



Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee

Thursday 22 October 2026

6.00 pm

Council Chamber, Third Floor, Southwater One, Telford, TF3 4JG

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Committee Members:	Councillors L Parker (Chair), C Chikandamina (Vice-Chair), E Aston, S P Burrell, A S Jhawar, J Kaur, T J Nelson, K Tonks, J Urey Co-optees S Fikeis and C Morgan
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	Agenda	Page
4.0	SEND Reforms	3 - 8
	For the Committee to receive an update on the national SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan.	

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Telford & Wrekin
Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest
to create a better borough

Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee

Thursday 22 October 2026

SEND Reform

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Shirley Reynolds – Cabinet Member: Children, Young People, Education, Employment & Skills
Lead Director:	Rebecca Carey – Director: Education & Skills
Service Area:	Education and Skills
Report Author:	Rebecca Carey – Director: Education & Skills Abi Martin – Strategic Lead SEND
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Wards Affected:	All Wards
Report considered by:	Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee – 22 October 2026

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

- 1.1 The Committee is asked to note the national direction for SEND reform, the Council's proposed local response through the Telford & Wrekin Local SEND Reform Plan.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of SEND Reform, its national and local context, the case for change, the principal delivery proposals and the arrangements for governance, co-production and performance monitoring.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 The national SEND reform programme responds to sustained pressures across the special educational needs and disabilities system. It expects local authorities to work with education, health and care partners to develop support that is more inclusive, integrated and financially sustainable.

- 3.2 Telford & Wrekin has developed and submitted a three-year Local SEND Reform Plan to the Department for Education which was approved in October 2026. The plan covers children and young people aged 0 to 25 and is founded on the ambition that children and young people receive the right support, at the right time and in the right place, with a clear presumption of mainstream inclusion.
- 3.3 The borough is well placed to progress this work, having acted as the West Midlands lead for much of the trial activity undertaken through the SEND and Alternative Provision Change Programme. The local plan now moves from development into implementation, with the first year used to test new approaches, understand impact and refine delivery in response to evidence and feedback.

4.0 Summary of Main Proposal

- 4.1 The plan responds to increasing demand for SEND support, pressure across the system and the need to strengthen confidence in mainstream inclusion. It sets out a strategic approach to improving inclusion, ensuring that children and young people receive appropriate support at the earliest opportunity and that provision is sustainable over the longer term.
- 4.2 The plan recognises ongoing pressures on local specialist provision and the associated financial impact on the High Needs budget. It seeks to strengthen local sufficiency, reduce reliance on provision outside the borough where appropriate, and ensure that children and young people can access high-quality support closer to home. It also recognises the need for continued improvement in attendance, inclusion and outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

5.0 Vision and Intended Outcomes

- 5.1 By 2029, Telford and Wrekin will want to deliver a fully integrated 0–25 SEND system where children and young people receive the right support, at the right time and in the right place, with a clear presumption of mainstream inclusion.
- 5.2 Co-production is embedded throughout the local offer, ensuring children (through a child friendly approach), young people and families shape decisions, while resources are used efficiently to secure long-term financial sustainability.

Locally, implementation will focus on three connected priorities:

- strengthening inclusive practice and earlier support in mainstream education;
- coordinated access to education, health and care expertise through locality-based working;
- developing sufficient, sustainable local provision for children and young people whose needs require specialist support.

6.0 Alternative Options

- 6.1 The principal alternative would be to continue with existing arrangements and respond mainly when needs have escalated. The evidence in the briefing indicates that this would not address rising demand, confidence in mainstream support, reliance on external placements or pressure on the High Needs budget.

7.0 Key Risks

- 7.1 The key risks to delivery include workforce capacity and recruitment, variable engagement across settings, delays in developing local specialist provision, continued growth in demand and effective partnership working. If not effectively managed, these could affect the pace and consistency of implementation, increase pressure on services and budgets, maintain reliance on external provision and, importantly, limit the extent of improvements.
- 7.2 Mitigation will focus on phased implementation, targeted recruitment and strengthened locality support, alongside clear expectations and quality assurance across education settings. Delivery of additional local provision will be overseen through the capital and sufficiency programme, while live data and regular performance review will enable emerging demand and pressures to be identified and addressed. Strong partnership governance, joint commissioning and continued co-production will provide further assurance that delivery remains responsive and focused on improving outcomes for children and young people.

8.0 Council Priorities

- 8.1 The proposals outlined in this report support the following Council priorities:
- Every child, young person, and adult lives well in their communities
 - Everyone benefits from a thriving economy

9.0 Financial Implications

- 9.1 The increase in needs and demand for high needs support has created significant financial pressures, both in T&W and nationally. It has been reported that the overall DSG deficit nationally at 31 March 2026 exceeded £5bn. However, for T&W, recent government approval of T&W's SEND Reform plan will lead to the payment of a grant equivalent to 90% of T&W's accumulated deficit.

10.0 Legal and HR Implications

- 10.1 The Children and Families Act 2014 places duties on local authorities and partner agencies in relation to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), including duties relating to Education, Health and Care Plans, joint commissioning and the publication of a Local Offer. The proposals outlined within this report are consistent with the Council's statutory responsibilities and reflect the national direction of travel in relation to SEND reform.

- 10.2 Whilst the report does not seek a decision of the Committee, implementation of elements of the Local SEND Reform Plan will need to continue to have regard to the Council's statutory obligations, including duties under the Children and Families Act 2014, the Equality Act 2010 and associated SEND legislation and guidance. Where future proposals require formal decisions, procurement activity, commissioning arrangements or changes to service delivery, appropriate legal advice should be obtained to ensure compliance with the Council's legal obligations and governance requirements.

11.0 Ward Implications

- 11.1 All wards are affected. The locality-based model and expansion of local inclusive and specialist provision are intended to improve access to support closer to home and reduce the need for children and young people to travel outside the borough for education.

12.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

- 12.1 Earlier identification, integrated support and stronger mainstream inclusion are intended to improve education, health and preparation-for-adulthood outcomes. Developing local provision should also reduce travel and disruption for families. A more sustainable system would support better use of public resources while maintaining a focus on outcomes for children and young people. The SEND reform plan, Best Start in Life and Family First Partnership are closely connected transformation programme being developed collaboratively.

13.0 Child Friendly

- 13.1 The implementation of Telford & Wrekin's Local SEND Reform Plan will support the Council's strategic ambition to create a Child Friendly borough in which every child and young person is able to thrive and achieve their potential.
- 13.2 The reforms will strengthen prevention and early intervention, ensuring needs are identified earlier and that children, families and settings can access the right support, at the right time and in the right place. Through more inclusive mainstream provision, timely access to specialist expertise, clear pathways and sufficient local specialist provision, the Council and its partners will seek to reduce escalation and ensure children and young people are supported within their local communities wherever possible. This approach places children and young people's voice, lived experience and outcomes at the centre of service design and delivery.

14.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 14.1 The plan is specifically focused on children and young people with SEND and therefore has significant equality implications, ensuring that children and young people are getting the right support, at the right time in the right place.

15.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

- 15.1 The development of more local provision has the potential to reduce travel associated with out-of-area placements. Any capital works will need to consider relevant corporate environmental and sustainability requirements. Detailed implications should be confirmed through the capital programme and individual projects.

16.0 Appendices

None.

17.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Legal	22/10/2026	22/10/2026	DTW
Finance	22/10/2026	22/10/2026	TD

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