Department for Education

Georgia Gould OBE MP
Minister for School Standards

By email: tom.hayes.mp@parliament.uk

5 October 2026

Dear Tom Hayes MP,

I am writing to all Members of Parliament to inform you of the outcomes of the Local SEND Reform Plan process and the next steps for local areas. I am grateful to Members of Parliament who recently shared reflections on SEND provision in their constituency, and more broadly for your continued engagement with the Government's work to reform the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system and improve support and outcomes for children, young people and their families

Every child and young person should have the opportunity to fulfil their potential, whatever their needs or circumstances. This Government's programme of SEND reform is intended to deliver a more inclusive system that delivers for children and families - one that identifies needs early and provides the right support at the right time. Local leadership and strong partnership working will be central to achieving that ambition. It was against this backdrop that, in March 2026, this government commissioned all local area partnerships to develop and submit a Local SEND Reform Plan.

Through these plans, we have set clear expectations for local action, and will hold partnerships to account for progress. Each plan must set out a credible three-year strategy for moving from the area's current position to a more inclusive and sustainable system by 2028–29, which secures stronger outcomes for children, young people and their families. These plans must be partnership plans showing strong join up between local authorities, ICBs, local services and engagement with parents and young people.

Following submission on 19 June 2026, government officials have assessed every plan against a Quality Assessment Framework, shared with local areas at the point of commission. Each plan was considered through a rigorous five-stage process,

drawing on evidence and advice from DfE regional delivery teams, NHS England, SEND and Financial Advisers, and senior officials. The National Network of Parent Carer Forums (NNPCF) was also engaged to provide feedback on their members' experience of the plan development process. Regional consistency checks, national moderation and independent scrutiny by senior civil servants provided further assurance that decisions were evidence-based, and applied consistently across England.

Approval of a Local SEND Reform Plan is a condition of payment of a local authority's High Needs Stability Grant allocation. The grant will meet 90% of each local authority's high-needs-related Dedicated Schools Grant deficit and forms a central part of the Government's support for local authorities as we move to a reformed SEND system.

The government has now notified every local area partnership of whether its plan met the required threshold. The outcome for the local areas that encompass your constituency is set out in the annex of this letter. The Local Area SEND Performance and Delivery Framework will be published in due course, alongside each local area's overall performance and delivery RAG.

We encourage you to engage with local authorities in your area to discuss their plan outcome and feedback. Approval reflects the strength and credibility of the plan submitted; it does not, in itself, indicate that there is no further improvement to be made. Similarly, for LAs that have had their plans deferred, this recognises that further work is required to meet our assessment criteria but under no circumstances should a deferral prevent children accessing support.

Local areas whose plans have been deferred will receive enhanced, hands-on support focused on helping the partnership to respond to the identified areas for improvement within their plans. We expect these local areas to resubmit their plans by 30 November 2026. Government officials, together with SEND and Financial Advisers, will continue to engage closely with the partnership throughout this process. Local areas whose plans have been approved but concerns about their delivery capacity and existing performance remain will receive closer oversight and support focused on helping the partnership translate their plan into sustained improvement and better outcomes for the children and young people with SEND in their care.

Confirmation of Local SEND Reform Plan outcomes marks the beginning of the next phase of work. DfE and NHSE officials, alongside expert advisers, will support and challenge local authorities and integrated care boards as they implement their plans and strengthen the quality of existing support to the children and young people with SEND in their care, alongside their families. Local area SEND delivery will be kept under regular review through the department's Local Area SEND Performance and Delivery Framework, which brings together evidence on outcomes for children and young people with SEND, local partnership readiness and capacity, and progress in delivering the Local SEND Reform Plan. Each area's overall assessment will determine the level of monitoring, engagement, support and, where necessary, intervention. My department will use quarterly data on local area progress and dedicated resources to closely monitor performance across the country. Our support will be ongoing and will respond to changes in performance, risk and confidence in delivery. We will not hesitate to take further action and intervention if outcomes for children are not met.

For deficits that arise in 2026–27 and 2027–28, local authorities can expect that we will continue to take an appropriate and proportionate approach, though it will not be unlimited. Future support will take into account LAs' successful delivery of their approved Local SEND reform plan, including appropriate use of investment funding to establish an Experts at Hand offer.

We recognise that delivering our ambitious reform of the SEND system will require continued collective effort across local government, health services, education providers and central government. We are committed to working with local area partnerships to realise this ambition; providing the support, investment, challenge and national leadership needed alongside their local efforts. We are also committed to working with parents and young people to deliver change. Together, we can build a more inclusive, responsive and sustainable SEND system that earns the confidence of children and young people with SEND and their families, and enables every child to achieve and thrive.

As this work progresses, I would welcome your continued engagement and any further reflections you may wish to share on SEND provision and the impact of reform in your constituency. If you would like to meet your regional lead to discuss these issues further, then please contact Giles.DERIVAZ@education.gov.uk.

Yours,



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Local Area Partnerships	Plan Outcome	Support and Next Steps
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole	Approval with Improvement Notice	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole will receive a High Needs Stability Grant covering 90% of their DSG deficit accrued up to the end of 2025 - 2026. However, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole still has further work to do to strengthen their readiness to deliver reform successfully at pace. They will be expected to strengthen collective ownership, governance, capability and partnership working, with clear senior accountability and robust performance monitoring. They will be supported to reflect on the actions needed to address feedback provided in their local governance, implementation planning and reporting with review meetings providing a formal opportunity to assess progress, examine risks and agree further action. Where progress is insufficient or not evidenced, we will consider whether further support, challenge or oversight is required. They will receive closer monitoring and targeted support to address the concerns identified in their wider SEND delivery as well as Strategic Review Meetings with government officials, health regional SEND leads and SEND and Financial Advisers to discuss ongoing improvement activity and delivery of their reform plan. They will also be able to draw on the universal support available to local areas, including Regional Improvement and Innovation Alliances, Council for Disabled Children webinars and e-learning, What Works in SEND research and Local Government Association universal leadership training.