerging pressures and swift activity adaptation.

Residual risks remain around workforce availability and demand pressures, which will be actively monitored through the ECAT Partnership Group and reported to the SRO and Alliance on a regular basis.

8. Other funding

Block Transfers: If you have made a block transfer (Schools Block to High Needs Block) for 26-27, please set out how your plans for this funding align with the activities outlined above.

250 words

The block transfer will align with the seven inclusion principles:

- **Leadership and governance:** the Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education will focus funding on Dorset's Inclusion Charter and Quality Inclusion Framework, ensuring inclusion is a core expectation across schools, MATs and localities.
- **Evidence-based early intervention:** investment will support the strengthened Universal Offer through approaches such as Balanced System, PINS and the SEMH practice of Learning Centres.
- **High-quality teaching for all learners:** funding will train staff to deliver inclusive classroom practice, curriculum access and reasonable adjustments, supported by Dorset's Expertise Offer, Valuing SEND and workforce development.
- **Accessible and enriching provision beyond the classroom:** investment will support inclusive pastoral and curricular opportunities, helping settings respond to attendance, EBSA and belonging needs before they escalate.
- **A safe and respectful culture:** funding will embed relational, trauma-informed and rights-based practice and engage settings with the Rights Respecting Schools Award, placing children's rights at the centre of school life and strengthening behaviour, attendance and placement stability.
- **Strong partnerships with families and wider services:** investment will align with Family Help, Family Hubs, DPCC and locality working, ensuring clear routes to advice and specialist input.
- **Inclusive environments:** the transfer will complement the Inclusive Classrooms pilot and Inclusion Bases, supporting physical and curricular accessibility including flexible seating and assistive equipment.

Spend and impact will be monitored through the SEND dashboard, Schools Forum reporting and programme governance, tracking setting confidence, attendance, exclusions, placement stability and family feedback, informed by emerging findings from the Expert Panel for National Inclusion Standards.

Capital: We have announced at least £3 billion in high needs capital between 2026-27 and 2029-30 to support children and young people (CYP) with SEND, or those requiring alternative provision (AP). This funding is intended to support place delivery across the full 0-25 age range, including early years and post-16. We expect funding to support the following outcomes:

- a. Inclusion at the core of high needs sufficiency strategy, resulting in more children and young people with SEND accessing suitable places in mainstream settings, across all phases of education
- b. Every child or young person who needs a place in an inclusion base can access one
- c. Fewer children and young people with SEND needing to travel a long way to access a suitable placement
- d. Improved suitability of the mainstream estate to support children and young people with SEND, with adaptations to improve inclusivity and accessibility of the physical environment

We also welcome innovative uses of high needs capital to drive inclusion, for example, investment in assistive technology for use in mainstream settings.

Please outline your strategy for how this funding will meet the outcomes above, with reference to the core minimum requirements and other workstreams in this reform plan where appropriate. We would like to see detail around your plans to increase capacity for inclusion bases (formerly known as SEN units, resourced provision and pupil support units – SU/RP/PSUs), such as schools, colleges or early years providers identified, engagement with relevant settings and trusts, and target cohort of needs.

If your plans include increases to places in special schools or specialist post-16 institutions, please include a clear rationale, showing the need that is being met, and why it cannot be met through other types of provision, such as inclusion bases.

If you are receiving additional capital funding to replace one or more planned special or AP free schools, please set out how this funding will meet need in your area, and plans for engaging relevant trusts in your sufficiency planning.

500 words

Inclusion at the core of the high needs sufficiency strategy

An inclusive model of high needs provision has been developed across localities, responding to gaps identified through sufficiency analysis. The core response is to accelerate the Specialist Inclusion Base programme, which has wide support across the partnership^{2.2}. The plan adds 17 new specialist bases by 2029, with some existing bases expanded, increasing capacity to 479 places from 195 in April 2026, primarily funded through the High Needs Capital Programme^{2.6}. Locating bases within mainstream schools will enable pupils to remain in mainstream settings across all phases, while providing graduated pathways that stabilise needs earlier. The LA is collaborating with MAT leaders on the programme with the six bases proposed for 2026/27 being planned and delivered in partnership with four of Dorset's largest MATs^{2.3}.

Every child or young person who needs an Inclusion Base place can access one

New provision is targeted at areas of unmet need, particularly Cognition and Learning. The programme ensures capacity grows in line with need while maintaining quality, reducing reliance on exceptional funding and crisis placements. Estate opportunities, including those arising from falling rolls, have been identified with school and MAT leaders^{2.3, 2.5}. An estimated capital cost of up to c£50K per base has been used for planning purposes, reducing to c£40K for later bases.

Fewer children and young people travelling long distances

Reducing travel is a consistent driver throughout the sufficiency plan^{2.8}. Specialist Inclusion Bases are distributed so each locality has a continuum of provision, limiting reliance on Learning Centres, special schools, out-of-area placements and non-school AP. This is key in Dorset's rural context, where long journeys contribute to disengagement, attendance challenges and high transport costs.^{2.7}

Improved suitability of the mainstream estate

£1m per year of capital investment will enhance universal inclusion and accessibility in mainstream and may also support targeted contributions for school-commissioned support bases^{2.6}. This will be developed with the local area partnership to ensure it is additional to school and trust investment in estate condition. Funding will support schools to adapt physical environments and will complement the Inclusive Classrooms pilot, supporting investment in inclusive classroom resources, furniture and staff training to build confidence in more inclusive teaching approaches.

Special and AP schools

Dorset's sufficiency intent is that improved mainstream inclusion will allow special schools to focus on low incidence and high support needs that cannot be supported in Inclusion Bases, reducing reliance on high-cost independent placements^{2.2, 2.6}. Where capital investment is required, this will be right-sized to complement the mainstream programme. A new primary-age AP school funded by our Modernising Schools Programme is under construction, with capital costs to be incurred into 2027. The opening of Osprey Quay special school will make a significant contribution to local sufficiency, providing much-needed specialist capacity. Osprey Quay is funded separately from this capital programme but is closely aligned to the sufficiency strategy. Beyond the provision set out in this plan, Dorset will not develop additional specialist places over the course of the next three years.

9. System partner and stakeholder engagement, and co-production.

Please outline how the local area partnership plans to engage system partners and stakeholders to develop and implement the plan – include planned engagement with schools and early years settings, alternative providers, FE and post-16 providers (including those your young people attend that are not within your local area), Parents and Carers and children and young people with SEND, with reference to the core minimum requirements. Consider changing roles and responsibilities in the context of the Schools White Paper and how you work collaboratively to manage the transition. Please indicate where additional support is required to engage partners or stakeholders - senior officials at the Department for Education will be available to contribute to summer term events with education leaders and parent carer forum leaders.

500 words

Dorset takes a system-led, co-produced approach to engagement, ensuring that partners, children, young people and families are active participants in shaping, delivering and evaluating this plan. Co-production is embedded throughout, with feedback loops demonstrating how lived experience directly informs decisions and outcomes. Dorset is committed to being transparent about the nature of involvement at each stage, distinguishing clearly between engagement, co-production and collaboration.

This approach is also reflected in the extensive engagement undertaken to develop this SEND Reform Plan, including a weekly partnership group, a series of multi-agency workshops, dedicated working groups, engagement with parent carers and children and young people, alongside system-wide communications to shape priorities and direction.

Our approach operates at three connected levels, providing a golden thread from strategic leadership to frontline practice:

- **Strategic:** *The Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education brings together education, health, care, parent carers and youth voice to provide system leadership, set shared priorities and ensure joint accountability for delivery and outcomes*
- **Operational:** *Multi-agency delivery groups aligned to key workstreams – inclusion, sufficiency and preparation for adulthood – lead co-design and implementation, monitoring impact against outcomes and system demand*
- **Local/practice:** *Engagement through settings, locality forums and community networks enables continuous feedback, supports consistent inclusive practice and ensures frontline insight feeds into strategic decision-making*

Education and system partners

Education settings are central to delivering inclusion and managing demand^{4.4}. Through strengthened SENCO networks, termly partnership forums and engagement with school leaders, partners will co-own the inclusion agenda, building on the existing Inclusion Charter to establish a shared definition of inclusive practice.^{2.3} Settings will be fully integrated into delivery – including early identification in Early Years, co-designed AP pathways focused on prevention and reintegration, and a dedicated post-16 partnership group shaping preparation for adulthood. We welcome the offer of DfE senior official support to engage education leaders during summer term events to build momentum around the reform programme.

Parents, carers and children and young people

The Dorset Parent Carer Council is embedded across governance and delivery at all levels, ensuring co-production is integral to planning, implementation and review^{5.1}. Regular communication – including a SEND engagement calendar of Let's Talk SEND events and "you said, we did" reporting – will build trust and transparency across the system. Dorset has strong foundations for children and young people's engagement through Dorset Youth Voice, the Dorset Unstoppables, Youth Council and Youth Parliament^{5.2}. The focus will be on extending representation to seldom-heard groups and ensuring the impact of young people's involvement is clearly evidenced. Innovative approaches, including work-placed involvement for young people with SEND to help shape a social media strategy and strengthened engagement through the Dorset Careers Hub, will extend reach beyond traditional participation routes. To hold itself to account, Dorset will draw on NHSE co-production guidance to agree a local benchmark, self-assessing against it in Year 1 to identify improvement actions and establish a baseline for measuring progress.

Delivering system change

Partners will operate within a shared accountability framework, supported by clear agreements, place-based working, joint leadership development and integrated performance measures.

10. Risks and Mitigations

What are the key risks that could affect the successful implementation of your Local SEND Reform Plan, and what mitigation strategies are in place to manage these risks? Please include a maximum of 5 risks with impact and likelihood RAG for each risk. See Annex C for suggested risk matrix.

Risk	Impact	Likelihood	RAG	Mitigation	Residual RAG
Loss of trust from families if reform is not well communicated or does not lead to visible change <i>The plan depends on improved confidence from parents, carers and young people. If families do not understand Dorset's Expertise Offer, inclusion bases, AP changes, pathways, access routes or indicators for support, reform may be seen as a service reduction rather than better support. Loss of trust could also drive increased demand for EHCPs, independent placements and dispute resolution – adding significant cost pressure to the High Needs Block at the point when the system needs demand to stabilise.</i>	Critical	Possible	Red	Develop a clear communications and engagement plan, co-produced with Dorset Parent Carer Council, children and young people, SENDIASS and frontline partners. Use simple messages, publish clear pathways and "you said, we did" updates, involve families in service design and review, strengthen feedback loops through Family Hubs and locality forums, and track parental confidence as a core measure.	Green
The wider system partnership model for collaboration does not successfully support consistent engagement with the reform work, including due to change fatigue and the volume of concurrent system change <i>Our model depends on mainstream school confidence, MAT and school leader buy-in, use of Valuing SEND, adoption of the Inclusion Charter and willingness to collaborate or pool resources. Dorset's system is navigating a significant volume of concurrent change – across SEND reform, the Schools White Paper, NHS restructuring, devolution and wider children's services transformation – and there is a recognised risk, that the cumulative weight of this change could affect partner capacity, confidence and engagement. Without sustained buy-in across the system, escalation into specialist and independent provision will continue, sustaining the</i>	Crisis	Possible	Red	Early engagement with system partners, in particular school leaders, SENCOs and post-16 providers; co-produced inclusion expectations that give settings a genuine stake in the agenda; clear articulation of the benefits for settings of engaging with the reform programme; locality-based support and challenge to maintain momentum and address concerns close to the ground; active monitoring of change fatigue and partner capacity as a standing item in programme governance; an early and sustained communications plan that celebrates progress and wins to build confidence and maintain momentum across the system; and explicit recognition of the concurrent change landscape in all partner engagement, with sequencing and pacing of reform activity managed	Amber

<i>financial pressures the reform programme is designed to address and limiting the return on investment from the High Needs Block.</i>				<i>carefully.</i>	
Insufficient delivery capacity and programme grip <i>The plan has many linked workstreams, including Dorset's Expertise Offer, inclusion bases, AP reform, sufficiency, data, co-production and early years. Without strong programme management, milestones may slip, delaying the point at which reform activity begins to reduce demand and cost – extending the period of High Needs Block pressure and increasing the risk of the projected financial trajectory not being realised.</i>	<i>Critical</i>	<i>Possible</i>	<i>Red</i>	<i>Dedicated programme capacity, named workstream leads, clear milestones, regular ECAT oversight, risk log and escalation to the SRO and Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education.</i>	<i>Green</i>
Workforce capacity and specialist availability <i>Delivery relies on EPs, SALT, OT, specialist teachers, AP leadership, data capacity and project roles. Dorset is starting from a strong foundation, but demand is expected to rise and neurodevelopmental and mental health pathways face pressure. Other areas will also be recruiting into their Experts at Hand model at the same time. Failure to recruit and retain the right workforce will delay delivery, limit the reach of the Expertise Offer and sustain reliance on high-cost external provision – with direct cost implications for the High Needs Block.</i>	<i>Critical</i>	<i>Likely</i>	<i>Red</i>	<i>Workforce sufficiency plan, phased rollout, prioritised recruitment, use of locality teams, clearer deployment of existing specialist capacity, targeted training, and a creative approach to workforce design including the development of assistant roles working alongside qualified practitioners, rotational posts across specialist and mainstream settings that build capacity across the system.</i>	<i>Amber</i>
Demand and cost pressures outpace reform impact <i>We want to reduce reliance on independent, distant and high-cost provision, but demand for EHCPs, specialist placements, AP and transport may keep rising before prevention has impact. If demand growth is not contained, the High Needs Block deficit will widen, limiting Dorset's ability to invest in the mainstream and early intervention infrastructure that underpins the reform programme – creating a compounding financial risk that becomes increasingly difficult to reverse.</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Possible</i>	<i>Amber</i>	<i>Robust sufficiency strategy, phased inclusion base expansion, strong commissioning, financial tracking, clear pathways, access routes and indicators for further support, early warning data on EHCNAs, exclusions, EBSA and placements.</i>	<i>Amber</i>

11. Dependencies

Please detail the key areas of the local area partnership's proposed SEND future state and roadmap that may be impacted by wider reforms nationally and locally and outline how you will manage these. We expect these will include but not be limited to:

- NHS reforms
- Local Government Re-organisation
- Reforms to Children's Social Care
- Best Start in Life, including Family Hubs
- Best Start In Life Strategy
- Curriculum and Assessment Review

500 words

Dorset's plan is being delivered within a wider programme of national and local reform. The local area partnership recognises that these changes are aligned to our vision of a more inclusive, preventative and locally responsive system, and will be actively coordinated to ensure they are mutually reinforcing.

Our approach is to proactively align and integrate these reforms through shared governance, joint commissioning and locality-based delivery, ensuring a coherent system that supports earlier identification, stronger inclusion and improved outcomes.

Key Reform Areas and Alignment:

- **NHS Reforms:** Dorset is aligning SEND reform with health system transformation through integrated pathways, joint commissioning and locality-based multidisciplinary working. The delivery of integrated neighbourhood teams for children, as part of the NHS Ten Year Plan's neighbourhood health agenda, is a key enabler of this alignment – providing a stronger infrastructure for joined-up, community-based support that complements Dorset's locality model and the ambitions of this reform programme. Dorset's Expertise Offer brings together education, health and care practitioners to support settings in real time, reducing escalation to statutory assessment and improving confidence in mainstream inclusion.
- **Wessex Devolution:** The emerging Wessex local government collaboration and potential introduction of mayoral devolution could influence transport, access to services and community capacity for children and young people with SEND. Dorset Council has strengthened working relationships across the Wessex geography, recognising the area as well placed for a strategic authority, and is a key driver of regional alignment through its devolution and regional aspirations. This leadership will be critical in navigating future opportunities, and Dorset will ensure SEND outcomes remain central to how this agenda develops.
- **Children's Social Care Reform:** As a Wave 1 Pathfinder, Dorset is advanced in embedding social care reform through integrated locality working and shared accountability, building on the locality model. Locality-based joint planning ensures system partners collectively respond to children's needs, reducing duplication and ensuring timely support.
- **Best Start Family Hubs:** Family Hubs provide a key platform for early identification and multi-agency support^{3.7}. Early Years SEND support, health visiting and family support services are being aligned within hubs to support earlier identification and reduce escalation into statutory services, with the Best Start in Life Strategy strengthening workforce capability and joined-up moves into education.

- **Curriculum and Assessment Review:** Dorset is working with education partners to strengthen ordinarily available provision and inclusive practice, ensuring settings are supported to meet a wider range of need within mainstream.

Managing Alignment and Delivery

To ensure these reforms support one another effectively, Dorset will:

- Align governance through the Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education and ECAT Partnership Group
- Coordinate delivery by actively managing dependencies, risks and sequencing across programmes
- Strengthen joint accountability across education, health and care, aligned to shared outcomes ^{1.10}
- Integrate data and insight through a shared evidence base to inform decision-making
- Embed co-production, ensuring children, young people and families shape implementation and review impact

This coordinated approach ensures reforms are mutually reinforcing and focused on shared outcomes, supporting the shift towards earlier identification, inclusive mainstream provision and support delivered closer to home.

Section 3 – Monitoring and Evaluation

12. How will the local area partnership know delivery is on track?

Please set out how you will monitor and track progress referencing:

- **Monitoring tools and processes** - the specific tools, systems, and data you will use to track delivery milestones and measure the impact on outcomes.

Some Local Area Partnerships hold data in a central SEND operational dashboard. This is used by teams on a weekly basis to identify trends in demand or inform conversations with local school or setting leaders.

In some Local Area Partnerships, a view of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) is reviewed monthly by a SEND Board to take decisions on prioritisation, resourcing and delivery of services informed by regular data.

Please set out how you will use data to track demand (e.g., EHCP applications for assessment), Service delivery (e.g., Speech and Language Specialists deployment; places created), Service quality (e.g., parental satisfaction) and outputs (e.g., pupil attendance; pupil exclusions)

- **Feedback and adaptation mechanisms** - what feedback loops and stakeholder input you will use to review progress and adjust your approach.

500 words

Dorset's partnership will maintain strong oversight of delivery through an integrated performance management framework, combining data, structured governance, quality assurance and continuous feedback. This will ensure that delivery remains on track and progress is measured against defined KPI trajectories aligned to this plan.

Monitoring Tools, KPIs and Trajectories

The Children's Services Performance Management Framework will be supported by a central SEND operational dashboard, drawing on systems including Synergy, Mosaic, DiiS and PowerBI. An integrated dashboard will provide a single, shared evidence base aligned to the plan's expected trajectories and outcomes.^{4.3}

The dashboard and reporting framework will track progress against baseline and target trajectories, to measure whether delivery is achieving the intended system shift.

KPIs are aligned to four key areas:

- **Demand:** EHCP requests for assessment, conversion rates, tribunal activity, and overall EHCP volumes. Trajectories will reflect a planned reduction in demand growth over time, demonstrating the impact of earlier intervention and strengthened inclusion.
- **Service Delivery:** Delivery of Dorset's Expertise Offer, therapy deployment, and creation of additional inclusive provision. Milestones and capacity trajectories will ensure provision expands in line with need and reduces reliance on high-cost placements.^{1.8, 2.6}
- **Service Quality:** Timeliness of EHCP processes, audit outcomes, parental feedback and complaints. Service quality reporting will also include mediation and dispute resolution metrics, including timeliness, resolution rates, repeat issues, tribunal escalation and family feedback. Quality measures will track improvement in experience, ensuring reforms lead to improved confidence in the system.^{5.6}
- **Outcomes:** Attendance, exclusions, placement stability and preparation for adulthood outcomes. These will evidence increased inclusion within mainstream settings and improved long-term outcomes.

Data will be reviewed weekly at operational level and monthly through Programme Board and Partnership governance, ensuring performance against trajectories is regularly assessed. Where data indicates variance from expected trajectories, corrective actions will be agreed and implemented at pace.

Monitoring will provide assurance that grant funding is being spent in line with the government policy objectives and that the offer is delivering the expected changes in reach, access, setting confidence, early support, reduced escalation and improved outcomes.^{1.8}

Feedback and Adaptation^{5.6}

Dorset will triangulate quantitative data with qualitative insight, ensuring a full understanding of performance and impact:

- **Performance and practice review:** Monthly performance meetings will analyse KPI trends and trajectories, focusing on the "story behind the data" and agreeing actions to maintain progress.
- **Co-production:** Engagement with DPCC and youth voice groups will ensure lived experience informs both delivery and refinement of interventions.^{5.1, 5.2}
- **Operational insight:** Feedback from education settings, locality forums and practitioners will identify emerging pressures and test whether changes are working in practice.
- **Continuous improvement cycle:** The Dorset ECAT Partnership Group will review data and feedback on a regular basis, enabling adjustment to delivery, refinement of interventions, and escalation where required.

Impact

This approach provides a clear line of sight from activity to outcomes, with KPI trajectories evidencing progress towards reduced demand, improved inclusion, and better outcomes. By integrating data, professional insight and lived experience, Dorset will ensure delivery remains on track and achieves sustainable system change and financial resilience.

13. Reporting to DfE

Using the attached data template, the local area partnership is required to provide quarterly data returns to DfE against selected key metrics. DfE will, in turn, provide quarterly data reports with visualised analysis and benchmarking that will support your local delivery, monitoring and evaluation. This will include data the department holds on **Attendance**, **Exclusions**, and **Unauthorised absence**.

Please use the attached data template to upload your initial data return to DfE.

INSERT DOCUMENT UPLOAD LINK

Section 4 – Governance

14. How will the local area partnership ensure delivery of plans remain on track?

Please outline the governance structures in place to oversee delivery. Clearly set out who is responsible for overseeing reform delivery, what each governance group or individual is accountable for, and how these arrangements ensure progress is monitored and decisions are made transparently. Please identify where the named SRO for the Local SEND Reform Plan sits within the governance structure and ensure your response incorporates the core minimum requirements.

Governance of the Local SEND Reform Plan provides clear accountability, strong multi-agency leadership and robust oversight of delivery. Data is brought together across education, health and care to support reporting, decision-making, escalation and continuous improvement, with the Plan reviewed annually.

Governance Mechanism	Purpose/ Responsibilities <i>What is the function of this governance mechanism? What are they accountable for overseeing? What information is</i>	Membership <i>Who does this governance mechanism comprise of? [should include health and PCF representation] What</i>	Cadence <i>How regularly does this governance mechanism meet?</i>	Decision Rights <i>What decisions can this governance mechanism make?</i>	Escalation Route <i>Where can this governance mechanism escalate issues or decision to?</i>
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<i>This may be a governance group, or an individual (e.g. SRO).</i>	<i>reported to this governance mechanism?</i>	<i>stakeholders are represented at this governance mechanism? Please indicate who chairs this. (Include n/a if an individual).</i>			
Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) – Paul Dempsey – Executive Director, Children’s Services ^{1.9, 4.1, 4.6}	Overall accountability for delivery of the Local SEND Reform Plan. Ensures alignment with statutory responsibilities and system priorities. Oversees delivery against milestones, financial sustainability and outcomes. Monitors performance, risk and system alignment, and receives regular reporting on progress, KPIs, risks and financial trajectory, ensuring data-led assurance of delivery and system performance across the partnership.	The SRO sits within the senior leadership team of Dorset Council and reports directly to the Chief Executive, Catherine Howe, and wider partnership governance.	Ongoing oversight, with formal reporting cycles aligned to programme governance.	Accountable for key delivery decisions and overall direction of the programme. Has authority to escalate risks and direct resources and interventions where delivery is off track.	Escalates issues and decisions to the Senior Leadership Team comprising of Executive Directors, Directors and Assistant Chief Executive), with further escalation to the Chief Executive where required, and the Chief Executive of the ICB
Dorset Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education ^{1.9, 4.1}	Provides strategic oversight, challenge and support for SEND reform delivery, overseeing progress, risks and system pressures (including inclusive education, school places, standards, attendance, exclusions and disadvantaged learners). Oversees priority actions and outcomes, and supports effective partnership working across education, health, care and partners. Receives and scrutinises integrated performance reporting across education, health, care and partnerships using shared data to monitor system performance, identify pressure points and drive collective accountability for outcomes.	Independent Chair Senior leaders ^{4.2} : • Elected members for Children’s and Parenting Board • Director of Children’s Services • Corporate Director of Education & Learning • ICB Commissioning SRO for children and young people and maternity • Health partners – Dorset Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust • Designated Clinical Officer for SEND • Education community – leaders from all phases • Public Health • Dorset Council Place • Schools Forum	Every two months or termly, aligned to programme governance cycles.	Approves strategic direction, key policy decisions and major changes to delivery approaches. Holds partners to account for delivery commitments.	Escalates issues and decisions to senior Dorset Council Executive Directors and the CEO where required.

		• Lead school governors and trustees • Youth Justice (Pan Dorset) • Voluntary and Community Sector • Dorset Parent Carer Council (DPCC) • Dorset SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)^{5.1, 5.2, 5.3} • Birth to Settled Adulthood (B2SA) Chair • Youth Voice • DfE			
Dorset ECAT Partnership Group ^{1.10, 4.1}	Provides regular operational leadership of the SEND Reform Programme, coordinating delivery across workstreams, resolving risks and partner disputes in real time ^{4.5} , and escalating strategic issues through the Alliance to ensure pace, alignment and accountability. Oversees integrated operational data across workstreams, including performance, demand, activity and financial data, enabling real-time decision-making, identification of emerging risks and alignment of delivery.	Local Authority: • Corporate Director for Education & Learning • Corporate Director for Commissioning & Partnerships • Senior Accountant – Children's • Principal Lead Best Start in Life • Head of Service – Best Education for All • Head of Service – Children Thriving & Virtual School • Head of Locality & Strategy – SEND • Head of Service Health Education and SEND Commissioning • Health Education & SEND Commissioning • Principal Educational Psychologist • BI & Performance Manager • Consultant SEND & Inclusion • Youth Voice Manager Health • DCO for SEND	Initially three-weekly; frequency to be reviewed in Q3	Makes decisions on operational delivery issues across workstreams, including sequencing and prioritisation of activity, resolution of cross-cutting delivery blockers, and refinement of plan content, data assumptions and modelling inputs within agreed strategic direction, using shared data and insight to inform decisions.	• Escalates issues and decisions to the Alliance and SRO and ICB Place Director for Dorset and Bath & North East Somerset.^{4.5}

		• Deputy DCO • Mental Health Schools Team Clinical Lead • Lead for Families First Partnership Programme • Place Director – Bath, North East Somerset Parent and Families • DPCC • SENDIASS Other partners • IMPOWER • Council for Disabled Children			
Multi-agency Delivery Groups (workstreams)	Responsible for designing and delivering interventions across key reform priorities, including inclusion, sufficiency and preparation for adulthood. Leads core workstreams to strengthen inclusive provision, early identification, collaboration and Dorset's Expertise Offer. Monitors implementation and impact, providing regular reporting on progress, risks and outcomes, supported by shared data to inform system-wide performance and decision-making.	Operational leads from education, health, care, finance and data, with parent carer and youth voice representation.	Monthly during mobilisation, then frequency agreed by ECAT according to delivery risk	Makes operational decisions within agreed workstream scope, aligned to overall programme direction.	Escalates key issues and decisions to the Dorset ECAT Partnership Group.
Locality	Delivery of SEND reform at a place-based level, linking strategic governance with frontline practice and enabling joined-up working across education, health and care. Implementation of the Local SEND Reform Plan locally, using data to identify needs, coordinating partners, supporting inclusion and early intervention, and escalating	Operational leads from: • Learning & Belonging Service • Contextual Safeguarding • Targeted Youth Work • Inclusion and SEND • Educational Psychology • Virtual School • Specialist Teaching • Early Years • Best Start in Life Advisors	Termly	Influences delivery and continuous improvement within the workstream, with no formal programme decision-making authority.	Escalates issues and decisions to Delivery Groups and the Dorset ECAT Partnership Group.

	<i>issues where needed, while providing regular insight and reporting into programme governance.</i>	• <i>Family Help Teams</i> • <i>Post 16 and Dorset Careers Hub</i> • <i>Birth to Settled Adulthood</i>			
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If you have a diagram to show the relationship between these governance mechanisms, please upload this here.

INSERT DOCUMENT UPLOAD LINK [Strategic Governance September 2026 May](#)

Section 5 – Central Government Support

15. How can we help you?

Please outline any practical support you need from central government to implement your plan effectively.

This may include:

- Access to specialist expertise or advisory support
- Help with workforce development or recruitment challenges
- Tools or templates to support data collection, reporting, or evaluation
- Facilitation of peer learning or regional collaboration
- Support with system-level coordination across education, health, and care
- Guidance on navigating regulatory or policy barriers

250 words

Dorset welcomes the offer of support and would find the following particularly helpful in implementing the plan effectively:

- **Legislation:** *prompt progression of the legislative programme is essential and will help Dorset and partners plan with confidence and manage the pace of change*
- **Guidance and communications:** *relevant national guidance is needed, particularly around SEND assessment pathways and the Experts at Hand model. Nationally produced communications materials and messages that can be adapted locally would be valuable to support with communications to partners and families to provide clarity and manage anxiety*
- **Funding:** *meaningful and sustained investment in mainstream inclusion – including through the Mainstream Inclusion Fund – is needed to support schools to build the confidence and capability required to meet a wider range of needs*
- **Osprey Quay:** *delivery of the Osprey Quay special school is a priority for Dorset, providing much-needed additional local capacity and directly supporting the ambition to reduce reliance on high-cost and distant independent placements*
- **Ofsted:** *the inspection framework should actively support and reinforce inclusive practice, providing a consistent signal to schools and settings about the importance of inclusion*
- **Driving culture change:** *central government has an important role in driving the culture change needed across the system: supporting local areas to bring partners, schools and MATs on the journey and reinforcing the inclusion agenda at a national level*

- **Peer learning:** *facilitation of regional collaboration, particularly with areas further ahead in implementing the Experts at Hand model, would help Dorset learn from emerging good practice and avoid duplication of effort*

Annex B - Supporting Documents

Document	Link
The Schools White Paper	Every Child Achieving and Thriving
SEND Consultation Document	SEND reform: putting children and young people first.
LA and Schools Budget 2026-27	Schools Operational Guide 2026-27
Local Partnership Maturity Assessment Guidance and Tool	Included in commission pack
Local SEND Reform Plan – Data template	Included in commission pack
Local SEND Reform Plan Quality Assessment Framework	Included in commission pack
Local Inclusion Partnership Grant 2026-27	To be published Spring 2026
Experts at Hand Guidance	To be published Spring 2026
High Needs Capital Allocations 2026-27	To be published Spring 2026
Guidance on Inclusion bases	To be published Spring 2026

Annex C – Risk Matrix

IMPACT DESCRIPTION	IMPACT LEVEL	PROBABILITY/LIKELIHOOD				
		< 10%	>10% - <30%	>30% - <60%	>60% - <90%	>90%
		Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Possible	Likely	Very Likely
Cannot deliver Reform Plan; Failure of mission critical activity.	Crisis					
Significant impact to objectives; Significant and sustained disruption to activity.	Critical					
Delivery targets are compromised; Project delay / budget overrun.	Moderate					
Limited impact on delivery targets; Deviations from project resource, timescale or targets.	Marginal					
Minimal impact on delivery targets; Minimal impacts to project / programme efficiency.	Negligible					