

MORE SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

- Over a thousand new special school places confirmed, as additional seven special free schools to be built
- Local authorities in every region selected to be at the forefront of delivering transformational reform set out in the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Alternative Provision (SEND and AP) Improvement Plan
- Reforms backed by £70 million to test what works to ensure children and young people get the best possible services

Over a thousand more children and young people with SEND are set to benefit from access to high-quality specialised learning, with seven new special free schools in Cambridgeshire, Kent, Merton and Norfolk selected to be built alongside the existing 83 already committed to opening, located across England from Devon to Darlington.

Once complete, this investment will almost double the number of special free school places available across the country – from around 8,500 to 19,000 – ensuring all children receive a quality education, tailored to their needs.

Today, local authorities across the country have been selected to deliver a ground-breaking new programme to test and refine the reforms to services for young people and families.

Backed by £70 million, the local authorities will help inform the development of new national standards to improve the consistency of provision across the country.

Each area will also bring together education and health services, as well as parents and families to develop an inclusion plan that sets out how they will deliver local services in a co-ordinated way – for example making sure a child with special educational needs who is behind in reading is quickly assessed and given the right support. This addresses feedback from families that the current system is often fragmented with agencies not working together.

This follows recent confirmation that high needs funding is increasing by a further £440 million for 24/25, bringing total funding to £10.5 billion – an increase of over 60% since 2019-20.

Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing, Claire Coutinho said:

“Making sure children with special educational needs and disabilities get a superb education is a priority.

“Earlier this year our Improvement Plan set out systemic reforms to make sure every child and young person gets consistently high-quality support, no matter where in the country they live.

“Today we’re making sure that those reforms are informed by the experiences of real families, up and down the country, and creating the thousands of new places at specialist schools and in staff training courses that are needed to make sure our plan is a success.”

The Government is also confirming today an expansion in training for early years staff, adding an extra 2,000 training places for early years special educational needs co-ordinators on top of the 5,000 already announced.

Measures confirmed in the Improvement Plan included:

- a new leadership level National Professional Qualification for Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (NPQ for SENCOs), ensuring SENCOs have the training they need to provide the right support to children. The NPQ will replace the NASENCO from September 2024 and will start in Autumn 2024 and start in Autumn 2024. Further information on the transition to the new NPQ can be found here: [Transition to national professional qualification for special educational needs co-ordinators - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/transition-to-national-professional-qualification-for-special-educational-needs-co-ordinators)
- a new approach to AP will focus on preparing children to return to mainstream or prepare for adulthood. AP will act as an intervention within mainstream education, as well as high-quality standalone provision, in an approach that meets children's needs earlier and helps prevent escalation.
- an extension until March 2025 to the AP Specialist Taskforces, which work directly with young people in AP to offer intensive support from teams made up of experts, including mental health professionals, family workers, and speech and language therapists, backed by an additional £7 million investment.
- a doubling of the number of supported internship places by 2025, from around 2,500 to around 5,000, backed with £18 million of funding to help young people make the transition into adulthood.
- £30 million to go towards developing innovative approaches for [short breaks for children, young people and their families](#), providing crucial respite for families of children with complex needs - the programme funds local areas to test new services including play, sports, arts and independent living activities, allowing parents time to themselves, while their child enjoys learning new skills. 13 local authorities are taking part in the second year of the programme.

ENDS

For more information and to arrange an interview with the minister, email monica.wilson@education.gov.uk and adam.collins@education.gov.uk

Notes to editors:

- The seven new special free schools have been approved in Cambridgeshire, Kent, Merton and Norfolk local authorities. The full list of schools approved:
 - Merton, 120 place all-through in Morden
 - Norfolk, 170 place all-through in Great Yarmouth
 - Norfolk, 100 place all-through in Down Market
 - Kent, 250 place all-through in Swanley
 - Kent, 120 place all-through in Whitstable
 - Cambridgeshire, 210 place all-through in Fenland
 - Cambridgeshire, 60 place secondary in Gamlingay

- Added to the 33 announced in March 2023 and the Bury free school which was approved in May 2023 and is now in pre-opening, we have approved a total of 41 special free schools in this wave. The full list of the 33 special free schools including Bury.
 - Barnsley and Sheffield, 200 place secondary
 - Bath and North East Somerset, 120 place all-through
 - Birmingham, 400 place all-through
 - Birmingham, 120 place 14 to 19
 - Blackpool, 56 place secondary
 - Bracknell Forest , 100 place, all-through
 - Bristol, 164 place, all-through
 - Central Bedfordshire, 130 place all-through
 - Cheshire East, 60 place all-through
 - Cheshire East, 60 place all through
 - Darlington, 48 place secondary
 - Devon, 70 place, 9 to 16
 - East Riding of Yorkshire, 120 place all-through
 - Enfield, 96 place secondary
 - Hampshire, 125 place, secondary
 - Hillingdon, 180 place, all-through
 - Isle of Wight, 75 place 9 to 16
 - Leeds, 200 place, 7 to 16
 - Leicestershire, 90 place, 10 to 16
 - Middlesbrough, 100 place, all-through
 - North East Lincolnshire, 150 place, 8 to 19
 - North Yorkshire 120 place, 8 to 16
 - Salford, 150 place, primary
 - Somerset, 64 place, 9 to 16
 - South Tyneside, 56 place primary
 - Suffolk, 117 place primary
 - Surrey, 170 place secondary
 - West Sussex, 130 place all- through 4 to 18
 - Wiltshire, 130 place all-through
 - Windsor and Maidenhead, 100 place, secondary
 - Wokingham, 100 place, all-through
 - Wokingham, 100 place all-through
 - Worcestershire, 120 place all-through
 - Bury, 60 place secondary
- Today, we have also published on GOV.UK the free schools 'How to Apply' Guidance setting out the criteria for applicants wishing to apply to run one of the seven new schools.
- The LAs included in the Change Programme Partnerships are:
 - East Midlands: Leicester, Leicestershire, Rutland-
 - East of England: Bedford, Central Bedfordshire, Luton
 - London: Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Islington
 - North East: Durham, Gateshead, Hartlepool, Stockton on Tees
 - North West: Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Trafford
 - South East: Brighton, East Sussex, Portsmouth, West Sussex
 - South West: Gloucestershire, Swindon

- West Midlands: Herefordshire, Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin, Worcestershire
- Yorkshire and Humber: Bradford, Calderdale, Leeds, Wakefield

- Each partnership will work closely with parents, carers and children and young people to ensure they are involved in the testing, learning and development of the reforms.
- Partnerships will also receive extensive hands-on support and expertise from REACH (Reaching Excellence and Ambition for all Children), the Department's Delivery Partner. PA Consulting will lead the consortium, comprising of IMPOWER, Council for Disabled Children (CDC) and Olive Academies.