

SEND Update

February 2026



Coventry City Council

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Contents

This report complements the information shared at the recent SEND All-Member Seminar, with a focus on:

- SEND Local Area Inspection and Evaluation
- The Outcomes and Experiences of Young People with SEND and their Families
- System Leadership for SEND across the Local Partnership
- Local Priorities and Processes for Delivering Transformation

Local Area Inspection

SEND is externally inspected by OFSTED and CQC using the Special Education Needs (SEND) & Alternative Provision (AP) National Framework.

Local Area Inspection

- **Ofsted** and **Care Quality Commission (CQC)** jointly inspect how well local partners meet the needs of children and young people with Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND).
- Inspections judge the **effectiveness**, **experience**, and **outcomes** of local SEND arrangements, identifying strengths and priorities for improvement.
- The national framework sets out the statutory basis, inspection model, and evidence required, including lived experience, leadership, identification, access to support, and inclusion.
- Inspectors review evidence, speak with leaders, families and young people, and examine how consistently support works in practice.
- Coventry is due its inspection having last been inspected in 2019

SEND Self Evaluation

- The Local Area Partnership (LAP)'s evaluation enables us to evidence strengths in **identification, participation, access, transitions, inclusion, and system leadership.**
- Regular self-evaluation ensures we maintain an accurate, up-to-date picture of local need and service impact.
- Our quality assurance, audits, and data reviews provide clear evidence of what is working and where improvement is focused.
- This helps us articulate impact, demonstrate consistency across education-health-care partners, show how lived experience informs change, and identify priorities for improvement

SEND Local Reform Plan (new requirement)

- The **Department for Education (DfE)** are asking every local area to produce a Local SEND Reform Plan, setting out how they will move to a new SEND system built on five principles, as set out by the Secretary of State:

Early

Local

Fair

Effective

Shared

- Full details of expectations of these plans will be published alongside the schools' white paper (expected imminently).

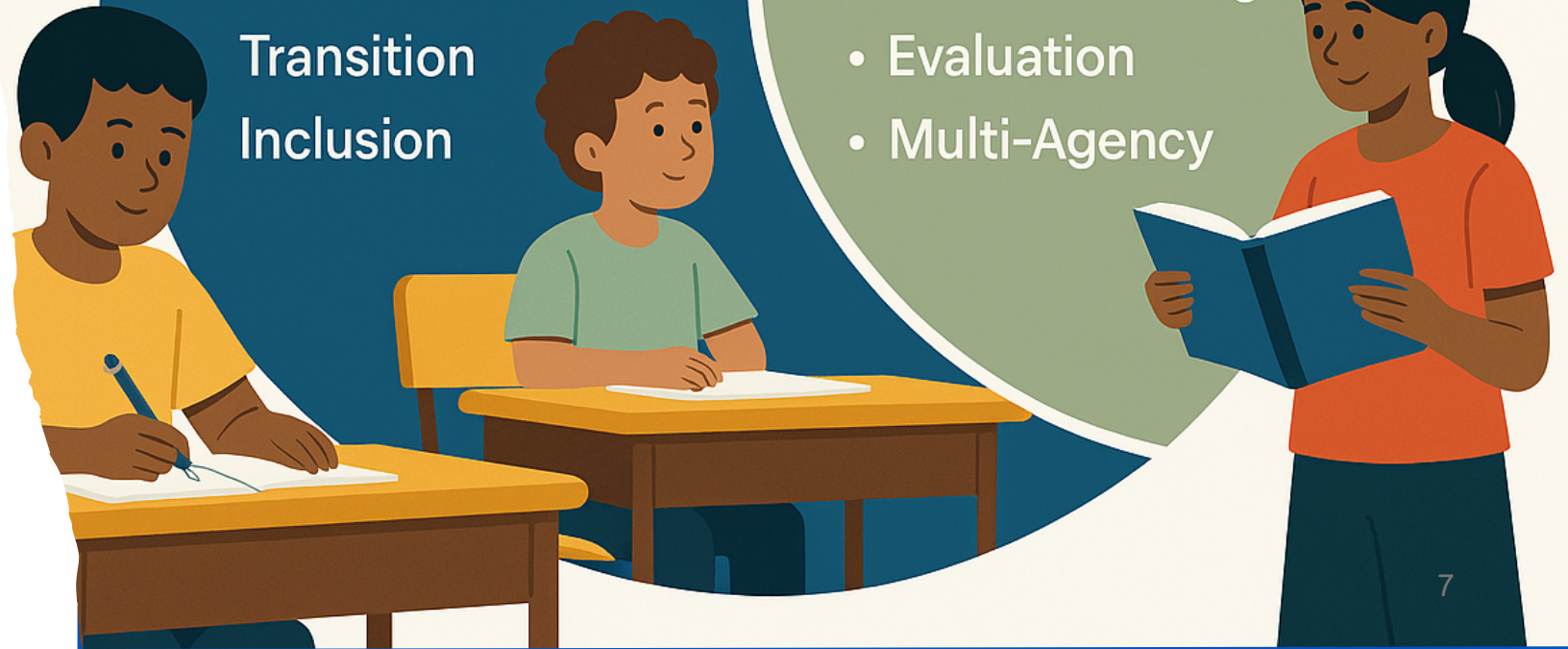
Focus Areas: SEND & Alternative Provision (AP) Self Evaluation

Outcomes and Experiences

- Identification
- Participation
- Access
- Transition
- Inclusion

System Leadership

- Ambition
- Engagement
- Commissioning
- Evaluation
- Multi-Agency



Outcomes & Experiences		System Leadership	
Identification	Are children and young people's needs identified and assessed effectively?	Ambition	Are leaders ambitious for children and young people with SEND?
Participation	Do children, young people, and families have a real say in decisions about their support?	Engagement	Do leaders actively engage and work with children, young people and families?
Access	Is the right help provided at the right time?	Understanding	Do leaders have a clear, shared view of local needs?
Transition	Are children and young people well prepared for transitions and adulthood?	Commissioning	Are services and provision commissioned to meet needs and aspirations?
Inclusion	Are children and young people with SEND visible, valued, and included	Evaluation	Do leaders evaluate services and drive improvements?

The Outcomes & Experiences of Young People with SEND and their Families

Key Strengths & Focus Areas

Identification & Participation

Strengths

- Coventry Children are more likely to have their needs met without an EHC Plan than in any other West Midlands LA.
- Autism Diagnostic capacity has increased, reducing wait times for assessment.
- Coventry has a strong SEND outreach; professionals and families work closely together to plan and deliver support.

Focus Areas

- We need to help more families to take up funded nursery places.
- Increased demand for EHC assessments through 2024 into 2025 has impacted customer satisfaction and strained established practices.
- Further capacity is still needed to ensure diagnostic assessment for Autism and ADHD meets local demand.

Access, Transition and Inclusion

Strengths

- The SEND Inclusion Fund (SENIF) budget was increased by 64% in 2025/26 and capacity in the SEND Early Years Team was strengthened. This helps ensure children are supported at the start of their educational journey.
- The Local Area has a comprehensive and quality assured framework for commissioning Alternative Provision, with over seventy providers.
- Coventry has the highest proportion of young people with an EHC Plan in a supported internship in the West Midlands.
- Most children with SEND in Coventry attend their local mainstream school, supported through 'School Support', reflecting a strong culture of inclusion.
- Coventry provides a wide range of community-based support, coordinated through family hubs.

Focus Areas

- There are gaps in attainment between children with EHC Plans and those on SEND Support.
- Families have reported a need for clearer information about how HAF activities are made accessible for children with SEND.
- Need to further integrate information from SEND and Early Help Services to strengthen timely support.

System Leadership across the Local Area Partnership

Key Strengths & Focus Areas

Ambition and Engagement

Strengths

- Coventry has a mature SEND and AP Partnership Board with strong, long-standing relationships between the Local Authority, schools, and the NHS.
- Elected members are actively engaged in SEND, participating in working groups, scrutiny panels, and seminars.
- The 2024 restructure of Education Services into a fully integrated Children's and Education service has strengthened collaboration
- The city supports student-led action groups (e.g. Strong Voices, AmbasSENDors) and parent forums.

Focus Areas

- The transition to a new Parent Carer Forum (PCF) has taken time with a need to further build capacity and integration with the wider SEND partnership.
- While engagement is strong at the service level, there is a recognized need to embed genuine co-production with all partners at a strategic level.

Joint Information & Commissioning

Strengths

- The Local Area Partnership (LAP) now has a comprehensive and current SEND Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and conducts annual demand forecasting, which informs strategic planning and commissioning.
- The LAP is co-producing a **single, interactive data set** with providers, which prioritizes data flow into the SEND and AP Partnership Board, supporting quality assurance and commissioning decisions.
- Commissioning Arrangements are well-established across the Local Authority (including Public Health, Social Care, and Education) and the Integrated Care Board (ICB), with joint posts and annual review of priorities.
- A Speech and Language JSNA has led to strengthened early intervention, prevention, and a universal offer, with increased training and partnership working across partners.

Focus Areas

- Further extend and **refine data sharing practices** in 2025/26 to ensure all communities can access services and that data informs ongoing service improvement.
- Ensure services are accessible to all, particularly as community demographics evolve. This includes focused work to address potential inequalities related to gender, ethnicity, or disadvantage.
- Ensuring increased capacity for the provision of health advice and the delivery of therapies
- Timely access for children and young people, especially those with complex needs, to appropriate, equitable and accessible services (e.g., short breaks, speech and language therapy)

Evaluation and Multi-Agency Working

Strengths

- There is a scheduled program of **multi-agency SEND audits**, drawing on information from schools, the Local Authority, and the NHS.
- Outcome reporting is embedded within the SEND Partnership, with key findings reported to the SEND and AP Partnership Board.
- A five-year forecast for SEND needs to ensure sufficiency of provision across mainstream and special schools, adapting to shifts in demand and parental preference.
- Co-designed workforce development program, including annual core training and a training calendar for school staff, developed in response to identified needs..
- Coventry's Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) brings together key professionals to facilitate early, high-quality information sharing and decision-making for vulnerable children, including those with SEND.
- Accredited Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) training addresses issues specific to children with SEND.

Focus Areas

- While workforce development has been positively received in schools, there is a need to further extend high-quality training to all sectors, including health, care, and the third sector, to ensure a shared frame of reference and best practice. This program is being extended to health, care, and third sector professionals
- While outcome reporting is established, there is a need to further embed joint analysis and sharing of this information with system leads to ensure oversight of how families experience services and the outcomes delivered.

Delivering Change

Governance, Strategy and Operation

Governance

- Coventry's SEND and AP Partnership Board has representation from parents and carers, schools, and senior leads from the Council, ICB and NHS.
- The Board has overall responsibility for implementing the SEND and AP Action Plan – as identified through the Self Evaluation.
- There are three workspaces reporting into the board, focusing on transformation, commissioning and quality assurance.
- The Action Plan is underpinned by the five principles of SEND reform.



SEND Transformation Priorities

The SEND Transformation Work Programme is made up of five priorities. Its aim is to ensure a sufficiency of provision for children with SEND across the city.

Workforce Development

- SEND is a shared responsibility; we want all members of our children's workforce to have the knowledge and skill needed to deliver high quality provision to all our SEND Children.
- Our Workforce Development Programme aims to deliver this.

Adaptive provision

- Mainstream Schools in Coventry are committed to inclusion and are adapting the way they deliver education to meet the needs of more children with more complex SEND Needs.
- The Adaptive Provision programme aims to support them in this endeavour.

Alternative Provision

- AP supplements and supports school-based education. It allows schools to create packages of support that meet individual children's needs.
- Coventry's AP Framework ensures that all AP accessed in Coventry is quality assured and impactful.

Enhanced Resource Provision (ERP)

- Enhanced Resource Provisions are based in local mainstream schools but support children with more complex SEND needs and an EHC Plan. Admissions to ERPs are managed by the Council.
- The ERP Partnership is successfully increasing the number of places available in ERPs.

Specialist Provision

- Coventry has excellent Special School provision, which meets the needs of children with the most complex SEND.
- Our Special School Partnership is successfully increasing the number of places in specialist provision.

Workforce Development

Key Achievements 2025

- A comprehensive training offer in place, developed and led by Coventry SEND Support Teams and external providers.
- A SEND Bulletin has been introduced for schools, which includes regular training updates and resources.
- Speech and Language Tiered Training is funded for all Coventry schools during 2025/6.
- A training package is available for SEND Governors
- Belonging Training Pathway – linked with Coventry Alternative Provision (CAP)
 - Focused on Secondary Schools in the first instance.
 - Fully funded initiative aims to develop a consistent, city-wide relational approach in all schools
- Training for Adaptive Provision Schools
 - Led by both Tiverton and Kingsbury Special Schools
 - Focus on Curriculum and Environment

Priorities 2026

- Strengthen specialist provision workforce training and career progression pathway to build capacity and expertise
- Establish and grow the Coventry Communicators Network to improve consistency and quality of Speech and Language training in schools
- Current training offer to be revised for next year to better meet school needs and reduce attendance barriers
- Assess the impact of newly announced DfE-funded training packages, align with local authority provision and support schools to maximise benefit

Adaptive Provision

Key Achievements 2025

- The Council facilitated a programme of workshops for schools running adaptive provision (inclusive approach)
- A total of 31 mainstream primary schools engaged in year 1
- The workshops provided space; self-evaluation; professional development; sharing practice across schools; inspection preparation and networking.
- The impact was:
 - Strengthened quality assurance.
 - Increased confidence across school staff
 - Greater coordination and sharing of best practice.
 - Positive feedback for engaged schools undergoing inspection

Priorities 2026

- The programme of workshops has now transitioned into an enduring professional development network.
- A total of 45 mainstream primary schools are now engaged.
- Shared training and networking opportunities continue (e.g. meeting sensory needs in mainstream schools)
- Alongside this, there is a broader focus across all aspects of school life
- An equivalent secondary phase network being implemented – 4 schools (from different trusts) engaged to date
- Impact to date has been:
 - Positive feedback from new schools
 - Ofsted interest in feedback to HMIs

Alternative Provision

Key Achievements 2024/25

- **Secondary CAP Graduated Model of Support** successfully piloted and embedded citywide
- Established **CAP Multi-Agency Panels** with an independent chair to provide **quality assurance** and **strategic oversight** of the model.
- Strengthened **Quality Assurance Framework** to improve monitoring of unregistered AP providers.
- **19 out of 22 secondary schools** actively engaged in **CAP**.
- **120 commissioned AP places with AP Academy** including Early Intervention, 6th-day and transitional placements.
- Expanded and diversified the CAP provider framework from **25 to 75 providers** through a robust procurement process.
- Developed robust compliant **SEN packages** for both compulsory-school-age and post-16 learners.
- Launched the Belonging Training Pathway with secondary schools to begin establishing a strong culture of belonging.

Priorities 2025/26

- Increased engagement to **20 out of 22 secondary schools** participating in the CAP model.
- Complete and review the **Secondary CAP Model pilot-year evaluations**.
- Embed the **new DfE National AP Standards** across all CAP quality assurance processes.
- Co-design a **Primary Graduated Model of Support** with Primary Headteachers and internal LA teams
- Further expand and diversify **CAP provider capacity** for the primary phase.
- Design and implement a **bespoke Year 11 AP employability pathway**.
- Strengthen the **Education Engagement Team offer**, providing enhanced advice, guidance, and outreach for schools.

Enhanced Resource Provision (ERP)

Key Achievements 2025

- The partnership has:
 - Opened 2 new Primary ERPs for learning needs.
 - Increased the places available at an Existing ERP for communication needs and Autism.
 - Opened the city's first Secondary phase ERP.
 - In total, an additional 26 new places have been created.
- A new ERP Partnership Group has been established, which as already:
 - Set out what quality provision looks like within ERPs.
 - Identified further work to strengthen practice
- A gateway process is in place for new EPRs, from application, through building and recruitment, to opening.

Priorities 2026

- Three new Primary EPRs are due to open this calendar year alongside an expansion of our Secondary ERP.
- This will create a further 26 places in total.
- The Partnership Group will continue to quality assure and share practice amongst ERPs.
- The Council will continue to work with partner schools to identify locations for new provisions (subject to the policy direction set out in the White Paper).

Specialist Provision

Key Achievements 2025

- An additional 60 places were created in special schools, ready for September 2025.
- This included capital work at Castlewood School.
- A Special Schools Partnership group was established to guide the strategic development of Coventry's local Special School offer.

Priorities 2026

- Additional capacity at Baginton Fields to bring additional Broad Spectrum (Learning) Specialist Places.
- Phased expansion of Woodfield school to provide additional SEMH Specialist Places.
 - 26 additional places from January 2027.
 - With further year on year expansion planned for the following four years.
- A Strategic Plan has been developed with Special Schools, which includes:
 - Redefining Specialist Provision for 2025-30
 - Communities of Practice to share practice between special and mainstream schools.
 - A project to support more children with highly complex needs in Coventry.
 - Alternative Provision for Special Schools
 - Further Workforce Development

Further Priorities

Demand Projection
and Long Term
Planning

Integrating SEND
with the Family First
Partnership
Programme

Speech and
Language Therapy
Recommissioning

Review of Ordinarily
Available Provision
and revision of the
Digital Local Offer

Council SEND
Workforce Sufficiency
(for Educational
Psychologists and
Plan Coordinators)

Education Otherwise
Than At School
(EOTAS) Practice
Review.

National Direction of Travel

- The government's long-awaited 'SEND' White Paper is expected imminently.
- This White Paper will outline the government's proposed reforms to the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) system, setting out policy intentions rather than immediate legislative changes.
- It is anticipated to focus on improving inclusion, strengthening accountability, and addressing the significant pressures currently facing local areas, schools, and families, particularly around Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and high-needs funding.
- Ahead of the White Paper, the Government has published an Estates Plan, which covers inclusion bases, specialist resource bases, and signalling further capital investment in mainstream and specialist settings.
- These national developments align closely with Coventry's existing strategic direction and ongoing reform activity.