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Submitted to SEND reform: putting children and young people first
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About You

1 What is your name?

Name:

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2 What is your email address?

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3 Are you happy to be contacted directly about your response?

Yes

About You

4 Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation?

Organisation

5 If you are responding as an individual, how would you describe yourself?

Not applicable – Responding as an organisation

6 If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, which of the following best describes who/which part of the sector your organisation represents?

Organisation – Other (please specify)

If 'other,' please specify your organisation type::

Parent Carer Forum

7 What is the name of your organisation?

Please respond below::

PODS Parent Carer Forum

8 What is your role within the organisation?

Please respond below::

Strategic Lead

About You

9 Would you like us to keep your name and/or organisation confidential?

Please select one answer in each row - Name (if responding as an individual):

Not applicable

Please select one answer in each row - Organisation (if responding on behalf of an organisation):

Yes

10 Would you like us to keep your responses confidential?

Yes

If yes, please explain why you consider it to be confidential.:

There may be information contained within the response that is sensitive to readers or individual families.

Executive Summary

1 We want children, young people and their families to be involved in making better, evidence-based decisions about SEND, both in their local area and across the country. How can we make sure children, young people and their families have a genuine say in these decisions?

Please comment below::

Children, young people and families can only have a genuine say in SEND decisions when their lived experience shapes every stage of planning, delivery and review. That means creating participation structures that are accessible, representative and influential. We need clear routes for families to share what's working and what isn't, and a commitment from local and national leaders to act on what they hear.

Parent carer forums must be resourced to reach diverse communities, including those who don't usually engage. Children and young people need age-appropriate, creative ways to contribute — through schools, youth groups, digital tools and trusted adults. Feedback must be transparent: families should see how their input has changed decisions. Co-production should be the default, not the exception, with families involved early, not once decisions are nearly made.

By valuing lived experience as evidence, investing in participation, and embedding co-production in governance, we can ensure children, young people and families genuinely shape a SEND system that works for them.

2 How can we make sure that high-quality evidence and best practice inform decisions about SEND? Please share examples.

Please respond below::

High-quality evidence and best practice must sit alongside lived experience when decisions about SEND are made. Parent carer forums play a key role in making this happen. Forums can champion co-production as the standard approach, ensuring that data, research and family insight are considered together from the start, not added at the end. Meaningful involvement in Strategic boards/decision making panels and operational groups is important.

Forums can work with local partners to build a shared evidence base: analysing local SEND data, identifying gaps, and comparing outcomes with national benchmarks. They can highlight best practice from other areas, national programmes and research bodies, and push for decisions to be tested against what is known to work.

To make evidence meaningful, families need information in accessible formats and opportunities to discuss it. Forums can host listening events, surveys and focus groups that blend quantitative data with real-life experience.

Finally, transparency matters. Decision-makers should show how evidence and family voice have shaped choices, and forums should hold them to account when this doesn't happen. When lived experience, data and best practice are brought together consistently, SEND decisions become fairer, more effective and genuinely informed by those they affect most.

Example: https://www.telfordsend.org.uk/info/1/home/112/telford_and_wrekin_send_working_together_charter

Part one: putting children and young people first

3 How can we ensure that children are best supported by the Universal offer?

Please respond below::

Children are best supported by the Universal Offer when it is consistent, inclusive and designed around real-life needs.

A strong Universal Offer must be clear, well-communicated and understood by all involved - parent carers, school staff and anyone who supports the child. Forums can work with partners to test whether the offer is genuinely accessible: Are reasonable adjustments happening early? Are staff confident in SEND identification? Do families know what support they should expect without an EHCP? Lived experience should be used as evidence to highlight gaps and drive improvement.

Training is critical - high-quality, mandatory SEND training for all staff, including understanding of neurodiversity, trauma-informed practice and inclusive teaching. Universal support should not depend on postcode or individuals knowledge - it needs a whole school approach.

Finally, accountability matters. Local areas should publish data on how well the Universal Offer is working, and forums should be part of reviewing this. When families can see consistent support in every setting — early, proactive and inclusive — children are far more likely to thrive.

4 How can we ensure that children in the Targeted layer are best supported?

Please respond below::

Children are best supported by the Targeted Offer when it provides timely, flexible help that bridges the gap between the Universal Offer and specialist pathways. Families need to be involved in the design of what this support looks like - so it reflects real needs, not assumptions.

The Targeted Offer must be easy to access, with clear criteria and no unnecessary bureaucracy. Forums can work with partners to test whether the offer is working in practice: Are interventions available early enough? Are waiting times reasonable? Are children with emerging needs getting the right help before difficulties escalate?

Quality and consistency matter. Staff delivering targeted support need strong training in evidence-based interventions, neurodiversity, communication needs and trauma-informed practice. Forums can highlight where provision varies between schools or services and push for a more equitable local offer.

Targeted support should be joined up. Health, education and social care must share information and plan together so families aren't repeating their story. Forums can champion multi-agency working and ensure children's voices shape decisions about the help they receive.

Transparency is essential. Local areas should publish data on uptake, outcomes, gaps in the Targeted Offer, with forums involved in reviewing/improving it. When targeted support is early, consistent and co-produced, children are more likely to thrive without needing escalation to specialist services.

5 How can we ensure that children in the Targeted Plus layer are best supported?

Please respond below::

Children are best supported by the Targeted Plus Offer when it provides timely, intensive and well-coordinated support that prevents escalation to crisis or unnecessary reliance on specialist pathways.

Targeted Plus must be clearly defined, with transparent criteria and consistent access across all settings. Families should not face long waits, repeated assessments or postcode-based variation. Forums can work with partners to test whether the offer is working: Are interventions evidence-based? Are they delivered by trained staff? Are children with complex needs receiving coordinated support from education, health and social care?

Joined up working is essential. Targeted Plus should include structured multi-agency planning, shared information and a single lead professional where appropriate. Forums can highlight where families are still navigating fragmented systems and push for smoother pathways.

Children and young people must have a voice in shaping their support. Forums can champion accessible tools for capturing their views and ensuring these influence decisions.

Finally, accountability matters. Local areas should publish data on outcomes, waiting times and gaps in the Targeted Plus Offer, with forums involved in reviewing and improving it. When Targeted Plus is early, coordinated and co-produced, children are far more likely to thrive without unnecessary escalation.

6 How can we ensure that children in the Specialist layer are best supported?

Please respond below::

Children are best supported by the Specialist Offer when access is timely, needs-led and consistent across the country.

The Specialist Offer must be clearly defined, with transparent criteria and no unnecessary delays. Families should not have to fight for assessments, therapies or placements. Forums can work with partners to test whether the system is functioning: Are EHCP processes timely? Are therapies delivered as specified? Are specialist settings adequately staffed and trained?

Quality matters. Specialist provision must be built on evidence-based practice, with staff trained in neurodiversity, communication needs, sensory profiles and trauma-informed approaches, specialist services, complexity of needs, learning disabilities, PMLD, etc . Forums can highlight gaps in provision, workforce shortages and inconsistencies between settings.

Joined up working is essential. Children with complex needs often rely on coordinated support from education, health and social care. Clarity on 'complex' needs and how they will be supported with varying levels of identified need by health professionals.

Finally, accountability must be transparent. Local areas should publish data on waiting times, outcomes and unmet need, with forums involved in reviewing and improving the Specialist Offer. When specialist support is timely, consistent and co-produced, children are far more likely to thrive.

Part one: putting children and young people first

7 How do you think early years settings, schools, and colleges can best support the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people?

Please respond below::

Children and young people in Telford & Wrekin are best supported when mental health and wellbeing are treated as core to learning, not an add-on. Settings should adopt a whole-school approach, with leadership, staff, families and pupils working together. Telford & Wrekin Council highlights the value of Wellbeing Governors, who champion mental health across the school community and ensure wellbeing is prioritised in policy and practice . Parent carer forums can encourage all settings to embed this role and monitor its impact. Local CAMHS service are important at this stage, as is the work of the Mental Health in schools teams.

Staff training is essential and BSAT, Mental health in schools teams and support in schools to be recognised, valued and used. CPD and targeted interventions for SEMH needs, helping schools respond early and effectively to emerging concerns . Forums can advocate for consistent access and champion this to families.

Settings should also use high-quality wellbeing resources, to support pupils, staff and parents. Strong communication with families, regular check-ins with pupils, and safe spaces for young people to share concerns all help build resilience.

By embedding wellbeing in governance, strengthening staff confidence, using local SEMH expertise and involving families through co-production, Telford & Wrekin can ensure mental health support is proactive, consistent and centred on children's lived experience.

8 Do you agree that the refreshed 'areas of development' will support educators to understand and address barriers to learning and participation? Please explain your answer.

Please respond below::

The refreshed areas of development can help educators understand and address barriers to learning and participation, but only if they are used consistently, interpreted with professional curiosity, and informed by lived experience. Parent carer forums see too many children whose needs are missed because staff focus on labels rather than the underlying developmental barriers. A clearer framework helps shift the conversation back to what a child needs to thrive.

The updated areas of development give a more holistic picture of learning, communication, sensory needs, emotional regulation and independence. This helps educators recognise early signs of difficulty and understand how different needs interact. It also supports more consistent identification across settings, reducing the postcode variation families often experience.

However, the framework alone is not enough. Educators need high-quality training to apply it confidently, and families must be involved in interpreting what the areas mean for their child. Tools like co-production meetings, shared language across services, and accessible explanations for parents make the framework more meaningful.

When used well, the refreshed areas of development help educators look beyond behaviour, understand root causes, and plan support that removes barriers rather than managing symptoms. This leads to earlier help, more inclusive practice and better participation for children and young people.

9 What arrangements would best support effective joint working between early years providers, Best Start Family Hubs, health, local authorities, and parents for children with SEND in the early years?

Please respond below::

Effective joint working in the early years depends on clear structures, shared language and genuine partnership with families. The best arrangements bring early years providers, Best Start Family Hubs, health teams, the local authority and parents together around the child, not around organisational boundaries and we are pleased that this has started in Telford & Wrekin.

There needs to be clear referral routes and timely access to advice from health and SEND specialists. Families should not have to repeat their story.

Best Start Family Hubs can act as a central connector, offering a place where parents can access early help, health visitors, SEND support and community services in one space. Joint training across early years, health and hubs helps build a shared understanding of SEND, neurodiversity and inclusive practice.

Regular multi-agency meetings, with parents as equal partners, ensure that support plans are joined-up and responsive. A named lead professional can help coordinate communication and reduce duplication. Information-sharing agreements must be simple, safe and family-friendly.

Parent carer forums should be involved in designing these arrangements, ensuring they reflect lived experience and reach families who are less likely to engage. When early years settings, hubs, health and the local authority work together through co-production, children receive earlier, more consistent support that strengthens their wellbeing and participation.

10 How can the early years foundation stage (EYFS) two-year old progress check and the Healthy Child Programme development review be improved so that children's needs are identified and supported more quickly? Please share examples.

Please respond below::

The EYFS two-year-old progress check and the Healthy Child Programme (HCP) development review can identify needs much earlier. The biggest improvements will come from joining up education and health so that both checks form a single, shared picture of the child.

A combined or closely coordinated review—where early years practitioners and health visitors share information and, where possible, meet families together—reduces duplication and ensures concerns aren't missed. Shared tools for developmental monitoring and a common language across EYFS and health help professionals spot emerging SEND needs earlier.

Families need clear, accessible explanations of what each check covers and what happens next. Using parent-friendly templates, visual summaries and opportunities for parents to add their own observations strengthens co-production and ensures concerns are taken seriously.

Examples of what works well include:

Joint progress-check appointments in Family Hubs, where health visitors and early years staff complete assessments together.

Shared digital records that allow both teams to see concerns, referrals and follow-up actions.

Health visitors attending setting-based reviews for children with known vulnerabilities.

Part one: putting children and young people first

11 What should the top three priority areas be for building and sharing evidence within the National Inclusion Standards?

Please respond below::

Consistency of inclusive practice across all settings

In Telford & Wrekin, families report variation between early years settings, schools and colleges. Evidence should focus on what high-quality inclusion looks like locally — from reasonable adjustments to sensory-friendly environments — and how this is implemented consistently. Sharing strong practice from settings already working inclusively (e.g., those engaged with the local SEND Improvement Programme) helps reduce postcode-based differences.

Impact of early intervention through local pathways

Telford & Wrekin's Early Help and Family Hubs model provides a strong foundation, but families still experience delays in accessing support such as speech and language, SEMH advice or neurodevelopmental pathways. Evidence should track what interventions are offered, how quickly, and what outcomes they achieve. This helps the area invest in approaches that prevent escalation and reduce pressure on specialist services.

Lived experience and co-production with Telford & Wrekin families

Parent carers consistently say that services work best when designed with them, not for them. Evidence must capture the experiences of families across the borough inc minority communities and those less likely to engage. This includes feedback on accessibility, transitions, communication and how well support meets need. Lived experience should be treated as equal to professional evidence in shaping the Standards.

12 What are the most important issues for national training to cover, to help support children and young people with SEND?

Please respond below::

Understanding neurodiversity for everyone - recognition of communication and learning needs, recognising early signs, avoid behaviour-based assumptions, and understand how neurodivergent children experience the world.

Inclusive classroom practice - practical strategies they can use every day: scaffolding, visual supports, sensory regulation, flexible teaching, trauma-informed approaches and reducing cognitive load. Need to show what inclusion looks like in real classroom

Speech, language and communication needs - SLCN is the most common area of need nationally. Staff need training on early identification, modelling language, supporting interaction, and adapting the environment to reduce communication barriers.

Social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) - Training must help staff understand emotional regulation, attachment, anxiety, masking and the impact of unmet needs. This includes de-escalation, relational practice and creating psychologically safe environments.

Co-production with families - Training should embed family partnership as a core skill. This includes listening well, valuing lived experience as evidence, and involving parents and young people in planning support.

Support for understanding families needs - supporting families to understand their children's needs (including specialist level/complex/PMLD families).

13 What practical actions can help teachers, educators and leaders manage workload whilst implementing these changes?

Please respond below::

Co-production with families

Working with families early reduces misunderstandings, repeated meetings and escalation. Families often provide insights that save staff time and lead to quicker solutions.

Protected time for SENCOs

SENCOs need dedicated time for strategic work, coordinating multi-agency support. Need time to answer family questions and queries, supporting their anxieties.

Streamlined planning tools

Use simple, shared templates for processes that are consistent across the LA. One-page profiles, consistent recording systems and shared digital tools reduce duplication.

Clear roles and responsibilities

Leaders should define who does what in SEND processes. When teachers, TAs, SENCOs and pastoral teams understand their specific responsibilities, workload becomes more manageable and support is more consistent.

High-quality, practical training

Training should focus on everyday inclusive strategies teachers can use immediately.

Use of evidence-based universal strategies

When classrooms are set up inclusively from the start—visual supports, routines, sensory-aware practice—fewer children require intensive individual plans, reducing workload across the setting.

Stronger multi-agency coordination

Clear communication with health, early help and specialist teams prevents repeated referrals, duplicated assessments and unnecessary paperwork.

14 How should the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) role evolve to better meet the needs of children and young people with SEND?

Please respond below::

The SENCO role needs to evolve, becoming a strategic leader of inclusion on management boards. SENCOs should have protected time, authority and training to drive whole-school change, National standards should ensure every SENCO is a qualified teacher with specialist training in inclusive practice, neurodiversity, SEMH and multi-agency working.

SENCOs should act as inclusion leads, coaching staff, modelling strategies and ensuring the graduated response is used consistently. They need the capacity to do their job.

The role must also strengthen partnership with families. SENCOs should lead co-production, ensuring parents and young people shape support plans and feel heard. Clear communication, accessible information and regular check-ins reduce conflict and build trust.

Multi-agency coordination is essential. SENCOs should have the authority to convene professionals, share information appropriately and ensure children don't fall between services. Training in multi-agency working and early identification pathways will help SENCOs secure timely support.

Finally, SENCOs need strategic recognition. Being part of the senior leadership team ensures inclusion is prioritised in staffing, curriculum, behaviour policy and resource planning. When SENCOs are empowered as leaders, not administrators, children and young people receive earlier, more consistent and more effective support.

Part two: new Targeted and Targeted Plus support that is written into law

15 What would provide assurance for families that an Individual Support Plan (ISP) is high quality and contains the essential information?

Please respond below::

Families feel confident in an ISP when it is clear, consistent and genuinely reflects their child's needs. A high-quality ISP should start with a strong one-page profile that captures the child's strengths, interests, communication style and what helps them feel safe. This shows families that the plan is personalised.

The ISP must clearly describe the child's needs using accessible language. It should link these needs to specific, measurable outcomes and detail the graduated response being used. Families want to see what support will happen, who will deliver it, how often, and how progress will be reviewed.

Co-production is essential. Parents and young people should be active partners in writing the plan, not just consulted afterwards. A high-quality ISP shows their voice clearly — what they want to achieve, what works at home, and any concerns. This reassures families that the plan is rooted in lived experience.

Regular review arrangements also build trust. The ISP should state when reviews will happen, what evidence will be used, and how changes will be made if support isn't working. Clear communication routes give families confidence that the plan won't sit on a shelf.

Finally, consistency matters. ISPs should follow a shared local template so families know what to expect across settings. When an ISP is personalised, co-produced, measurable and regularly reviewed, families feel assured that it contains the essential information and will genuinely support their child.

16 How can we ensure Individual Support Plans are clear, concise and practical for professionals to use?

Please respond below::

ISPs that are simple, consistent and focused on what staff need to do every day. The most effective ISPs use a shared local template with clear sections, so teachers, TAs and SENCOs know exactly where to find key information. Using one-page profiles at the front keeps the plan child-centred and avoids long narratives.

ISPs should describe needs in plain language, What matters most is linking each need to specific, achievable strategies. Professionals need to see what to do tomorrow, not pages of background. Using the graduated response structure helps keep plans focused on assess-plan-do-review rather than becoming static documents.

Concise, measurable outcomes make ISPs more usable. Staff should be able to tell whether a strategy is working without extra paperwork. Embedding simple review prompts—"What's working? What's not?"—keeps the plan alive and reduces workload.

Co-production with families ensures the plan reflects experience and their needs Families can often provide practical insights that streamline support and make plans more effective and their voice must be heard and trusted.

Finally, digital tools help keep ISPs accessible and up to date. When plans are easy to read, easy to update and clearly linked to classroom practice, professionals are far more likely to use them consistently.

17 How can we best support transition for young people with SEND, so that they are well supported into post-16 provision and further education, training or employment?

Please respond below::

Smooth transition happens when planning starts early, is co-produced with families, and is coordinated across education, health and social care. Young people need a clear, personalised pathway that builds on their strengths and prepares them for adulthood.

Planning from Year 9 onwards is essential. This should include a Preparing for Adulthood focus on independence, community participation, health and employment. Young people should have regular opportunities to explore their aspirations, with accessible tools to help them express what matters to them.

Information sharing must be seamless. Colleges, training providers and employers need clear summaries of needs, strengths and effective strategies — ideally through a high-quality Individual Support Plan or EHCP that is up to date and practical. Families should not have to repeat their story.

Work experience, supported internships and employer engagement are vital. Young people benefit from real-world opportunities, job-coaching and support to develop confidence, communication and independence. Strong partnerships with local employers help create inclusive pathways into work.

Multi-agency coordination is key. A named lead professional can help ensure health, social care and education work together, especially for young people with complex needs. Clear handovers between children's and adult services prevent gaps in support.

Part two: new Targeted and Targeted Plus support that is written into law

18 How can we make sure that every area can meet the full range of the needs of children and young people through Inclusion Bases?

Please respond below::

Inclusion Bases can only meet the full range of needs when they are designed as flexible, well-resourced hubs that strengthen inclusion across all settings, not as separate units. Every area needs a clear vision of what an Inclusion Base is for: early intervention, specialist advice, and short-term, needs-led support that helps children stay connected to their mainstream setting.

A consistent national framework is essential. Strong multi-agency links are critical. Inclusion Bases must have direct access to educational psychology, speech and language therapy, mental health teams and early help. Clear pathways for multi-agency working prevent delays and ensure children with complex needs receive coordinated support.

Co-production with families is vital. Families should help shape how Inclusion Bases operate, what support looks like, and how transitions in and out are managed. This builds trust and ensures the offer reflects lived experience.

Finally, Inclusion Bases must be part of a wider inclusive system. Regular training for mainstream staff, shared resources, and opportunities to observe specialist practice help build confidence and reduce reliance on escalation.

It's really important that children are not placed into inclusion bases if needs cannot be met there (they are not to be placed whilst waiting for specialist placement).

19 How can we make sure that Inclusion Bases help children and young people succeed in mainstream settings?

Please respond below::

Inclusion Bases help children succeed in mainstream settings when they are designed as short-term, needs-led support that strengthens inclusion rather than replacing it. The focus must be on building capacity in the child and in the mainstream environment they return to.

Inclusion Bases should provide targeted assessment, specialist teaching and therapeutic input, with a clear plan for reintegration from day one. This includes a personalised support plan, co-produced with families, that identifies strengths, needs and the strategies that work. Sharing this through a high-quality Individual Support Plan ensures mainstream staff know exactly how to support the child.

Strong communication between the Base and the mainstream setting is essential. Regular check-ins, joint observations and shared review meetings. This includes modelling strategies, coaching teachers and providing resources that help the child succeed once back in class. When mainstream staff feel supported, reintegration is smoother and more sustainable.

Finally, transitions must be gradual and flexible. Phased returns, safe spaces, and ongoing access to Base staff help children feel secure. When Inclusion Bases work collaboratively, focus on skill-building, and strengthen mainstream capacity, children are far more likely to thrive in their home setting.

20 Through the Experts at Hand offer, we want to ensure that mainstream settings can get quick specialist support for children and young people. What arrangements are needed between local area partners (education, health, social care) to deliver this Experts at Hand offer effectively?

Please respond below::

The Experts at Hand offer will only work if education, health and social care agree clear, shared arrangements that guarantee quick access to specialist advice. Mainstream settings need a single, simple route to request support — not multiple forms or unclear thresholds.

Strong multi-agency coordination is critical. Partners need agreed response times, named contacts and clear escalation routes. Access to educational psychology, speech and language therapy, mental health teams and early help must be built into the Experts at Hand model, not dependent on individual relationships. This strengthens multi-agency working and reduces variation between settings.

Co-production with families ensures the offer reflects lived experience and is accessible to those who need it most. Parent carer forums can help shape

referral pathways, communication tools and feedback loops. Parent Carer forums and navigators need to be seen as an 'Expert at Hand' in coproducing services to meet needs of families.

Finally, outreach support is vital. Specialists should not only advise on individual cases but also coach staff, model strategies and build confidence in inclusive classroom practice. When partners work through a single, coordinated system with clear expectations, mainstream settings can access the right expertise quickly and children receive support before needs escalate.

The whole 'Experts at Hand' needs a co-ordinator/lead to ensure consistency, modelling and audit/recording.

Part three: specialist support for those with complex needs

21 What needs to be in place so that children and young people with low incidence, highly complex needs can always access the right specialist placement?

Please respond below::

Children with low incidence, highly complex needs need a system that is planned, consistent and proactive. A nationally consistent definition of low incidence needs, so local areas can plan specialist places based on real data rather than crisis demand.

Local areas need strong, accurate forecasting of need, supported by shared data across education, health and social care. This includes early identification pathways, joint assessments and clear routes into multi-agency planning.

Specialist provision must be flexible. Some children need highly specialist schools; others need bespoke packages combining special school expertise, therapies and outreach. A strong local offer includes residential options, sensory specialist environments, and access to therapies communication tools, mobility support and medical care.

Clear commissioning arrangements are essential. Local areas should work regionally to ensure access to rare specialist provision, supported by transparent funding agreements. Families need confidence that decisions are based on need, not budget.

Co-production with families is vital. Families must be involved in shaping provision, reviewing quality and ensuring placements meet their needs. High quality Individual Support Plans and EHCPs help ensure placements understand the child from day one.

When planning is multi-agency and co-produced, every child with complex needs can access the right specialist placement at the right time and families are supported.

22 How can Specialist Provision Packages be designed to effectively support the main types of need we currently recognise?

Please respond below::

Specialist Provision Packages work best when they are flexible, needs-led. Each package should combine specialist teaching, therapies, environmental adaptations and family support

Across all areas, packages must be co-produced with families, include clear outcomes, When designed this way, Specialist Provision Packages become flexible, evidence-based support that meets the full range of needs.

23 We propose that EHCPs will guarantee educational provision set out in a Specialist Provision Package, with day-to-day provision captured in Individual Support Plans. What is needed to make these proposals work effectively?

Please respond below::

We are aware that there is further work happening on this subject with a 'panel, It's important to recognise that specialist provision packages must be flexible and meet the needs of individual children who may fall into one or more of the 'packages' especially if they are complex, but to summarise:

Clear national definitions and templates;

Strong multi-agency coordination;

High quality, co-produced ISPs;

Clear accountability and monitoring;

Local areas need transparent systems;

Digital systems that reduce duplication;

Training for staff;

Smooth alignment with the graduated response;

24 We propose creating a more direct route to Specialist Provision Packages and EHCP assessments for children under 5 with complex needs. How can we make sure this works in practice?

Please respond below::

A direct route will work if early years, health and social care partners share information quickly. The first requirement is clear national criteria for what counts as "complex needs" in the early years, so decisions are consistent and not dependent on individual interpretation. This helps avoid children being bounced between services.

Early identification must be strengthened. Joint assessments linked to the two-year progress check should trigger automatic consideration for a Specialist Provision Package where appropriate. Families should not need to fight for recognition of need.

A single, simple referral route is essential. One form, one pathway, and one multi-agency panel.

Families need a named lead professional who coordinates assessments, explains the process and ensures support starts immediately. This prevents drift and gives parents confidence that needs are being taken seriously.

Specialist Provision Packages must be available quickly. This means local areas need strong early years SEND capacity, access to therapies, and flexible funding so support can start before an EHCP is finalised.

Finally, co-production with families ensures the pathway is accessible, transparent and responsive. When criteria are clear, assessments are joined-up, and support starts early, a direct route becomes a genuine early-intervention offer.

25 What would you expect to be considered as part of the needs assessment, for example evidence and expert or professional input?

Please respond below::

Child and family voice - Child's strengths, interests, communication style, what helps, and what is difficult — captured through conversations, observations and a one-page profile. Parents' insights into daily life, routines, sensory needs and behaviour are essential and to be believed (even if not seen in school)

Educational evidence - Showing what support has already been tried, how it was implemented, and what impact it had. This includes observations, progress data, adaptations made, and examples of work.

Specialist assessments and reports -Input from relevant professionals depending on the child's needs: such as Ed Psych, SLT, OT, Sensor, Physio, CAMHS, Mental health teams, Paeds,

These should provide clear recommendations on Health and developmental information

Birth history, medical needs, sensory or physical needs, sleep, feeding, mobility, communication development and any ongoing health interventions.

Social care information - Where relevant, input from early help (family first/hubs) , social care or family support services to understand home context, safeguarding, or wider family needs.

Environmental and contextual factors - How the child responds in different settings (home, early years, school), transitions, sensory environments and peer interactions.

Clear analysis of need - A joined-up summary showing how the evidence fits together, what the child needs to access learning, and why specialist provision or an EHCP may be required.

Part three: specialist support for those with complex needs

26 What factors should LAs take into account in proposing to parents and young people a list of potential settings to name on a plan?

Please respond below::

The child's profile of need

Must be able to meet the child's communication, learning, sensory, physical or SEMH needs as identified. This includes access to Experts at Hand.

Family/ young person preference

Families' views must be central. LAs should only propose settings that genuinely match need, not those chosen for convenience or cost.

Evidence of effective inclusion

LAs should consider how well each setting implements inclusive classroom practice, uses the graduated response, and supports children with similar needs.

Specialist Provision Package alignment

Proposed settings must be able to deliver the specialist elements guaranteed in the EHCP or Specialist Provision Package — not just the day-to-day support captured in the ISP.

Peer group and social opportunities

Settings should offer an appropriate peer group, opportunities for friendships, and a safe, supportive environment.

Transitions and long-term suitability

LAs should consider how well the setting supports transitions, prepares for adulthood, and can meet needs over time.

Distance, travel/accessibility

Travel/transport arrangements, physical accessibility and the impact on family life must be considered, especially for children with medical or physical needs.

When LAs consider these factors transparently and co-produce decisions with families, the list of potential settings becomes meaningful, fair and rooted in the child's best interests.

27 What information and support do parents need to make a decision about which setting will be best for their child?

Please respond below::

Families need clear, honest and comparable information to decide which setting will best meet their child's needs. This starts with a high-quality summary of the child's strengths and needs from the needs assessment, so families can see how well each setting aligns with what their child requires.

Families need accessible information about each local setting's SEND offer — class sizes, specialist staff, therapies, sensory environment, curriculum pathways and how the school implements inclusive classroom practice. This should be presented consistently across mainstream, Inclusion Bases and specialist settings so parents can compare like-for-like.

Parents need opportunities to visit settings, meet staff and see how support works in practice. They should be able to ask questions about communication, transitions, pastoral care and how the setting would deliver the child's EHCP/Specialist Provision Package/ISP.

Practical information is also essential: travel routes across the borough, accessibility, peer groups, and how each setting supports preparation for adulthood. Families should be given time to reflect and discuss options without pressure.

Finally, parents need impartial support from SENDIASS, and provided info on their Parent Carer Forum. Information about their rights, processes and what to expect needs to be easily available on Local offer and a navigator to support with all of the decisions and finding information.

28 What do you think is the right maximum length of time for a temporary placement in Alternative Provision (AP) schools? Please explain your rationale.

Please respond below::

AP should be short-term and purposeful, focused on addressing specific barriers to learning and supporting a successful return to mainstream. Longer placements risk children becoming socially isolated or losing connection with peers and curriculum.

Reintegration planning must start from day one, with a personalised plan co-produced with families and the home school. This should be captured through a high-quality Individual Support Plan so strategies transfer back into the mainstream environment.

Regular multi-agency reviews — every 4 weeks — ensure the placement remains appropriate and that progress is monitored. This reflects Telford & Wrekin's emphasis on strong multi-agency working and early help pathways.

Outreach from AP into mainstream settings helps build staff confidence and ensures the child is supported consistently on return.

Flexibility is essential. Some children may need a shorter placement; others with highly complex needs may require a brief extension, but only with clear evidence, family agreement and a reintegration plan already in motion.

A 12-week maximum, with strong review points and a reintegration-first approach, reflects Telford & Wrekin's commitment to inclusion, early intervention and keeping children connected to their community.

29 We have set out our plans to regulate Independent Special Schools (ISS) sector. Do you agree that these proposed changes will lead to suitable placements being available at a fair cost? Please explain why.

Please respond below::

Only if regulation is paired with strong commissioning, transparent quality standards and regional collaboration. This reflects the experience of families and professionals in Telford & Wrekin, where ISS placements are often used for children with highly complex needs that cannot be met locally.

Clear national standards will reduce variability and provide greater transparency on cost structures, better alignment with specialist packages and ensures these measurable and accountable.

Clear quality standards linked to outcomes, not just compliance, Regular monitoring and transparent reporting, A national register of approved ISSs, with clear information for families. Co-production with families and young people, ensuring placements reflect lived experience, Investment in local and regional specialist capacity, so ISSs are used appropriately, not because local options are full

Part four: reforming the system to reward inclusion

30 How should settings be held accountable for how they spend their Inclusive Mainstream funding?

Please respond below::

Accountability must be transparent, consistent and focused on impact, not paperwork. Families want to know that Inclusive Mainstream Funding is being used to deliver real, practical support that helps their child access learning and thrive in their school.

Clear, accessible information for families via a simple summary linked to their child's Individual Support Plan. This should show what support is in place, how often, and how it helps their child. Summary to include the APDR cycle, strategies - shared at regular review meetings.

Transparent reporting at school level for training and interventions made more available and this should be monitored by local authority.

Link to outcomes, not spend

Accountability should show whether support is helping children make progress, feel safe, regulate, communicate and access learning — not just list what was purchased.

Co-production with the Parent Carer Forum

The PCF should help shape the accountability framework, ensuring it reflects lived experience and is meaningful for families.

When accountability is transparent, co-produced and focused on impact, families in Telford & Wrekin can trust that Inclusive Mainstream Funding is being used effectively to support their children.

31 Do you agree that more SEND funding should sit directly within mainstream budgets? Please explain why.

Please respond below::

Yes, but needs to be done in mind to ensure earlier intervention becomes possible and schools can use funding to put in support quicker. This strengthens the graduated response and reduces delays that families in Telford & Wrekin often experience. It's important though that it doesn't become a postcode lottery!

Support becomes more personalised

Schools can use funding to tailor interventions, sensory support, small-group work, and pastoral input based on the child's Individual Support Plan and using the experts at hand offer appropriately.

Builds whole-school inclusion

More funding enables investment in staff training, specialist resources and coaching from Inclusion Bases or outreach teams. This strengthens inclusive classroom practice across the school.

Improves equity across the borough

Telford & Wrekin has schools with very different levels of SEND need. Direct funding helps ensure schools with higher levels of complexity can meet needs without relying on inconsistent top-ups.

Conditions needed for this to work

Funding must be ring-fenced for SEND and inclusion.

Schools must be transparent with families about how it is used.

The Local Authority should monitor impact, not just spend.

Parent Carer Forums should help shape the accountability framework.

When mainstream schools in Telford & Wrekin have the right funding, used transparently and effectively, children receive support earlier, inclusion improves, and pressure on specialist services reduces.

32 In relation to pooled funding, we propose that every school becomes part of a local SEND group. Do you agree that this proposal aligns with our aim for all schools to be part of high-quality, community-based trusts?

Please respond below::

Community-based trusts can emphasise collective responsibility for outcomes. Local SEND groups reinforce this by ensuring schools work together to plan support, share expertise and use funding transparently. This strengthens inclusive classroom practice across the area.

Conditions needed for this to work well:

Clear governance structures so decisions are fair, transparent and co-produced with families.

Strong LA oversight to ensure funding is used for inclusion, not absorbed into wider budgets.

Parent Carer Forum involvement in shaping priorities and monitoring impact.

Alignment with trust-level strategies, so SEND groups complement — not duplicate — existing structures.

33 How should disagreements about membership, provision, or funding in groups of schools for SEND be resolved?

Please respond below::

Part four: reforming the system to reward inclusion

34 How can we ensure the most effective use of these local partnership groups?

Please respond below::

Involving all partners including parent carer representatives (Parent Carer Forum) and young people groups.

35 Which stakeholders are important for the success of local partnership groups, and why?

Please respond below::

For local SEND partnership groups to work effectively, there needs to be shared responsibility, decision making and coproduction.

Parent Carer Forum (PCF) - Lived experience and ensure decisions remain grounded in what children actually need. PCFs help shape priorities, challenge inequity and strengthen coproduction across the system.

Schools and Trust Leaders - Their involvement ensures decisions about funding, provision and training translate into improved inclusive classroom practice.

Local Authority SEND and Inclusion Teams - Strategic oversight, ensures statutory duties are met, essential for consistency across the borough.

Health Partners - Speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, CAMHS and paediatrics must be part of the group.

Social Care and Early Help - family context, safeguarding and wider family needs.

Alternative Provision and Inclusion Bases - specialist expertise in SEMH, behaviour, trauma-informed practice and reintegration.

Post-16 Providers - Colleges and training providers ensure planning reflects preparation for adulthood and smooth transitions.

Voluntary and Community Sector - Local charities, youth services and disability organisations provide practical support and insight into gaps in provision.

Working together, partnership groups can make decisions that are fair, evidence-based and centred on children's needs. This builds trust, reduces conflict and ensures funding and provision are used effectively.

36 How can we build stronger collaboration and a culture of improvement through local SEND strategic plans?

Please respond below::

To build genuine collaboration and continuous improvement local SEND strategic plans must be coproduced, transparent and rooted in shared accountability. Families want a system where every partner — schools, health, social care and the Local Authority — works together with a common purpose and a clear plan.

Coproduction at every stage strengthens collaborative and joint working, Shared priorities across education, health and care, Clear, measurable outcomes, Transparent data and honest self-evaluation, Regular partnership reviews including partners and Parent Carer Forum, Investment in workforce development, Celebrating good practice

When strategic plans are coproduced, transparent and focused on outcomes, they create a culture where partners work together, learn from each other and continually improve. This means a more consistent, inclusive and responsive SEND system.

37 What information, advice and guidance can best support children, young people and their families to ensure greater fairness across the system?

Please respond below::

To ensure greater fairness for families in Telford & Wrekin, information, advice and guidance must be clear, consistent, accessible and coproduced. Families repeatedly say that fairness improves when everyone understands the process, the support available, and their rights — and when information is easy to find and easy to trust. Families need clear explanations of pathways and processes, jargon free.

Transparent information about local provision, accessible Local Offer that clearly describes mainstream support, Inclusion Bases, specialist settings, therapies, and eligibility criteria. This helps families compare options and reduces confusion.

Practical guidance linked to the child's needs - Families benefit from tailored advice linked to their child's needs assessment, including what support should look like in practice and how it can be captured in an ISP.

Impartial support and advocacy - SENDIASS, the Parent Carer Forum and voluntary sector organisations must be well-resourced so families can access independent advice early, not only when things go wrong and given opportunity to be involved in coproduction and participation.

Straightforward explanations of their legal rights, Info in multiple formats so every family can engage in whatever way suits them, Regular communication and updates, opportunities to ask questions and be heard - Workshops, drop-ins, and coproduction events help families understand the system and influence how it works.

38 Do you agree that a SEND specialist (e.g. a SENCO) should sit on the school complaint panel, when the complaint relates to SEND support and provision? Please explain why.

Please respond below::

Yes, because it ensures informed decision-making around complex issues such as graduated response, reasonable adjustments, sensory needs, or the implementation of an Individual Support Plan. A SEND specialist with track record for inclusion.

It would improve fairness and transparency and give reassurance and able to apply statutory (CoP) guidance correctly, Strengthens accountability around disagreement and procedural failure, Building trust with families.

Complaint panels should not only resolve issues but also help schools improve. A SEND specialist can highlight gaps in practice, training needs, or systemic issues that need addressing.

For this to work well, the SEND specialist must be independent of the case and not involved in the child's support, the panel MUST include both SEND expertise and governance expertise to ensure balanced decision-making. The Local Authority and Parent Carer Forum should help shape the role description to ensure consistency across Telford & Wrekin.

When a SEND specialist sits on complaint panels, decisions become more accurate, more transparent and more trusted — leading to better outcomes for children and families.

Part four: reforming the system to reward inclusion

39 This consultation outlines a series of measures intended to reform the SEND system. Some of these measures have already been finalised, and this is clearly indicated within the document. With this in mind, is there anything further you would like to contribute to help inform the remaining proposals that are still under consideration?

Please respond below::

National clarity on what "good" looks like: Families need clear, practical standards for the graduated response, reasonable adjustments, and mainstream inclusion. Without this, variation between schools will continue, and fairness will remain inconsistent.

A stronger focus on early identification and strengthening the quality of the needs assessment.

Access to therapies - Therapy provision is built into Specialist Provision Packages and monitored nationally.

Stronger accountability for mainstream inclusion with more funding in mainstream and needs transparent reporting, co-produced monitoring and clear expectations for inclusive classroom practice.

A national approach to workforce development to ensure consistent practice and more teaching staff and support staff put in place to support relationships and SEN needs.

Strengthen co-production at every stage of design, delivery and review — not optional or advisory. This includes involving families in shaping local pathways, reviewing data and evaluating impact.

Clearer rights and accessible information for families to understand their rights, processes and what support should look like. Families having legal redress to challenge and hold systems accountable.