

Hampshire County Council SEND: Key Points

To sit alongside: [ADCS SEND the evidence base for reform FINAL.pdf](#)

The National Context

Rise in the number of children needing an Education Health and Care (EHC) Plan

There has been a stark increase in the number of requests for statutory assessment since 2018, leading to a significant increase in EHC Plans being issued, both in Hampshire and nationally. The number of maintained EHC Plans in Hampshire has increased by 140% since 2018. For young people where a special school setting is requested to meet their needs, this is creating significant sufficiency pressures across specialist settings in Hampshire.

Shortage of Specialist School Places

There is a significant shortage of special school places causing delays in support for children.

Financial Strain on Authorities

Local authorities and schools face severe financial pressure due to the complexity of need within schools and the escalating costs of provision.

Need for Systemic Reform

The SEND system urgently requires reform to improve education quality and financial stability for a system that works for, above all, for children - but also for their families and all other parties involved with them and their education.

The SEN Crisis – A national issue

The Public Accounts Committee published a [report](#) setting out the SEN crisis and how the current system is not viable. Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP, Chair of the Committee summarised the extent of the crisis:

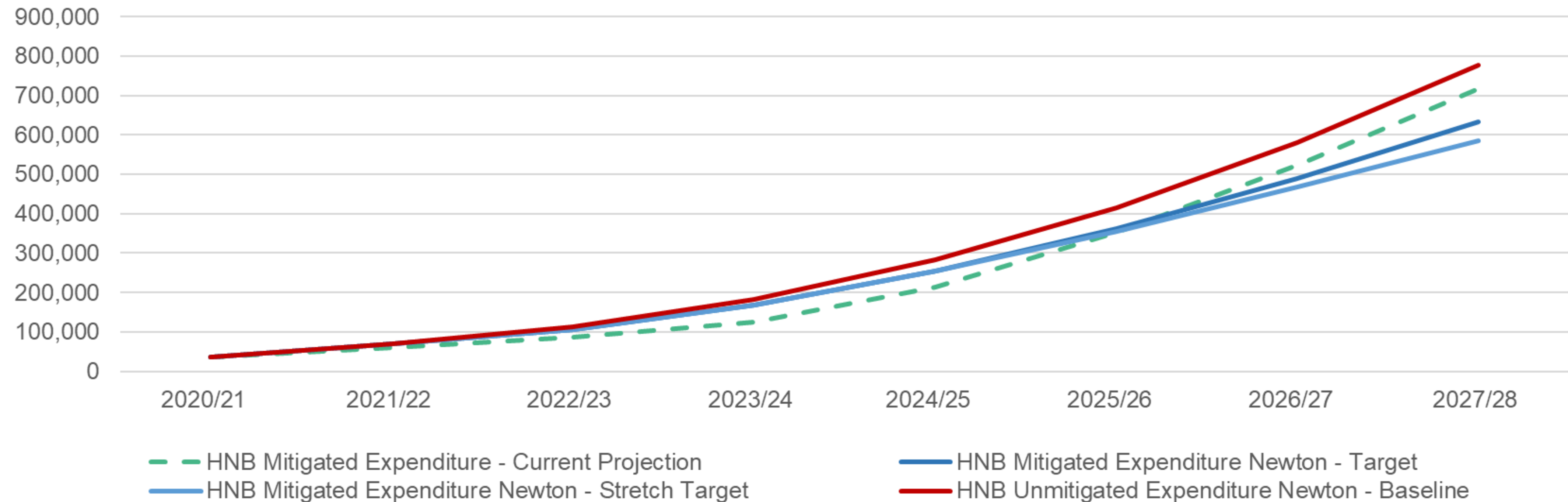
“The immensity of this situation cannot be overstated. As a nation, we are failing countless children. We have been doing so for years. At the same time, we are creating an existential financial risk for some local authorities, caused by that same failing system. This report must serve as a line in the sand for Government. Every day that goes by for families not receiving the right support is another day closer to a lost generation of young people.”

The recent paper from the [Institute of Fiscal Studies](#) summarises the financial position well:

Spending on educational support for children with high needs has increased dramatically, putting pressure on local and central government finances. High-needs spending by councils, which predominantly covers additional support for those with EHCPs, has increased by 66% from £7½ billion in 2016 to at least £12 billion in 2025, after adjusting for inflation. We forecast that spending on high needs will rise by a further £3 billion by 2029 without any reforms, taking it above total day-to-day spending by the Ministry of Justice.

Councils have little control over this spending as it is determined by the statutory provision set out in EHCPs. Since the cost of provision has exceeded funding provided by central government, local authorities have faced large annual shortfalls. The resulting debts are forecast to reach £8 billion by 2028. This is not financially sustainable.

The Local Issue: HCC DSG Medium Term Forecast



	Cumulative DSG Deficit (£'000)							
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
HNB Mitigated Expenditure - Current Projection	35,445	60,022	86,149	123,920	213,149	353,741	523,681	716,137
HNB Unmitigated Expenditure Newton - Baseline	35,445	69,209	113,433	183,010	282,904	414,898	580,937	778,334
HNB Mitigated Expenditure Newton - Target	35,445	69,209	106,834	167,450	254,716	362,614	489,916	633,179
HNB Mitigated Expenditure Newton - Stretch Target	35,445	69,209	106,834	167,450	253,885	354,889	466,703	585,051

Suggested solutions

Curriculum and Alternative Provision

- Redeveloping curriculum and accountability to be less prescriptive would better meet the needs of some children with SEND, especially those experiencing regular suspension and potential permanent exclusion. An embedded approach to inclusion for all schools where the default is local schools for local children, meaning children's needs are met alongside their peers in their local community. This would also relieve the pressure on Alternative Provisions, especially those classed as Pupil Referral Units (PRUs).
- Development from the current attainment 8 (A8) curriculum requirement to one where creative and vocational elements are recognised equally to more formal subjects would encourage schools to support pupils with SEN who do not thrive with the more regimented academic A8 offer.
- Recognition is needed that different types of qualifications and assessment routes may be needed by different individuals, and therefore all should have equal ratings when reviewing outcomes.

Teacher and Staff Training

- Special Educational Needs (SEN) must be a far bigger part of initial teacher training and early career training. Education and other related higher-level qualifications also need a greater focus on this.
- Although there are some increases in numbers of teacher trainees, teacher recruitment nationally and regionally remains challenging.
- Teaching assistants are a resource that with better pay and training could be far better used to support SEN children and young people to develop skills that will lead them to a successful adulthood. Competition for recruitment and retention of teaching assistants is significant with other sectors, such as retail, able to offer more competitive pay and benefits, whilst also providing flexibility in hours.
- Budget pressures are also causing challenges for some schools in affording a workforce or sufficient size and capability to support all the levels of need – this is particularly the case in smaller schools.
- Whether workforce capacity both in relation to teachers and teacher assistants is driven by budget pressures or ability to attract and recruit, the schools with these challenges are needing to work closely with their remaining staff around workload and wellbeing.

Statutory SEN Support

- A common, national understanding of what should be provided by schools as ordinarily available provision for the majority of Special Educational Needs (SEN) is required.
- SEN support on a statutory footing would open the door to early intervention and support and reduce reliance on EHC plans when support at SEN Support level would meet need.
- It would require the national standard set of expectations as stated above and would need funding, but this would be offset by a reduction in the cost of the creation and maintenance of EHC plans.

Policy and Funding

- To meet the needs of our children and young people with SEND, we need a sustainable system where policy aligns with the funding provided. This funding should be distributed on a fair basis reflecting current need, rather than historic need, as some local authorities such as Hampshire are accessing significantly lower levels of funding resulting in a reduced and unfair level of access to support and services. This variation can be highlighted on a unit of funding basis comparing Hampshire to the England average and the highest unit funded on different basis:

	High needs block allocation after deductions	High Needs Block per mainstream pupil	High Needs Block per Mid-2025 age 2-18 ONS population projection
Hampshire	£211,301,673	£1,198.24	767.30
ENGLAND	£9,982,568,998	£1,326.84	853.61
Lewisham	£83,238,385	£2,477.07	1327.80
Camden	£58,584,622	£3,564.95	1100.59

- For every child with an EHC Plan in a mainstream school, the first £6,000 of the cost of the provision as laid out in the plan must come from the school's existing budget. Where a school has lots of children with plans this represents a lot of their budget that they cannot spend on other young people. Where schools have few plans, this money is theirs to spend as they wish. This provides an obvious disincentive for schools to take children with plans and absolutely needs to be addressed such that all aspects of children's plans are appropriately funded when they attend mainstream schools.

Admissions and Local Authority Powers

- The ability to create maintained schools in the locality rather than the current position where only Free Schools and Academies can open new settings would support the inclusion agenda.
- A requirement for all schools, including academies, to adhere to the admissions criteria set by the Local Authority for places to be planned such that they meet local needs.
- Greater powers for Local Authorities to direct placements of children with SEN so that local schools take their 'catchment' or local children with EHCPlans plans and to make the number of children with EHCPlans more equitable between schools. It is of note that academy schools, especially at secondary phase, have less children with EHCPlans on their roles than their maintained counterparts. [Some schools in England taking up to six times more special needs pupils than others | Special educational needs | The Guardian](#)

Specialist Placement Value for Money

Type of provision	Average revenue cost per place (March 2025)
Community Special School	£21,188
Resourced Provision (RP)	£17,954
Independent and non-maintained special school place (INMSS)	£79,971

- Independent and non-maintained special schools (INMSS) are able to decide what they charge for places leading to significantly higher costs in a market where demand outstrips supply, driven in part by the marketing strategies of INMSS directly to parents.
- A transparent breakdown of costs to enable commissioners to ensure value for money is required.
- Maximum profit margins to be set for private providers to ensure costs cannot be excessive for Local Authority arranged placements.

What Hampshire is currently doing

- The County Council acknowledges concerns about SEND provision in Hampshire and has taken key actions, including updating the SEN Strategy, launching the Specialist Places Action Plan, and collaborating with schools and partners. This action plan commits to providing 1,000 specialist placements by 2030.
- We have undertaken a significant body of work through the SEND local area partnership (LAP) and transforming SEND programmes. These are a range of workstreams aimed at providing the right support at the right time for our children and young people, as well as supporting schools to meet the changing profile of need they are seeing in their cohorts.
- We work closely as a LAP, overseen by the LAP Board to make sure that across all agencies we are working together to highlight opportunities and identify solutions. This includes close liaison with the Hampshire Parent Carer Forum, and a range of voluntary agencies.
- HCC also engage with government officials and the f40 Group to advocate for improved funding and policy changes.

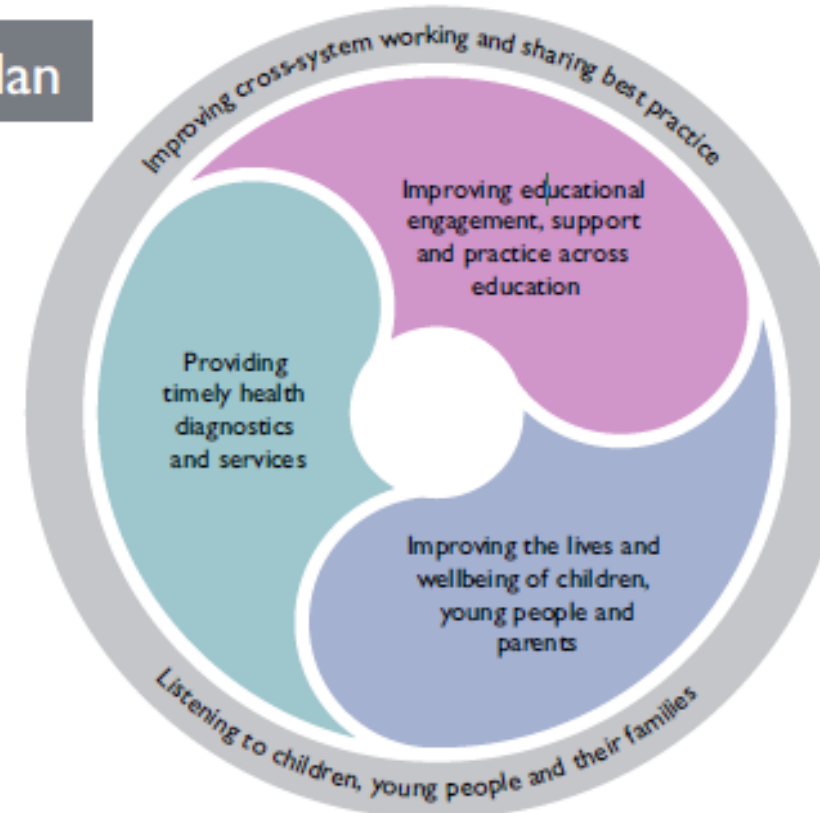
Appendix

Hampshire's Local Area Partnership Strategy

Our vision



Our action plan



Our success criteria

We will know we have succeeded when....

1. The views of children, young people and their families informs all our work.
2. Children, young people and their families can access the information and services they need when they need it.
3. Data is routinely shared, and we all work towards the same goals.
4. Children and young people with SEND are happy and have positive social relationships.
5. Young people with SEND increasingly live independently and gain meaningful employment.
6. There is a culture of support to families and carers.
7. Children and young people with SEND and their families can access services and support that meet their needs at the earliest point, without barriers.
8. The mental and physical health of children and young people with SEND compares positively with their peers.
9. Children and young people with SEND are engaged in their education within an inclusive environment.
10. Everyone in the system, works together to improve educational engagement.
11. A robust, resilient and skilled education workforce can meet SEND needs.
12. Children and young people with SEND and their parents are appropriately prepared for adult life from a young age.
13. There is sufficient provision to meet the needs of all Children and young people with SEND in Hampshire.

Our approach

We will achieve our vision through strong multi agency and parental partnerships, having a shared understanding of challenges and working together on solutions.

We will measure progress by...

1. Bringing together Health, Education and Social Care data.
2. Tracking and reducing the gap between outcomes for children and young people with SEND and their peers.
3. Annually canvassing parents about their confidence in the system.
4. Annually canvassing professionals about system improvements.
5. Listening to children and young people about what matters to them and acting on their views.

We will work together well by...

1. Collectively owning the issues.
2. Securing cross-partnership agreement to progress all actions.
3. Spreading the word, creating a system-wide understanding of our ambition.
4. Routinely seeking the voice of all children and young people with SEND.
5. Holding ourselves and each other to account on delivery of our action plan.
6. Monitoring our progress through our Local Area Partnership board.
7. Supporting and be honest with each other.
8. Asking for help to solve systemic problems.
9. Being critical friends for each other.
10. Reducing inequalities.