

Greater Manchester SEND Strategic Partnership Communications on the SEND Reforms

This communication from the Greater Manchester SEND Strategic Partnership provides a clarity around the proposed SEND reforms as outlined in the White paper ([Every child achieving and thriving \(HTML version\) - GOV.UK](#)) released on Monday 23rd February 2026.

This guide summarises what parents and carers need to know.

Important: Nothing has changed yet. The proposals are not yet law.

They are currently part of a national consultation, which means the government is asking families, professionals and organisations for their views.

Until any new laws are introduced:

- The current SEND system remains in place
- Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) remain the same
- Children’s legal rights to support have not changed
- Local authorities and schools must continue to meet their legal duties

What is the government proposing?

The White Paper suggests changes aimed at improving the SEND system. These include:

National standards describing the support children with SEND should receive

Earlier identification and support in schools

More consistency across different areas of the country

Better coordination between education, health and care services

Simpler processes for families

These ideas are still being discussed and may change following consultation.

Can parents share their views?

Yes.

Parents and carers are encouraged to take part in the national SEND reforms consultation.

The consultation closes on 18 May 2026.

Feedback from families will help shape the government's decisions about any future changes. You can find out more about the consultation process and submit your own response using this link. [SEND reforms Consultation Information](#)

The closing date is 18th May 2026

Where can I get more information?

You can speak to:

Your child's school or SENCO

Your local authority SEND team

Your local parent carer forum

They can help answer questions and explain the proposals.

What are the SEND reforms?

The SEND reforms are a set of proposed changes to how support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities is organised and delivered in England.

The government says the aim is to:

Improve consistency across the country

Ensure children get the right support earlier

Make the SEND system easier for families to navigate

Improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND

The proposals were published in a government White Paper, which sets out ideas for reform but does not change the law on its own.

Are the reforms happening now?

No.

The proposals are currently being consulted on nationally, meaning the government is asking families, professionals, and organisations for feedback. No changes have been made to the law yet.

This means that:

Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) remain in place

Local authorities still have the same legal duties

Children's rights to support remain the same

Any changes would only happen after consultation and new legislation.

Will Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) be removed?

The White Paper suggests changes to how support is described and delivered, but EHCPs are not being removed at this stage.

The proposals include exploring:

National standards for SEND support

Clearer expectations for schools

Different ways of describing support

However, EHCPs and the current legal framework remain in place unless future legislation changes this.

What are national SEND standards?

One proposal in the White Paper is to introduce national standards.

These would describe:

The support that children with SEND should expect

What schools, health services, and local authorities should provide

More consistency across the country

The aim is to reduce the variation in support between different areas.

Will schools have more responsibility for SEND support?

The government is proposing that schools may take a stronger role in providing early SEND support.

This could include:

Clearer expectations for schools

Earlier identification of needs

More support provided without needing an EHCP

However, these are proposals only and would require further development.

What might change about assessments?

The White Paper suggests the government may explore changes to how assessments are carried out, including:

Simplifying processes

Reducing duplication between services

Making support easier to access

Details about how this would work have not yet been finalised.

Will parents still have a say in decisions?

Yes.

Parents and carers will continue to play a key role in decisions about their child's support.

The consultation itself is an opportunity for families to share their views about the proposals.

Parent voice is considered an important part of shaping future SEND policy.

What will happen to current support for my child?

At the moment nothing changes.

Your child's:

EHCP

School support

Therapy provision

Rights to assessment

All remain exactly the same under current law.

Any future changes would take time to introduce and would involve further guidance.

Will my child's EHCP be taken away because of the reforms?

No.

The proposals in the White Paper do not automatically remove existing EHCPs. Any child or young person who currently has an EHCP will continue to receive the support set out in their plan under current law.

It is important to note that:

The SEND reforms are not yet law.

The Children and Families Act 2014, which established EHCPs, remains fully in force.

Local authorities must continue to meet their statutory duties regarding EHCPs. Any future changes to the system would require new legislation and a transition process.

Will children still be able to get an EHCP in the future?

At present, the process for requesting and issuing EHCPs remains exactly the same.

Parents, carers, schools, or other professionals can still request an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment from their local authority.

The legal thresholds and assessment process have not changed.

The White Paper suggests the government wants to:

Improve early support in schools

Clarify expectations through national standards

Reduce the need for families to go through complex processes

However, EHCPs are still part of the current system, and no immediate changes have been introduced.

Will the criteria for getting an EHCP change?

Currently, no changes have been made to the criteria.

Under existing law, an EHCP may be issued if:

A child or young person has special educational needs, and
They require support that cannot reasonably be provided through the resources normally available to mainstream schools.

The White Paper suggests the government may explore different ways of describing support and responsibilities, but the legal threshold for EHCPs has not changed.

Will EHCPs still include health and social care support?

Yes.

EHCPs currently bring together education, health and social care support in a single plan. This remains the case under current law.

Local authorities and health services continue to have legal responsibilities to deliver the provision set out in an EHCP.

The White Paper includes proposals aimed at improving coordination between education, health and care services, but this does not change the existing legal framework at present.

Will annual reviews of EHCPs still happen?

Yes.

Schools and local authorities must continue to hold annual reviews of EHCPs to:

Review progress

Update outcomes

Adjust support where necessary

The statutory requirement for annual reviews has not changed.

Can parents still appeal decisions about EHCPs?

Yes.

Parents and young people still have the right to challenge decisions made by the local authority.

This includes decisions about:

Refusing to carry out an EHCP assessment

Refusing to issue an EHCP

The content of an EHCP

The school named in the plan

Appeals can still be made to the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability).

These rights remain in place unless the law changes in the future.

Will schools still have to follow what is written in an EHCP?

Yes.

If a child has an EHCP, the educational provision written in the plan must be delivered.

Local authorities remain legally responsible for ensuring the provision in Section F of the EHCP is secured.

Schools and other services must continue to work with families to make sure the support described in the plan is put in place.

Could EHCPs look different in the future?

Possibly.

The White Paper suggests the government may explore changes to how support is described or structured, including the introduction of national standards.

However, the government has not yet confirmed what this might look like in practice, and any changes would require further consultation and legislation.

If reforms were introduced, there would likely be a transition period to ensure children and families continue to receive support.

What should parents do right now?

At this stage, families do not need to take any action regarding their child's EHCP.

Current plans remain valid and must continue to be delivered.

Parents may wish to:

Learn more about the proposals

Share their views through the national consultation

Speak with their child's school or SEND professionals if they have questions