

CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE



Report subject	SEND Improvement Update
Meeting date	15 September 2025
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>The Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Improvement programme of work has made significant progress over the past 6 months, including stabilising the workforce, improving plan quality, and continuing to implement the SEND Sufficiency Strategy. However, challenges remain in maintaining assessment timeliness and managing the growing demand for support at a statutory level. Key focus areas include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment process and timeliness including AI solutions • Resolving disagreements including Tribunals • Complaints /Improved communication with our families • Addressing the high use of Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) and Alternative Provision (AP) • Improving Co-Production across the system
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that:</p> <p>Members note the progress and challenges of the SEND Improvement Programme and to recommend where additional resource would be beneficial in order to deliver greater and faster impact.</p>
Reason for recommendations	To enhance the overall effectiveness of the SEND service.

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Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Information

Background

1. The SEND Improvement Plan has been delivered collaboratively by the local area SEND partnership to address stabilising the workforce, resource allocation, and enhancing co-production, with the aim of developing a sustainable, inclusive service across Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole. Key priorities include improving statutory timeliness and quality through strengthening pathways for children and young people with SEND and promoting mainstream inclusion to reduce exclusions and reliance on alternative provision. Effective early help, strategic leadership, and a partnership approach—supported by strong communication and co-production—are recognised as essential for optimising outcomes and ensuring the lived experience of children, young people, and their families informs ongoing improvement across the SEND system.
2. The government has recognised that the SEND system needs to change, and plans are to be set out in a Schools White Paper in the autumn. These will take time to be implemented and proposals concerning how councils are to be supported in the meantime will also be set out in the autumn.
3. The impact of the Children and Families Act 2014 and associated changes to the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice is still growing, due to the statutory requirement to extend EHCP support to age 25 since that time.
4. The number of children requiring an EHCP across England has increased by 140% between 2014 and 2023, with the cost of provision going up by 59%. This rise in pupils with EHCPs has been driven by three specific types of needs: autistic spectrum condition (ASC); social, emotional and mental health needs (including ADHD); and speech, language and communication needs. This aligns with findings in BCP Council.

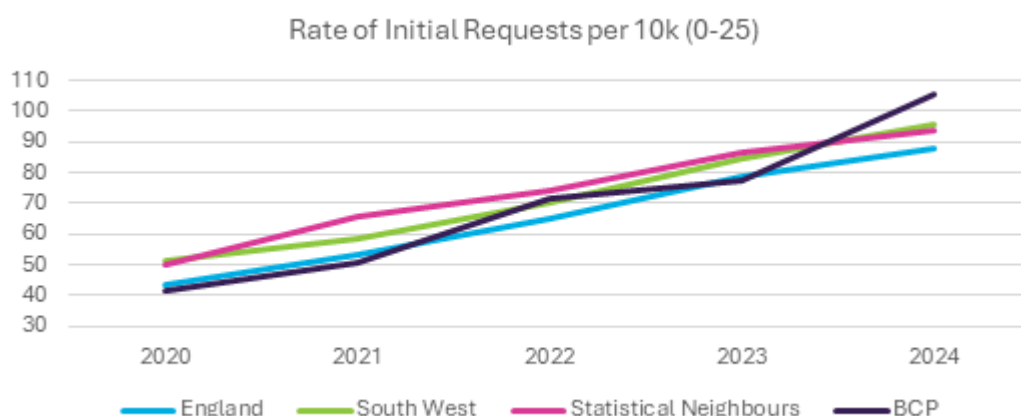
Overview and summary

Assessment process and timeliness including AI solutions:

5. The timeliness of Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments (EHCNAs) has remained a focus, with performance against the 20-week statutory timeline showing variability. Notably, compliance rates remained strong until May 2025, when they dipped

to 55.4%. June saw a further decrease to 33.8%, though this remains above the southwest average of 25.5%. For the year to the end of June 2025, overall performance stands at 68.5%, which is well above both the national average (46.4%) and the southwest average (25.5%).

6. However, rising numbers of EHCNA requests—up by more than 30% between March and June 2025—are placing considerable pressure on the service. The introduction of AI solutions is being explored to help manage these demands and improve efficiency. There has been continued growth in new and ongoing requests for EHCP assessments. The rate of initial requests increased in 2024 to 105.7 per 10,000—above the national (88.1), southwest (95.9), and Statistical Neighbour (93.4) averages—before a slight reduction to 100.5 for the 12 months up to June 2025, still outpacing comparator groups.



7. Alongside this, the number of children and young people the SEND Service supports rose by 18% between March 2024 and March 2025 and has since increased further to 28%. The financial implications are significant, with growing demand placing considerable strain on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budget.
8. **Resolving disagreements including Tribunals:** The service recognises the importance of resolving disagreements effectively and minimising the need for Tribunal hearings. Over the period from January 2023 to June 2025, the predominant reason for Tribunal appeals has consistently been relating to school placement of children and young people with EHCPs. The ways in which we attempt to resolve disagreements include offering Global Mediation and equipping staff with nationally recognised IPSEA training to promote legal accuracy and a child-centered approach.
9. **Complaints / Improved communication with our families:** Improving communication with families remains a key priority. The service has focused on ensuring that Education, Health and Care Co-ordinators (EHCCOs) and Appeals Team members are trained to provide high-quality, transparent, and consistent support to families throughout the assessment and review processes. Embedding Independent Provider of Special Education Advice (IPSEA) training into staff development supports this objective and aims to strengthen relationships with parents and carers. The approach is designed to address complaints proactively by promoting early resolution and maintaining a focus on the needs of children and young people.

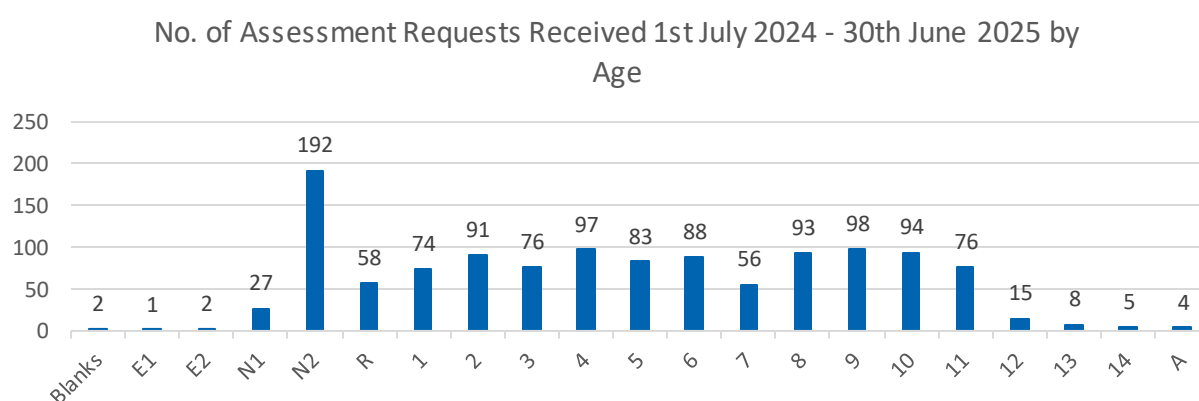
10. Addressing the high use of Alternative Provision: The high level of reliance on Alternative Provision (AP) and Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) was identified as a statistical outlier for BCP Council. This is driven largely by insufficient local specialist provision, contributing to both an increase in AP placements and higher associated costs, which are a significant factor in DSG overspend. The SEND Sufficiency Strategy, a two-year plan, is being implemented to expand specialist provision and reduce the need for alternative placements, aiming for a more sustainable and inclusive system. BCP and all comparator groups are showing an increase in pupils **educated elsewhere**. (England 7.8%, Southwest 10.1% and statistical neighbours 8.5%). At 11.8% BCP are above all other comparator groups.

Areas Of Focus

- Assessment process and timeliness including AI solutions
- Rising Demand

11. Between March 2025 and June 2025, the demand for EHCNA assessments rose by over 30%, putting pressure on the service's ability to maintain performance levels. In July 2025, 26% of assessment requests were made by parents, an increase of 3% from July 2024. The highest amount of requests from parents is within the secondary school age range.

12. The data shows continued growth in both new and ongoing requests for assessments. BCP Council is in line with the demand rates in the southwest and nationally, but there are no signs of the demand slowing down. The highest change in demand is now showing in Early Years settings. The majority of ECHNA requests in June were for children aged 3. There is also an increase in requests in Year 6 and beyond.



13. A deep dive has been undertaken to review the key drivers for this increase within the Early Years which are:

- **Securing Onward Placement**
EHCPs are increasingly being requested not to support access to current early years provision, but to secure appropriate support for school placement, particularly for children transitioning into Reception or specialist settings. There is a noticeable rise in children requiring specialist early years placements before reaching Reception age.

- **Rising Complexity of Needs**

While the overall number of children supported by Early Years Area SENCOs has reduced, the complexity of children's developmental, social, emotional, and communication needs has significantly increased, now representing most children.

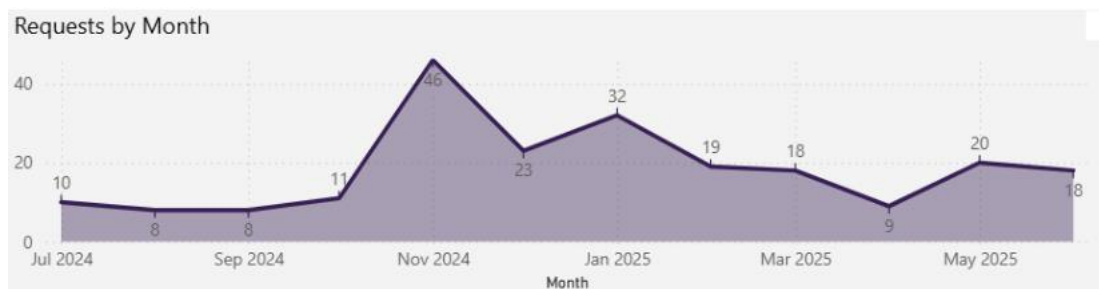
- **School-Led Pressure**

Schools are increasingly requiring EHCPs to be in place prior to a child's entry. Dingley's Promise highlights a growing trend of school deferrals, with children remaining longer in early years settings due to the absence of an EHCP.

- **Earlier Identification and Support**

Enhanced training and access to early funding streams have empowered early years providers to identify needs sooner and initiate support earlier. The Early Years Area SENCOs play a vital role in assessing children's needs and guiding providers on whether those needs can be met through SEN Support or require an EHCNA. A comprehensive training offer delivered both in-person and via recorded sessions supports settings with the graduated response and the EHCNA process. The quality and appropriateness of submitted EHCNA requests is demonstrated by the conversion rate (children who are issued EHCP after an EHCNA – 95.68% for 23-24 and 97.90% for 24-25).

14. The below graph shows EHCNA requests who are pre-statutory school age from 1st July 2024 to 30th June 2025



15. 142 children (84%) had EHCNA requests submitted during the transition to school—either in the final term of N1 year or during N2—ensuring EHCPs were in place before the statutory phase transfer deadline of 15th February.
16. Only 8 children (4.71%) had EHCNA requests submitted prior to starting early years provision. An additional 7 children had requests initiated during their E2 or N1 year while attending a setting. All 8 children in specialist provision had their EHCNA initiated in either the E2 year (5 children) or N1 year (3 children).

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile, 2024

17. The importance of early assessment has ensured that children with SEND are achieving above the national Good Level of Development (GLD) in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile.
- Children with SEND support achieved a GLD of 32.2%, above national SEN Support (25%).

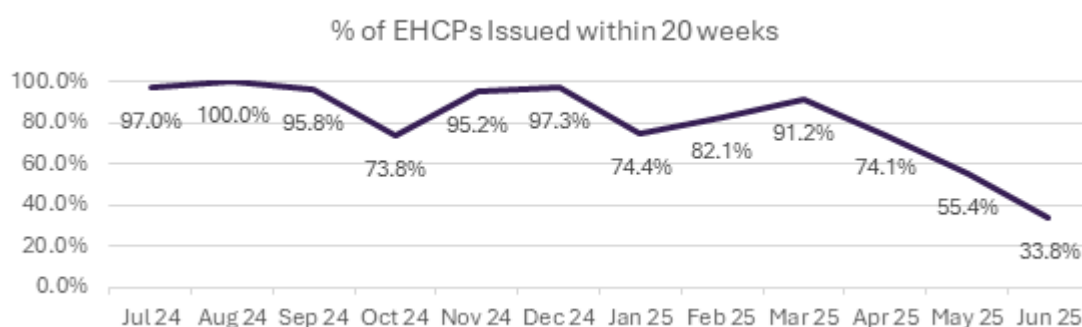
- All children with an EHCP and SEND support achieved a GLD of 32.2%, above national at 19.8%.
- Children with an EHCP achieved a GLD of 4.6%, above national of 3.9%.
- Children with no SEND GLD, 79%, above national 75.8%.
- All children had a GLD of 70.9% an increase of 0.5pp. This is above national of 67.3%.

The Resource Allocation System (RAS)

18. The RAS supports in allocating resources from the high needs block for children and young people with an EHCP. It allocates an indicative resource to support children and young people to achieve their outcomes and enable education establishments to deliver the provision set out in the plan.
19. Quarter 3 of this calendar year will realise the pilot of a new banding system RAS which was trialled in the summer term. The RAS was co-produced with schools and if successful will be rolled out for the Autumn Term 2025, enabling fairness, transparency, and sustainability of funding arrangements for schools across the area. The review aims to remodel the existing banding system and ensure that funding levels reflect the needs of children and young people with special educational needs.

20-week timeliness

1. 74 EHCNAs exceeded 20 weeks in June 2025, compared to 6 in June 2024.
2. It should be noted that the service received 136 requests for EHCNA in June 2025 and if this trend continues it will impact both the Educational Psychology and SEND Teams' ability to meet the statutory 20-week timescales.
3. Furthermore, the summer term volume now results in a real likelihood that timeliness and performance will deteriorate.



4. Careful consideration must be given to the impact of accruing backlogs in both the EPS and SEND Assessment and Review Teams. We will therefore welcome and respond to the legislative changes from central government in the Autumn.

Educational Psychology Team

5. Demand for Educational Psychology (EP) statutory advice in BCP has risen annually by 20% since 2023, matching national trends. This has resulted in growing backlogs

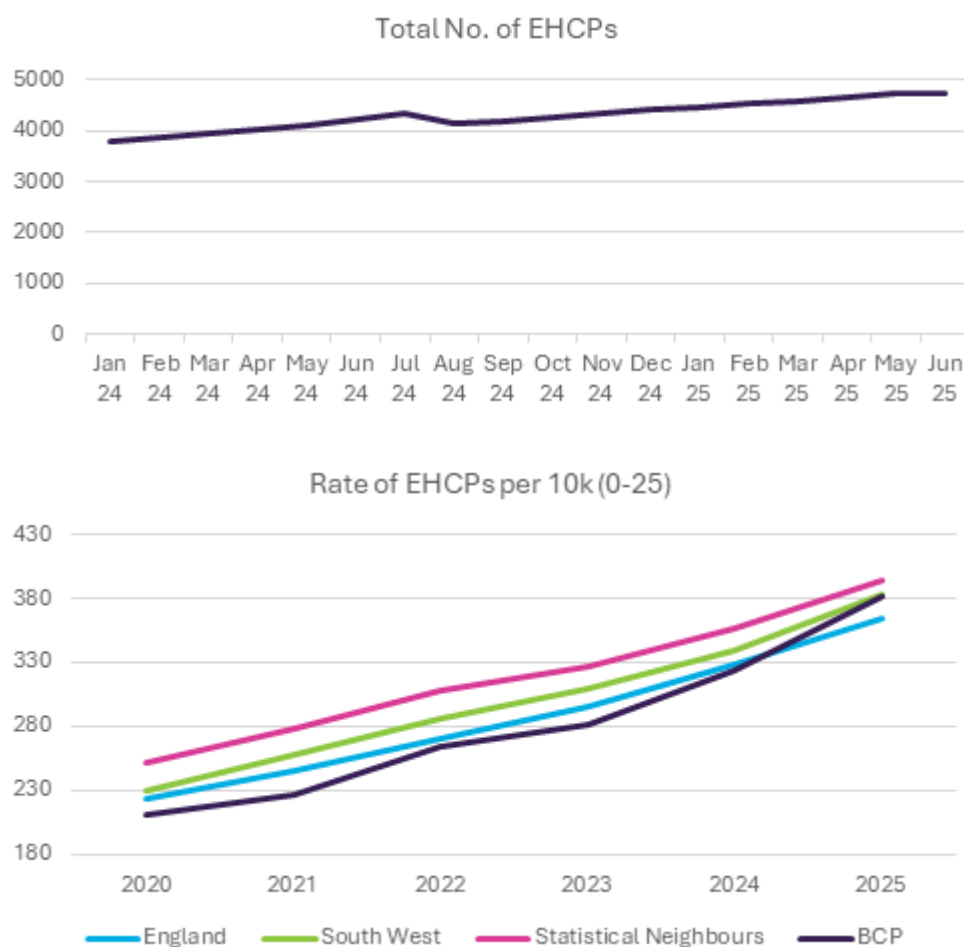
and reduced timeliness of assessments. As of 21/07/25 there are 196 assessments within a backlog. However, despite this increased demand the service has maintained an overall level of 20-week timeliness at least as good as national average.

Actions to address

6. The SEND Service will continue to work within budget to service the rising demand for EP assessments, with the aim of remaining at least in line with national average timeliness.

Number of EHCPs:

7. The number of EHCPs continues to rise, with 4746 in June 2025 compared to 4223 in June 2024, representing a 12.4% increase across the calendar year.



Actions for Further Development

8. To support the increase in demand and manage it within the current staffing budget, several actions are being implemented:
 - **Introduction of AI Solutions:** An EHCP AI writer case is being discussed at the Corporate Management Board (CMB) for permission to implement as a case project. This AI solution aims to reduce the administrative burden on EHCCOs, allowing them to maximise their time available for statutory assessment work and improve

communication with parents and carers at key stages of the process through an enhanced parent and partnership portal.

- **Improved Communication Pathways:** Enhancements in communication pathways, such as signposting and FAQ factsheets sent as auto-replies and included on the Local Offer, are being implemented to streamline the process.
 - **Increased Staffing and Training:** Following a recruitment drive, the SEND Assessment and Review Team will have increased permanency of EHCCOs to over 93%, significantly reducing the reliance on agency workers. A new workforce development program providing robust induction and training for staff has been implemented to support improved recruitment and retention.
 - **Partnership Working:** Collaboration with Social Care and Health is in place to increase the timeliness of the provision of their advice as part of the statutory assessment process.
9. The assessment process and timelines for EHCNAs and EHCPs are under significant strain due to rising demand. The integration of AI solutions, improved communication pathways, increased staffing and training, partnership working, and additional funding are critical actions needed to address these concerns and ensure timely and effective assessments.
10. By implementing these measures, services aim to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the assessment process, ultimately improving outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

The quality of EHCP's

11. There has been a gradual improvement in the number of EHCPs graded as good s seen through Practice Learning Review (PLR) audits. In quarter 4 2024 6% of audits completed were graded as good (2 out of 32). In quarter 2 2025 24% were graded as good (8 out of 33).
12. These improvements have been achieved through:
- The implementation of a revised EHCP template in the autumn term of 2024, facilitating the writing of a higher quality Plan.
 - Targeted briefing sessions for EHCCOs, based on EHCP Practice Learning Review data, to address identified weaknesses in EHCPs.
 - Focussed briefing sessions with partnership colleagues to improve the quality (including timeliness) of their advice, used in the writing of EHCP's.
 - Fortnightly drop in's for EHCCOs to get support from the Quality Assurance & Development Manager.

Resolving disagreements including Tribunals

13. With a focus on collaboration, early intervention, and continual service improvement, notable progress has been achieved in reducing the prevalence of Tribunals post-mediation and enhancing relationships with families. This section details the principal areas of progress, identifies ongoing challenges, and actions to further optimise

outcomes for all stakeholders, particularly our children, young people and their parents and carers.

14. The resolution of disagreements within the service area of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is a critical function of the Local Authority, directly impacting the well-being of children, young people, and their families. BCP Council is committed to delivering a service founded on integrity, transparency, and mutual respect. Drawing upon data from 2023 to mid-2025 and insights from stakeholders, this section of the report explains the council's approach to SEND dispute resolution, with emphasis on both qualitative and quantitative outcomes.

Areas of Progress

15. The total numbers and year on year comparison of trends are as indicated below.

Data Subject	Jan 2023 – Dec 2023	Jan 2024 - Dec 2024	January 2025 - June 2025
Total Number of Tribunal Appeals received	78	140	60
Tribunals as % of total live numbers of families they are supporting in 2023, 2024 and first 6 months of 2025	2.09% of total active EHCP's	3.17% of total active EHCP's	1.27% of total active EHCP's

16. In 2024 the total number of tribunal appeals registered increased by 62 to 140 as compared to a total of 78 in 2023, **an increase of 46.81%**.

17. **In the first 6 months of 2025** the number of tribunal appeals registered was 60. This indicates a slowing of our rate of Tribunals as a percentage of total live EHCP's, currently running at 1.27%.

18. Tribunal Appeals and Active EHCPs

	Jan 2023 - Dec 2023	Jan 2024 - Dec 2024	Jan 2025 to June 2025
No. of EHCP's	3736	4417	4712
No. of Appeals	78	140	60

Enhanced Partnerships and Communication

19. Services have worked hard to foster positive and collaborative relationships with SENDIASS (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Service, which provides free, confidential, and impartial information advice, and support to parents, carers and young people), and other key stakeholders, promoting a culture of proactive engagement and early problem resolution. The emphasis on direct, transparent

communication with parents and carers has contributed markedly to the reduction in formal disputes and a growth in the cultivation of mutual trust.

- Ongoing consultation with SENDIASS and families to ensure service delivery remains responsive and adaptive.
- Continuous professional development for staff, with a focus on mediation and constructive dialogue.

Adoption of Best Practice in Early Dispute Resolution

20. The SEND Tribunal Team is committed to resolving issues efficiently and equitably through Early Dispute Resolution (EDR), mediation, and where possible, Consent Orders. These measures are fully aligned with sector best practice, assisting families in achieving timely and satisfactory outcomes while minimising and managing the escalation of conflict, to keep it to a minimum. As a result there is:

- Significant reduction in the necessity for formal Tribunal hearings
- Accelerated timelines of achieving resolution, ensuring that children's needs are addressed without undue delay and their parents and carers are relieved of the anxiety that often accompanies any level of dispute with the Local Authority.

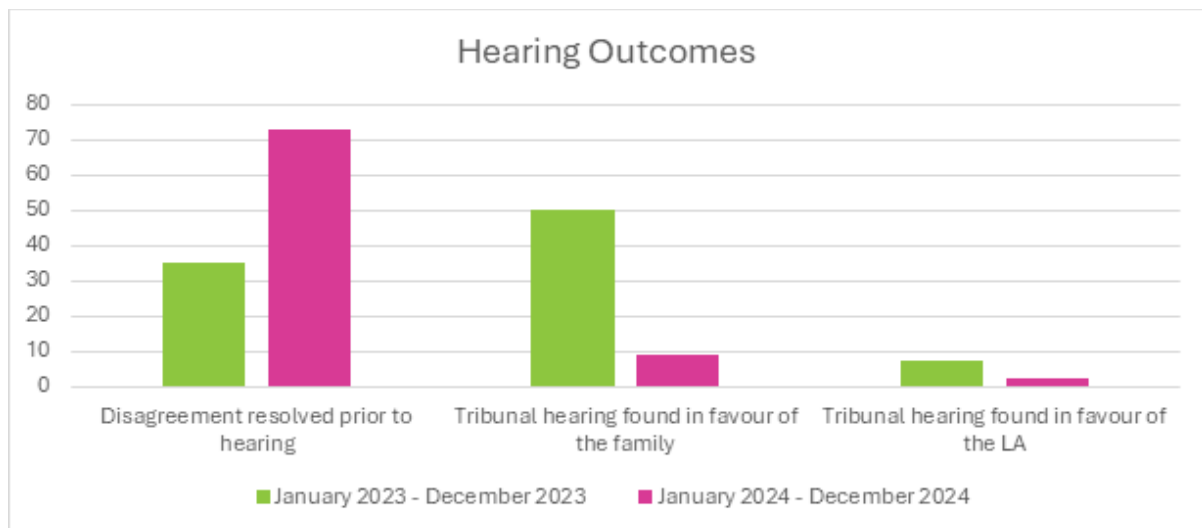
Service Development Informed by Lived Experience (see appendix 3)

21. The SEND Service values the insights and feedback provided by families, who have fed back through parent representative groups and via their conversations with SENDIASS that speedy resolution helps them as parents and carers to support their young people more effectively and, their children and young people receive suitable provision in a timely way, which have informed recent enhancements in service delivery. As an increasing proportion of disagreements are now resolved prior to final Tribunal hearings, this is evidence of the efficacy of early engagement strategies.

BCP Council's Commitment to dispute resolution through resource expansion

22. The Tribunal Team's expansion following the November 2024 SEND re-structure illustrates the Council's dedication to timely dispute resolution. These additional resources have facilitated increased capacity for personalised engagement with families.

- Recruitment of additional Tribunal Officers to support their management of the families they are supporting including mediations
- Investment in training to optimise service efficiency.



23. Resolving disagreements before and therefore avoiding a Tribunal hearing; the data shows that 38 more appeals were resolved before the Final Hearing in 2024 compared to 2023
24. In 2023, over 70% of families chose not to go through the mediation route (the LA cannot compel them to do so).
25. In 2024, despite the number of Tribunals almost doubling, a success rate of resolving around half of all disagreements before the Hearing was maintained. Similarly, during the first 6 months of 2025 mediations have been utilised in approximately half of all Tribunals and, an average of resolving roughly half of disagreements before the Hearing has been maintained.
26. In addition to the correlation between an increase in the number of disagreements resolved before Hearing and the number of mediations, the drive to improve parents' experience of disagreement resolution more widely is demonstrated and the direct work between BCP officers and parents and carers provides added value.
27. **Forty one** fewer decisions were found in favour of the parents at the Tribunal Hearing when comparing the full years of 2023 and 2024, showing that the LA is moving closer to a position of only going to Tribunal where we are confident that maintaining our original decision is the right one for the child /young person, with robust evidence to support our position.

How BCP compare regionally, nationally and with statistical neighbours

28. BCP has consistently maintained a Tribunal rate following mediation of approximately 0.3%, meaning a very low number of Tribunals are registered, following mediation, with BCP outperforming regional, national, and statistical benchmarks. This achievement is particularly significant in light of the continued growth in the total number of live EHCPs.

Tribunal After Mediation	2023	2024
England	0.7%	1.0%

Southwest	0.8%	0.8%
Statistical Neighbours	0.7%	1.1%
BCP	0.3%	0.3%

Current Challenges

29. Managing Increased Demand

The upward trajectory in EHCPs and Tribunal appeals continues to place demands on both staff and organisational resources. Proactive workforce planning is essential to maintaining high performance standards.

30. Emotional Impact on Families and staff

Despite the increased results achieved regarding early resolution, the dispute process remains emotionally taxing for all parties involved. The SEND Service recognise the necessity of providing support and clear guidance throughout the process to families as well as our colleagues.

31. Resource Allocation

Tribunals can take up to one year to progress from registration through to Hearing and place a significant financial and administrative burden on local authorities, potentially diverting resources away from other frontline services.

32. The SEND Resolutions team is experiencing a reduced but nevertheless high demand with over-reliance on third party solicitors to manage volume. The SEND Service are planning how to address this using more in-house expertise.

33. Data Completeness and Benchmarking

Incomplete regional and national data presents a challenge to robust benchmarking and continuous improvement. Enhanced data collection and transparency remain priorities.

34. Maintenance of Constructive Relationships

Sustaining positive relationships between parents, schools, and the local authority is imperative, particularly when the outcome of a Tribunal may differ from the hopes, wishes and expectations of our parents and settings. Consistent, respectful engagement is critical in such circumstances, and these values are held at the forefront of services' navigation of these situations.

Actions to address

35. Early Intervention and Professional Development

- Offer regular training in inclusive communication, conflict de-escalation, and empathetic practice for all staff

36. Support for families

- Develop comprehensive, accessible informational materials for families regarding the dispute process and available supports
- Strengthen peer-support networks for families navigating the SEND system

37. Continuous Stakeholder Feedback

- Facilitate engagement sessions to inform ongoing service refinement
- Encourage and incorporate feedback from families in service delivery and policy reviews

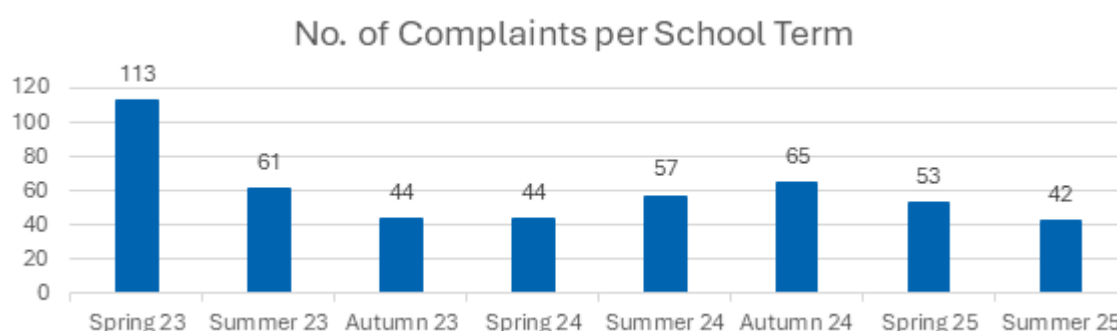
In summary

38. This approach to SEND dispute resolution exemplifies our commitment to transparency, partnership, and service excellence. Sustained low Tribunal rates, positive stakeholder relationships, and a robust early intervention strategy highlight the Council's strengths. By addressing the identified challenges and implementing the recommended actions, we can further enhance outcomes for children, families, and staff, ensuring the continued delivery of high-quality, responsive SEND services.

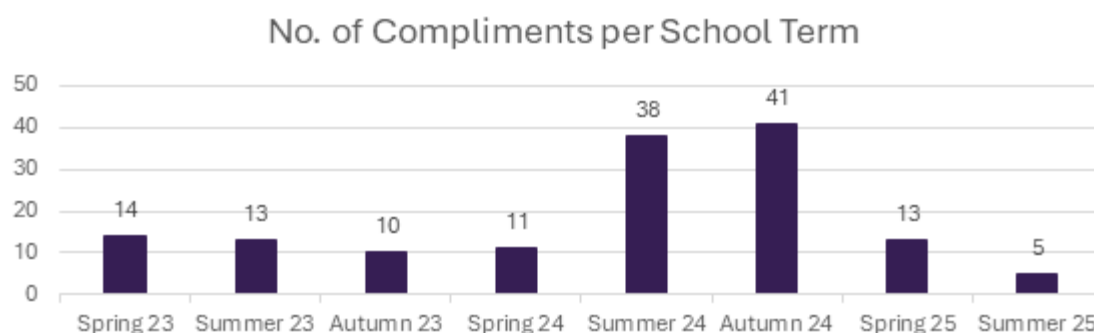
Complaints /Improved communication with our families

39. Complaints

The volume of complaints received in the term continues to fluctuate; however, the trend shows an improvement, based on the rate of complaints per EHCP cohort. This sits at 1.1% at the end of Spring 2025, compared to 3.3% at the end of Spring 2023. Please note that the Summer 2025 term is not yet showing a complete picture.



40. The number of compliments has also varied over time. The development work related to the local offer and co-production, as described below, aims to increase the volume of compliments and reduce complaints by improving communication and collaboration.



Local Offer

41. The quality of BCP Council's Local Offer website was highlighted in the previous inspection and feedback as an area needing improvement.

42. Development of the Local Offer website has now happened at pace in line with the co-produced Local Offer Improvement Plan and monitored by the SEND Improvement Board (SIB). This area of work is now being delivered at the desired pace.
43. For example, we have moved from a position of an under-developed Local Offer to a fully compliant one including these key areas:
- Accessibility
 - Awareness
 - Engagement
 - Content
 - Feedback
44. From August 2025 we also have a BCP Accessibility Strategy in place on the Local Offer.

Co-Production

45. The Co-Production Oversight Group has been reinstated to oversee plans to improve co-production across the system. There is a Co-Production Action Plan in place, led by a dedicated post of Co-Production Lead, within the Quality Assurance and Development arm of the SEND Service.
46. A series of Locality events are being held throughout this year as 'drop-in sessions for parents and carers to attend for advice, guidance and support from LA SEND Officers.
47. Earlier this year a Local Offer Live event organised by our Parent Carer Forums (PCT and PCF) and supported by all areas of the local area SEND partnership was held. The event provided advice, information and guidance to parents and carers of children and young people with SEND, which was well received. Further such events are being planned going forward.
48. Colleagues leading these two important areas of focus work collaboratively with each other and our parent carer reps and our Youth Champion.
49. The desire and drive to improve co-production with BCP children and young people remain a key focus. A recent example is the video made by children and young people on their views about 'belonging'.

Action to address

50. Significant work is being undertaken to ensure communication with children, young people and families is improved and from September there will be an increase in permanent staff, which yields higher rates of family satisfaction and a reduction in agency staff. This will ensure that communication will move to a more consistent and timelier model. There is also a Communication Plan, the development of a Portal for parents and a triage system to ensure more timely responses.

Addressing the high use of Alternative Provision

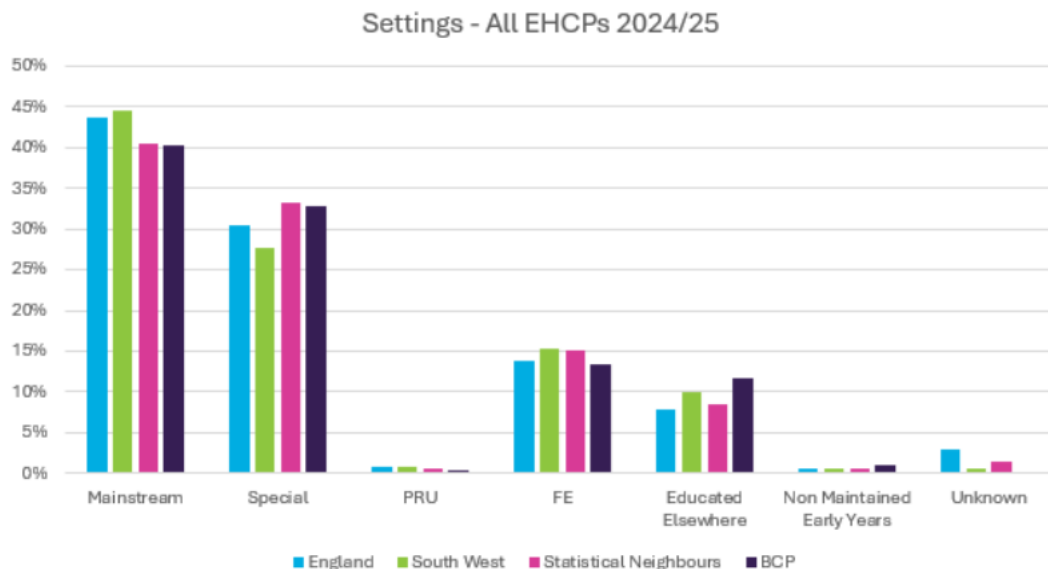
Education Provision

51. In BCP Council in 2024, pupils attending a mainstream setting has increased from 2023 from 37.1% to 40.3% whilst the comparator groups remain stable: Eng 43.3% to 43.6%, SW 43.8% to 44.6% and SN 41.2% to 40.5%. However, BCP are still below all comparator groups. The actions below will support the continued improvement seen in BCP.

Actions to address

- 52. To ensure continued progress, strengthening partnerships with our schools remains a key priority. During the Spring and Summer terms of 2025, Education Services hosted Belonging Conferences with Early Years Providers and Schools to introduce the Belonging Strategy. Both events featured distinguished BCP and national speakers who led engaging discussions on inclusive practices. The Local Authority is committed to providing appropriate support that empowers providers to address the diverse needs of children and young people. This includes adopting a graduated approach and upholding the core principles of inclusion and belonging.
- 53. BCP Council has secured funding from the Department for Education (DfE) SEND Intervention Support Fund to drive improvement and transformation within Education Services leading to development in three key areas:
- 54. The development of the BCP graduated approach and Ordinarily Available Provision toolkit will provide timely, high-quality support and services to children and young people through early intervention.
- 55. A sustainable three tier Alternative Provision model based on best practice with improved monitoring and oversight.
- 56. Inclusive whole school practice with the support of an established educational charity (The Difference).
- 57. BCP and all comparator groups are showing an increase in pupils educated elsewhere. Eng 7.8%, SW 10.1% and SN 8.5%. At 11.8% BCP are above all other comparator groups.
- 58. Pupils educated elsewhere include categories: Electively Home Educated (EHE), Other arrangements made by parents, other arrangements made by LA, Online Providers, Welsh Schools and Establishments, Other School types, other types of placements,

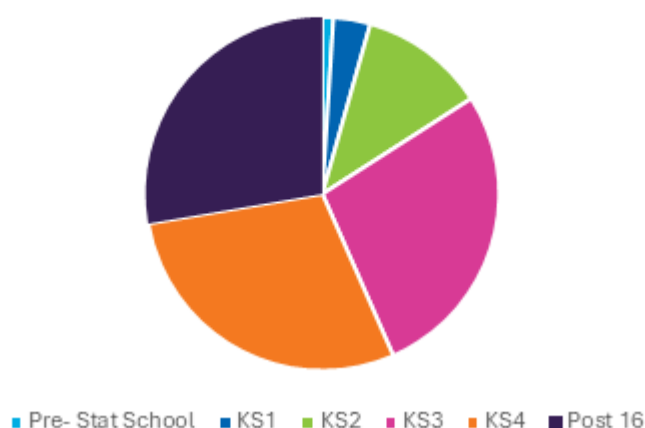
various Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).



Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) (see Appendix 4 for Lived Experience sample)

59. Education Otherwise Than At School means all forms of education that take place outside the formal school environment and meet the specific needs of children who cannot attend a mainstream or special school.
60. Section 19 of the Education Act 1996 places a legal duty on Local Authorities (LAs) to make arrangements for the provision of suitable education for children of compulsory school age who, for any reason (illness, exclusion or otherwise), cannot receive such education unless those arrangements are made. This duty is often referred to as the "s.19 duty".
61. S19 EOTAS is usually a short-term response to particular circumstances, and any arrangements made by the LA will normally be temporary. Pupil Referral Units (PRUs,) hospital schools, AP and home school tutors are all examples. This duty applies whether or not a child is on roll at a school and irrespective of the type of school they attend. It is for the LA to decide what education provision is suitable and includes all children with or without SEN.
62. Section 61 of the Children and Families Act 2014, when discussing Education Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS), allows local authorities to arrange for special educational provision for children and young people outside of traditional school or post-16 settings. This provision can only be made if the authority is satisfied that it would be inappropriate to provide education in a school or post-16 institution.
63. S 61 is often not a short term or temporary solution to a specific circumstance. It follows a decision by the LA often after an EHC Needs Assessment or annual review, based on the current and foreseeable needs of the child or young person, that special educational provision in a school would not be appropriate.
64. EOTAS 61 and 19 has risen every month for the past 7 months. This is linked to the lack of specialist placements and the wider challenges to inclusivity of the education system.

No. of C&YP in EOTAS Placements at 30th June 2025
by Key Stage



Key Stage	No. of children, young people (as of 30th June 2025)
KS1	17
KS2	58
KS3	138
KS4	145
KS5	139

65. The majority of EOTAS placements are in Key Stage 4 as there are a high number of children awaiting specialist placement.

Actions to address

66. As part of the Alternative Provision Improvement Plan, work is underway to co-produce with local providers a flexible approach to reduce the demand on EOTAS Section 19 provision. A working group has been established for this purpose focused on developing a three-tier model of alternative provision which aligns with the national plan set out in the Government's [Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\) and Alternative Provision \(AP\) Plan](#).

67. At the same time, improvements to administrative and support functions will strengthen our monitoring and decision-making processes. Improvements include a new AP Panel enabling robust decision-making set against a framework and the implementation of a new system 'Welfare Call' enabling strong oversight of attendance of our children and young people accessing an AP who are not on a school roll and prompt action as necessary.

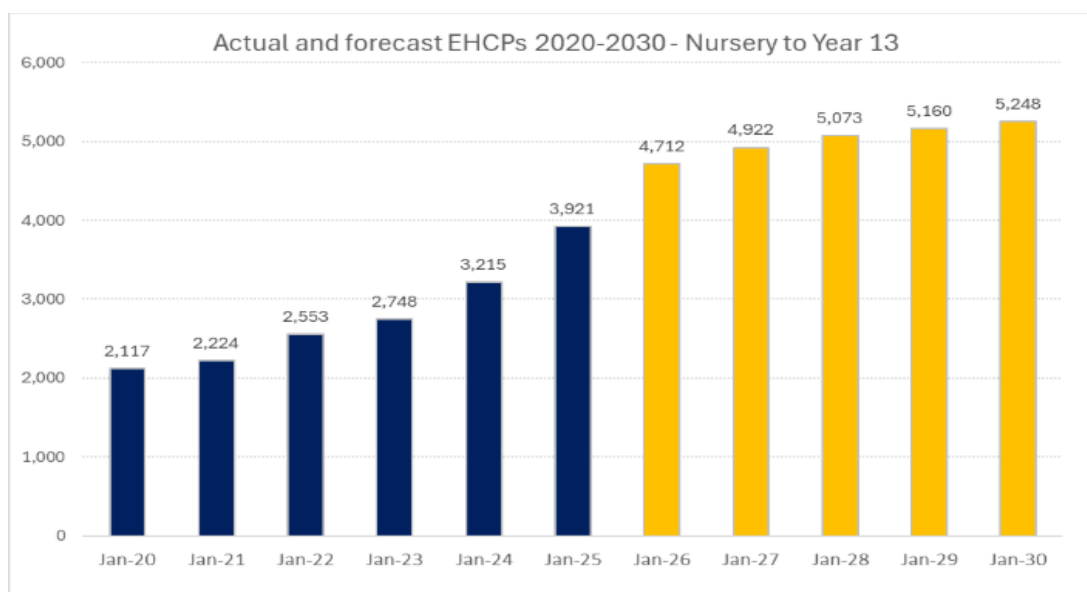
68. Supporting development in this area is a focus on commissioning activities and in April 2025, a Provider Forum was launched to develop strong working relationships across the sector and share best practice.

69. Over time, work with young people and carers will increase through the Preparation for Adulthood Engagement Officer to build our understanding of what young people wish for and how we can work locally to provide this, both in our mainstream Post 16 and Further Education (FE) settings and in opportunities for meaningful work and training.

70. The first iteration of an AP Panel has been implemented to ensure there is a child-centred, efficient and effective process for decision making for local authority Section 19 commissioned AP placements.

SEND Sufficiency

71. It is widely acknowledged that BCP Council has experienced a substantial increase in the number of children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). Since 2010, the total number of EHCPs—and previously, Statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN)—has risen annually. This growth has accelerated notably since 2015, reaching its highest rate of increase (18%) in the 2024–25 period. Actual and forecast EHCPs (from Nursery to Year 13) for BCP are presented below. Annual growth in the SEND population is a common trend across many local authorities as is rising complexity of needs across the age range.



72. There are a range of systemic issues and challenges which contribute to an overall picture where growth and demand for specialist provision exceeds the supply of places. Based on our existing pattern of provision (the proportion of children with an EHCP by provision type), growth easily supports the development of approximately 800 new and expanded places including resourced provision and specialist places. Note: Caution should be exercised when quoting these numbers since the assumptions and changes in the system can impact the trajectory.

73. The SEND Sufficiency Strategy sets out the detail. The strategy represents a two 2-year plan to support the development of specialist provision and is a key element of SEND Improvement work. The strategy sets out the Council's approach to addressing the growing demand for services and provision. It is designed to address the rising demand for specialist education placements, particularly for children with Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) and Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. It aims to:

- Increase local capacity and reduce reliance on costly independent placements.
- Deliver turnkey solutions through four workstreams focused on bespoke provisions, progression pathways, prior approved provision, and new provision

- Improve systems and data reliability to support sufficiency planning

74. The strategy will help to deliver a sustainable and stable system by working collaboratively with local partners and stakeholders to ensure that the needs of children and young people are met without escalating needs and unit costs of provision. In the last year, 140 additional places have been created. Round 2 of commissioning has launched with strong engagement from schools. 18 projects across mainstream and special schools are underway, expected to deliver circa 150 places, with an additional 25–50 places from special school expansions based on progress to date.

75. Other projects in development are as follows:

- Parkfield School site is being explored for SEMH provision, with proposals for 180 places going to the DfE in September 2025.
- Post 16 satellite provision at the former Ted Webster Community Centre for 60 young people at Linwood School, providing curriculum pathways which support the preparation to adulthood and routes into employment. This will be ready for the 2025/26 academic year.
- We are in the initial stages of developing our Post 14 Curriculum offer working with local FE Colleges.
- The LA is still waiting for an update from the DfE on plans for the development of its new special free school previously announced. The LA successfully bid for one of two new special schools. The school will provide 180 specialist places for children and young people with autism aged 3-18. The school plays an important part in increasing the sufficiency of local specialist places and details are eagerly awaited.

76. A lack of sufficient local provision results in increased use of Alternative Provision and the use of Education Other Than at School (EOTAS). These areas are statistical outliers for BCP Council as detailed earlier in this report. The use of Alternative Provision is one of the key drivers of DSG overspend.

Glossary:

- EOTAS: Education Other Than at School.
- The LA has the power to provide alternative education for young people under 18 who would not otherwise receive it (**section 19** (4) Education Act 1996). In BCP Council we record this as EOTAS Section 19.
- If an Early Years setting, School or College is not suitable for a child or young person, the LA has the power to arrange for any special education provision required to be delivered elsewhere (**section 61** of the Children and Families Act 2014). In BCP Council we record this as EOTAS Section 61.

Options Appraisal

77. None

Summary of financial implications

78. None

Summary of legal implications

79. None

Summary of human resources implications

80. None

Summary of sustainability impact

81. None

Summary of public health implications

82. None

Summary of equality implications

83. None

Summary of risk assessment

84. None

Background papers

85. None

Appendices

Appendix 1 – ECHNA Timescales

Appendix 2 – SEND Improvement Board Scorecard

Appendix 3 – Lived Experience of families- SEND Assessment and Review

Appendix 4 – Lived Experience of families -EOTAS