



Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 1st May 2025

Special Educational Needs Provision in Telford and Wrekin

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Shirley Reynolds, Children, Young People, Education, Employment & Skills
Lead Director:	Simon Wellman - Director: Education and Skills
Service Area:	SEND and Personalisation
Report Author:	Laura Goodfellow – Interim Service Delivery Manager SEND and Personalisation
Officer Contact Details:	Tel: 01952 385583 Email: Laura.goodfellow@telford.gov.uk
Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Not Applicable
Forward Plan:	Not Applicable
Report considered by:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – 1 May 2025

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- 1.1 Note the continued commitment to improving SEND provision and outcomes for all children and young people which is underpinned through the SEND and Alternative Provision strategy.
- 1.2 Endorse the strategies and services used across the borough to improve SEND outcomes for all children and young people in their journey through education, preparing them for adulthood.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 This report provides scrutiny with an overview of the current landscape of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) within Telford and Wrekin Council, highlighting key statistics, recent developments, and strategic



initiatives aimed at supporting children and young people with SEND in our community.

- 2.2 This overview is provided to ensure scrutiny members are informed about the SEND and AP Strategy. The report aligns with national developments under the SEND Code of Practice and responds to recent inspection feedback from Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 We believe that every child and young person deserves, and should receive, an excellent education and the chance to fulfil their potential. This is a whole system approach, involving education, health and care partners. This includes having a clear focus on providing the right support, in the right place, at the right time. We hold the ambition that every child and young person will have a sense of belonging in their education setting.

- 3.2 Telford and Wrekin's estimated population is 191,915. Of these 31.5% of the population are children and young people, equating to 58,357 individuals.

- 3.3 The size of the school population in Telford and Wrekin is 31,527 pupils. There are 5,360 children identified with SEND, representing 17.9% of the child population. This compares to the national average of 16.3%. Of these, 2,458 children and young people aged 0-25 have Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), accounting for 4.1% of the population, which compares to the national average of 4.8%. The number of EHCPs has increased over the past few years, demonstrated by a 11.6% increase between 2023 and 2024.

- 3.4 In Telford we have 56 primary and 13 secondary schools. There are 4 special schools and 2 Pupil Referral Units. We also run 4 SEND hubs within mainstream schools that are led by special schools. We have over 200 early years providers (inclusive of child minders). For our post 16 cohort there is 1 college and 6 training providers.

- 3.5 In Telford and Wrekin we have met continued demand for places by growing our local specialist sufficiency. Over the last 5 years the places available has doubled with 823 children now attending specialist provision. In order to achieve this the council has remodelled and expanded current special schools and introduced specialist hubs into mainstream schools.

- 3.6 We have strong governance in place through the SEND and AP Partnership Board. The partnership is a governance board that oversees the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Strategy and its delivery within the local area. The purpose of the board is to ensure appropriate, timely assessment, planning, and support for all young people with SEND and AP in Telford and Wrekin. It provides strategic direction and oversight, monitoring and holding to account all partners in the local area,



including education, health, and social care sectors. By working collaboratively, the board aims to deliver the right support at the right time, fostering a continuum of high-quality, local provision. This collaborative approach involves building trust, listening to lived experiences, and welcoming innovative ideas from families, and partners to shape and improve long-term outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

- 3.7 The Telford and Wrekin the SEND [Local Offer](#) is a comprehensive online resource designed to provide information and support for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), as well as their families and carers. It offers details about the services available in the local area, including education, health, and social care provisions. The Local Offer aims to make it easier for families to find the right support by providing clear, accessible information about how to access services, eligibility criteria, and the process for obtaining help. It is intended for children and young people with SEND, their parents and carers, as well as professionals working in education, health, and social care sectors.

4.0 Key Strengths

- 4.1 We are committed to ensuring that all statutory duties under the SEND Code of Practice are delivered in a timely manner. During 24/25 the SEND team delivers over 90% of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) within the 20-week timeframe. This significantly outperforms the national average, where only 50.7% of EHCPs are completed within the same period. This achievement reflects the council's commitment to timely and effective support for children and young people with SEND.
- 4.2 The joint area SEND inspection in 2023 highlighted several positive aspects. A strong partnership has been established with PODS Parent Carer Forum and other stakeholders, fostering a collaborative environment for improving services. The area's innovation in inclusion and early support models has gained recognition from the DfE, showcasing our commitment to inclusive practice.
- 4.3 In line with providing the right support at the right time, we have implemented a successful approach to encouraging inclusive practice in mainstream schools by providing an Inclusive School Forum (ISF). This is a school-led initiative that provides support and challenges to mainstream schools regarding their practices and provisions for children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).
- 4.4 The ISF aims to foster an inclusive educational framework within Telford and Wrekin, enabling children with increasingly complex needs to thrive and succeed in mainstream educational settings. It facilitates networking and offers peer-to-peer support, concentrating on the exchange of best practices to enhance the inclusive education system. The forum aids schools in implementing a graduated approach through cycles of assess, plan, do, and



review. Additionally, the ISF is allocated high-need top-up funding (Additional Inclusion Funding or AIF) from the Local Authority, which can be accessed upon meeting specific criteria.

4.5 Since the ISF began seven years ago 1080 children have benefited from this additional inclusive support and resource, with 114 children currently accessing the additional resource from the forum.

4.6 Co-production is at the heart of our SEND and AP strategy and underpins all that we do. We have developed a co-production framework that has been named The Telford and Wrekin SEND – Working Together Charter (See Appendix). This is a commitment to embedding co-production principles at the heart of services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Developed collaboratively by parents, carers, children, young people, Telford & Wrekin Council, Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin NHS, and other partners; the charter aims to build trust, use lived experiences and embrace innovative ideas from families and partners to shape and improve long-term outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The charter emphasises open communication, ensuring that everyone's voice is heard, and fostering a sense of value and inclusion for all stakeholders. By working together as equal partners from the start, the charter seeks to create a supportive and inclusive environment that celebrates the strengths of families, professionals, and systems.

4.7 We collaborate closely with the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin School Alliance (STSA) to support schools through a variety of initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality of education and inclusivity for all students. One of the key aspects of this collaboration is the implementation of the specialist outreach offer. This initiative involves specialist teachers from The Bridge, Haughton, and Southall Schools working directly with mainstream schools. Specialist teachers provide bespoke advice, model best practice and offer training to senior leaders, Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs), teachers, and teaching assistants within the mainstream schools. The goal is to ensure that children with complex special educational needs receive appropriate support and can thrive in mainstream educational settings.

5.0 Key Developments

5.1 Nationally there is an increasing number of children being identified with complex special educational needs. Approximately 1.4m in 2020 with numbers continuing to rise, reaching around 1.7m at the end of 2024. Many of these children receive their education in mainstream schools. According to the 2015 SEND code of practice, all children are entitled to receive a mainstream education regardless of their identified need. To ensure appropriate provision, we provide a suite of support services to schools and settings.



- 5.2 SEND services provide a range of training, consultation sessions with parents, and strategic support for schools to implement effective change. We have a team of Learning Support and Behaviour Support Advisory Teachers, who visit schools to work with children directly and offer training and advice to school staff regarding cognition and learning and social communication needs.
- 5.3 We offer an Educational Psychologist Service to schools. This provides bespoke consultation, observation and training. Educational Psychologists also perform the statutory psychological assessments necessary once an Education, Health and Care assessment has been agreed for a child or young person.
- 5.4 For our youngest children with complex needs, the Portage Service in Telford and Wrekin is a home-visiting educational service designed for pre-school children with SEND and their families. This service aims to support parents in teaching their children new skills at home, guided by a Portage home visitor. The Portage scheme focuses on enhancing the quality of life and experiences through specific teaching techniques and a curriculum of skills. The Portage model is dynamic, adapting to the individual needs of each child and family, and includes elements such as family focus, structured teaching, and child-led play. Telford and Wrekin is proud to still have a Portage Service available to our families.
- 5.5 The Sensory Inclusion Service (SIS) is a collaborative initiative between Telford & Wrekin Council, Shropshire Council, and Health services. SIS supports children and young people with hearing and/or visual impairments, ensuring they have a good quality of life, achieve their academic potential, and are included in their local community. The service provides support from birth to 25 years old, covering homes, early years settings, schools, colleges, and the broader community. SIS work closely with families and other professionals to offer tailored support. The service also partners with local voluntary organisations like the Shropshire Deaf Children's Society (SDCS), Sight Loss Shropshire and oneVISion to provide additional resources and advocacy.
- 5.6 We have developed a Specialist Outreach Service for all schools. This is to ensure appropriate provision for children with the most complex special educational needs. The outreach offer allows specialist teachers from The Bridge, Haughton School and Southall Schools to spend time with children, senior leaders, SENCOs, teachers and teaching assistants within the mainstream schools, providing bespoke advice, modelling and training. The feedback from schools has been extremely positive.
- 5.7 Telford and Wrekin have established Specialist Hubs. These are adapted classrooms situated within mainstream schools, designed to provide inclusive education for children with complex Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). These hubs offer a nurturing environment where children with communication and interaction needs, including Autism and associated social, cognition and learning difficulties, can learn alongside their peers in a mainstream setting. The hubs are managed in partnership with special schools,



ensuring that children receive tailored support while feeling part of the school community. This initiative bridges the gap between special and mainstream education, fostering an inclusive approach that helps children with SEND thrive.

- 5.8 We currently have four Specialist Hubs in Telford we 29 children accessing the provision. These children are taught within reduced class sizes with a specialist teacher, with opportunity to spend time within the mainstream school environment with additional support. In September 2025 an additional hub will open for up to eight children.
- 5.9 We have also invested in resource bases within mainstream schools. These are smaller class bases that are run by the school, with support received from outreach services. 28 children are currently attending resource bases, with an additional base opening in a junior school in September 2025.
- 5.10 Telford and Wrekin is the lead local authority in the West Midlands for the Department for Education's SEND & Alternative Provision Change Programme. This programme involves working alongside Shropshire, Herefordshire, and Worcestershire to test areas of support, share best practices and learning from other regional areas nationally. This collaborative approach helps to ensure that the provision for children with SEND is continuously improved and that schools are equipped with the necessary resources and knowledge to support these students effectively. The feedback from schools regarding these initiatives has been extremely positive, highlighting the effectiveness of the collaborative efforts.
- 5.11 There are currently many successful initiatives having a positive impact on our children in the borough. These include the Early Language Support for Every Child (ELSEC) programme. A pioneering initiative aimed at supporting children with Speech, Language, and Communication Needs (SLCN) within Early Years and Primary School settings. ELSEC seeks to model a flexible and responsive workforce, ensuring that children with SLCN are identified early and provided with both universal and targeted interventions. The programme involves collaboration between education and health sectors, and it is part of the SEND and AP Change Programme. Since its launch in September 2024, ELSEC has engaged with 8 primary schools and 6 private nursery settings in Telford and Wrekin, focusing on improving the speech and language support for children in Year 1, Reception, and pre-school years. The impact has been noticeable, and more schools will begin the programme this term.
- 5.12 This year a new initiative has also been rolled out into our schools. The Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) project in Telford and Wrekin is a nationally funded initiative aimed at enhancing the support for neurodiverse children within mainstream primary schools. Building on the success of the national Autism in Schools Project, PINS focuses on a whole-school approach, providing high-quality training for staff, and fostering strong partnerships between schools and parent carers. The project brings together health and education specialists to shape SEND provision, offer early



interventions, and upskill school staff. Currently, 20 mainstream primary schools in Telford and Wrekin are participating in the PINS project, which aims to create a sustainable impact through closer collaboration between education and health sectors. Again, due to the success of these another 10 schools have signed up to begin this project this term.

6.0 Council Priorities

6.1 The commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND supports the following priorities:

- Every child, young person, and adult lives well in their community.
- Every child and young person receive an excellent education and the support they need to fulfil their potential.

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 The high needs block is used to fund educational provision for children and young people with additional needs, up to the age of 25. Calculated by a combination of historic allocations and a national funding formula. The 2025/26 allocation for T&W is £39.5m. Similar to the national picture there continues to be significant pressure regarding the high needs resource block due to the escalating identification of SEND or high needs provision combined with significant cost increases.

8.0 Legal and HR Implications

8.1 The Children and Families Act 2014 states that children and young people and their families should be involved in all decisions that are about them at all levels and that coproduction should be at the heart of developing services across education, health and care. Both the SEND and AP Strategy and the Working Together Charter evidence that the Council is able to demonstrate that it is meeting its statutory obligations. The views and experiences of young people and the families of those with SEND were considered when the strategy was developed.

8.2 The Council must have due regard to the Equality Act 2010 and the public sector equality duty. The SEND and AP Strategy, along with the Working Together Charter and the initiatives that are implemented in the Borough are designed to support those with protected characteristics, as defined within the legislation and should promote equality for those with protected characteristics.

9.0 Ward Implications

9.1 This report covers the whole Borough with all wards being affected.



10.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

10.1 Ensuring that children and young people with SEND receive the right support at the right time has a profound impact on their overall well-being and development. Health-wise, effective SEND provision helps address the complex medical needs of children, ensuring they receive timely and appropriate care. Socially, inclusive practices foster a sense of belonging and community, enabling children with SEND to thrive alongside their peers in mainstream settings and attend schools in their local community. Economically, investing in SEND provision contributes to the long-term prosperity of the area by preparing young people for adulthood and reducing the need for costly alternative education.

11.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

11.1 Ensuring that children and young people with SEND receive the right support at the right time promotes inclusivity and equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their needs. This approach fosters a sense of belonging and community, enabling children with SEND to thrive alongside their peers in mainstream settings. By addressing the diverse needs of students, the council's SEND provision helps to create a more equitable educational environment, where every child has the chance to fulfil their potential.

12.0 Appendix

- A SEND and AP Strategy
- B Working Together Charter

13.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Director	28/04/2025	28/04/2025	SW
Legal	01/05/2025	01/05/2025	DTW