

CABINET

Report subject	BCP SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy 2026 - 2029
Meeting date	30 September 2026
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council, working with NHS Dorset and wider local area partners, has developed the BCP SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Strategy 2026-2029. The strategy sets out the partnership's shared vision, ambitions and priorities for improving outcomes for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and those who require Alternative Provision. The strategy has been developed through extensive engagement and co-production with children and young people, families, schools, settings and partner organisations. The shared vision is: "We belong. We are listened to. We can thrive." The strategy responds to increasing levels of need and demand across the SEND system whilst recognising the need to strengthen inclusion, improve consistency of support and ensure that children and young people receive help at the earliest possible stage. The strategy establishes a shared partnership framework built around six priorities: • Inclusive Practice and Belonging in Every Setting; • Earlier Help Through a Locality Model; • The Right Support in the Right Place; • A Strong and Purposeful Alternative Provision Offer; • Preparation for Adulthood; and • Trust, Communication and Co-production. The SEND and AP Strategy should be viewed as the partnership's overarching strategic framework. It describes what the local area is seeking to achieve and the outcomes it wishes to deliver for children, young people and families. Delivery of the strategy will be supported through the BCP Local SEND Reform Plan, which is presented elsewhere on this agenda and provides greater detail regarding how these ambitions will be implemented.

	Implementation of the strategy will be supported through a comprehensive governance framework bringing together education, health, care, commissioning and wider partnership arrangements. Strategic oversight will be provided through the SEND and AP System Leadership Group and associated boards responsible for key workstreams including inclusion, alternative provision, preparation for adulthood, co-production, sufficiency planning and SEND reform delivery. The governance framework also provides routes for accountability through Council and partnership structures including Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Schools Forum, the Children and Young People Partnership Board and the Health and Wellbeing Board. The Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the proposed strategy at their meeting on 14 September 2026. The report asks Cabinet to consider the proposed strategy, note the governance arrangements that will oversee implementation and recommend adoption of the BCP SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy 2026-2029.
Recommendations	It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet: (a) Notes the draft SEND and AP Strategy 2026 - 2029 (b) Endorses the vision, principles and six strategic priorities set out within the Strategy. (c) Notes the governance arrangements that will oversee implementation and monitor progress across the partnership. (d) adopts the BCP SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy 2026-2029 as the partnership's strategic framework for improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND and those requiring Alternative Provision.
Reason for recommendations	The SEND and AP Strategy provides the overarching strategic framework for improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND and those requiring Alternative Provision across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole between 2026 and 2029. It establishes a shared vision, agreed priorities and delivery principles across the local partnership and provides the strategic context within which the SEND Reform Plan and associated improvement programmes will be delivered. The strategy supports continued improvement in inclusion, partnership working, early intervention, preparation for adulthood and family experience, whilst responding to increasing levels of demand across the SEND and AP system.

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Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Recommendation to Cabinet

Background

1. Children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) should have the opportunity to belong, participate and thrive within their local communities. The DRAFT BCP SEND and AP Strategy 2026 - 2029 sets out the local partnership's shared vision and priorities for improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND and those requiring Alternative Provision (AP) over the period 2026-2029. The strategy has been developed jointly by BCP Council, NHS Dorset, education providers, families, children and young people and wider partners through a process of co-production.
2. The strategy is built around the shared local vision:
"We belong. We are listened to. We can thrive."
3. The strategy recognises that whilst progress has been made through strengthened partnership working and a shared commitment to inclusion, too many children and families continue to experience inconsistent support, delays in receiving help and varying experiences across services and settings. The local area has also experienced continued growth in demand for SEND services and Education, Health and Care Plans.
4. The strategy therefore sets out a collective partnership response focused on earlier intervention, inclusion, improved consistency and stronger collaboration across education, health and care services.

Purpose Of This Report

5. This report presents the BCP SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy 2026-2029 for consideration.
6. The strategy provides the overarching vision and framework for SEND and Alternative Provision across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole and complements the Local SEND Reform Plan submitted to the Department for Education in June 2026. Whilst the Reform Plan sets out the detailed delivery programme and improvement activity, the SEND and AP Strategy establishes the

longer-term partnership ambitions, priorities and outcomes that will guide implementation and decision making.

Strategic Priorities

7. The strategy identifies six partnership priorities for the period 2026-2029. These priorities were shaped directly through engagement with children and young people, parents and carers, schools, settings and partner agencies.
 - i. **Inclusive Practice and Belonging in Every Setting**

Embedding a strong culture of inclusion across all schools and settings through the Graduated Approach to Inclusion, an enhanced universal offer and greater consistency of practice. The ambition is that children and young people feel safe, welcomed and supported to succeed in their local community wherever possible.
 - ii. **Earlier Help Through a Locality Model**

Implementing a locality-based approach that brings education, health and care partners together to provide coordinated support at the earliest opportunity, helping to prevent needs escalating and reducing reliance on specialist intervention.
 - iii. **The Right Support in the Right Place**

Strengthening local capacity through enhanced mainstream inclusion, targeted provision and specialist support, ensuring children and young people can access support as close to home as possible.
 - iv. **A Strong and Purposeful Alternative Provision Offer**

Developing a coherent, high-quality Alternative Provision system which focuses on early intervention, preventing lost learning, promoting reintegration and ensuring provision is outcomes-focused.
 - v. **Preparation for Adulthood**

Embedding a cradle-to-career approach which raises aspirations, supports independence and improves progression into education, employment, training and community participation.
 - vi. **Trust, Communication and Co-production**

Strengthening relationships with children, young people and families through meaningful co-production, better communication and greater transparency in decision making and service development.

Proposed Governance and Accountability

8. A key feature of the strategy is the establishment of a clear governance framework to oversee delivery and ensure accountability across the partnership. The governance arrangements align strategic leadership, transformation activity and operational delivery, recognising that successful implementation depends on collective ownership across education, health, social care and partner organisations.
9. The central governance body is the SEND and AP System Leadership Group, supported by a range of themed boards and partnerships responsible for delivery

of specific priorities, including Inclusion Support, Alternative Provision, Preparation for Adulthood, Sufficiency Planning, Co-production and Local Offer development.

10. Strategic oversight is also provided through wider council and partnership governance arrangements including Cabinet, Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Schools Forum, the Children and Young People Partnership Board, Health and Wellbeing Board and other transformation and partnership structures.
11. The governance framework is designed to ensure delivery is monitored through performance information, lived experience feedback, quality assurance activity and scrutiny arrangements, enabling the partnership to respond to emerging risks and maintain focus on improving outcomes for children and young people.

Summary of financial implications

12. The SEND and AP Strategy does not itself approve new financial commitments. Rather, it provides the strategic framework within which future commissioning, investment and service planning decisions will be taken. Delivery of individual programmes arising from the strategy will be subject to existing governance, financial approvals and decision-making processes as required.
13. The financial implications associated with specific delivery programmes are set out separately through supporting business cases, capital proposals and the SEND Reform Plan report being considered elsewhere on this agenda.

Summary of legal implications

14. BCP Council and partner organisations have statutory responsibilities in relation to children and young people with SEND arising principally from the Children and Families Act 2014, the Education Act 1996, the SEND Code of Practice and associated legislation.
15. The SEND and AP Strategy supports the local area partnership in delivering these duties through a coordinated approach to improving inclusion, planning provision, strengthening partnership working and improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
16. Whilst the strategy itself does not create new statutory duties, it provides a strategic framework for how existing responsibilities will be delivered collaboratively across the partnership.

Summary of human resources implications

17. Implementation of the strategy will require continued partnership working and workforce development across education, health and care services.
18. The strategy promotes strengthened practice, collaborative working and ongoing investment in workforce capability as part of the wider ambition to create a more inclusive system for children and young people with SEND. Any future workforce changes arising from delivery programmes will be managed through the Council's established human resources processes and governance arrangements.

Summary of sustainability impact

19. The strategy supports sustainable service delivery through its focus on earlier intervention, strengthened local provision and improved partnership working.

20. The strategic emphasis on supporting children and young people closer to home, strengthening local mainstream provision and developing coordinated locality-based models of support contributes to longer-term sustainability across the SEND and AP system.

Summary of public health implications

21. The strategy supports improved wellbeing, educational participation, inclusion and life opportunities for children and young people with SEND.
22. Through its emphasis on earlier help, joined-up services, belonging and positive outcomes, the strategy contributes to wider public health objectives and seeks to reduce the risk of poorer outcomes associated with unmet need, exclusion and disengagement from education.

Summary of equality implications

23. The strategy directly supports the Council's commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND and reducing barriers to participation, learning and inclusion.
24. The strategy has been developed through extensive engagement and co-production with children and young people, parents, carers and partners. Inclusion, belonging, equity of access and participation are central themes throughout the strategy and underpin each of the six strategic priorities.
25. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed to support consideration of the strategy.

Summary of risk assessment

- Key risks associated with implementation of the strategy include:
 - Continued growth in demand for SEND support and specialist provision.
 - Variability in inclusive practice and outcomes across settings.
 - Workforce recruitment and retention challenges.
 - Insufficient partnership capacity to deliver strategic priorities at the required pace.
 - Failure to sustain engagement and confidence amongst children, young people and families.
 - National policy or funding changes affecting implementation assumptions.
26. These risks will be managed through the governance arrangements established for delivery of the strategy, supported by performance monitoring, quality assurance, co-production and regular reporting through partnership and council governance structures.

Background papers

The following documents have been used to a material extent in drafting this report:

- BCP SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy 2026 – 2029
- Governance Map: SEND Reform and Strategy Implementation
- BCP Local SEND Reform Plan June 2026.
- BCP Local Partnership Maturity Assessment.

- Department for Education SEND Reform documentation and guidance (published works).

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – BCP SEND and AP Strategy 2026 - 2029
- Appendix 2 – Proposed Governance Map