

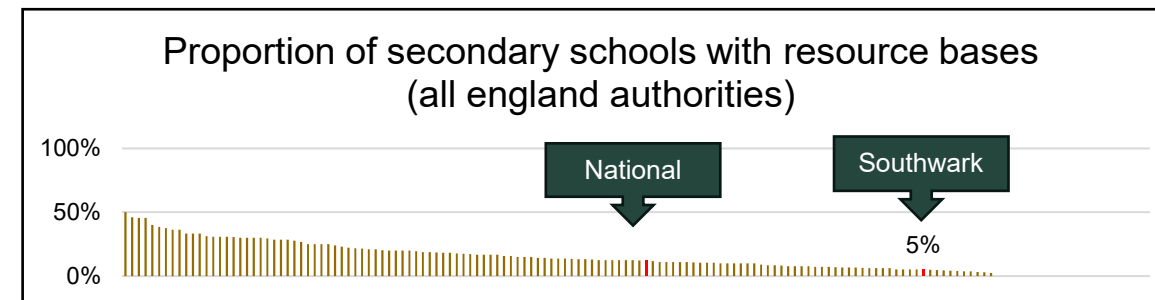
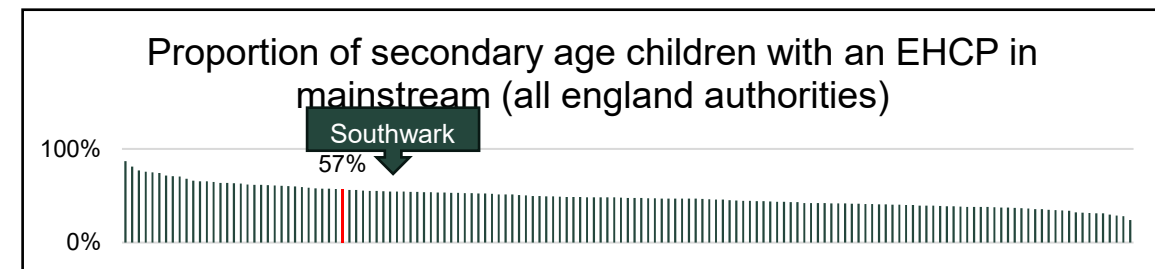
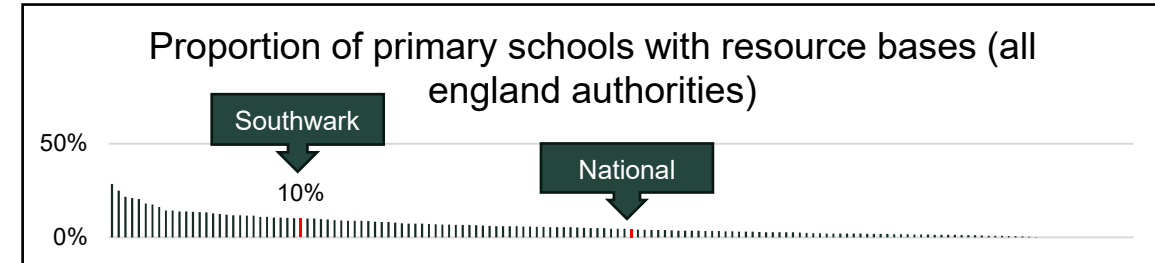
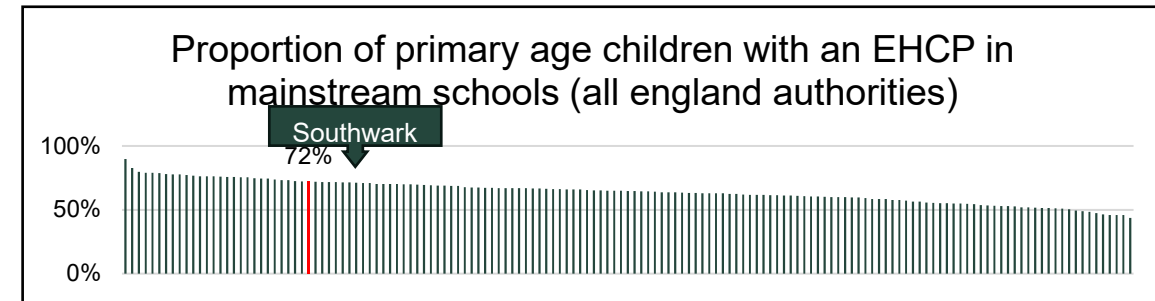
Update –the SEND reforms in Southwark

September 2026

Background

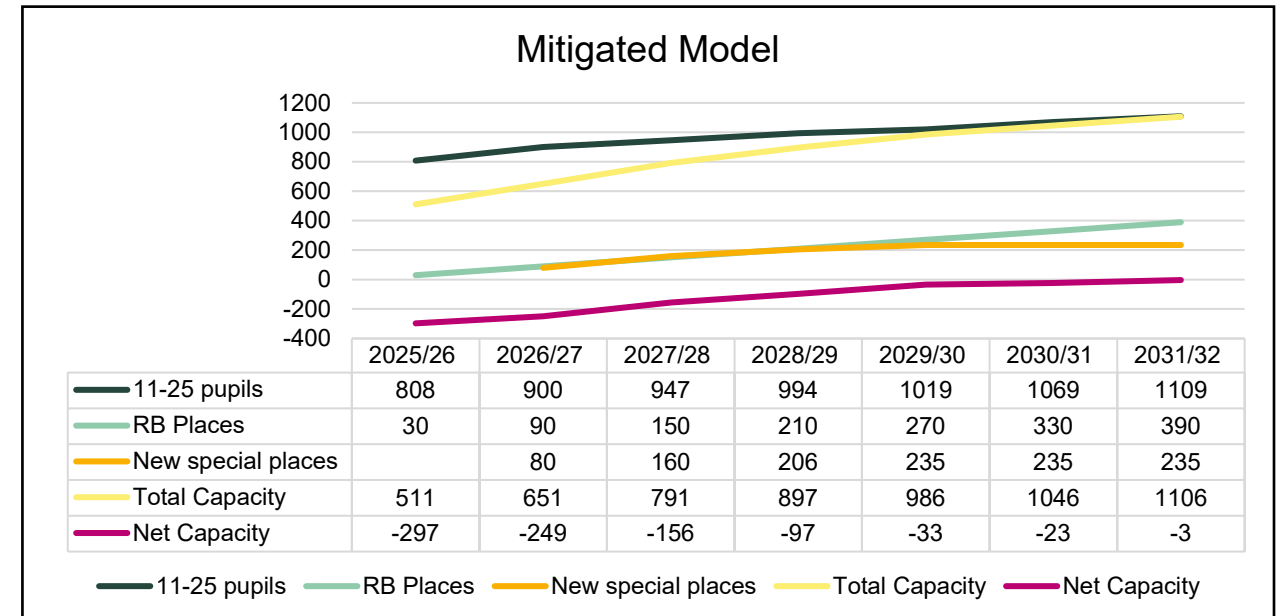
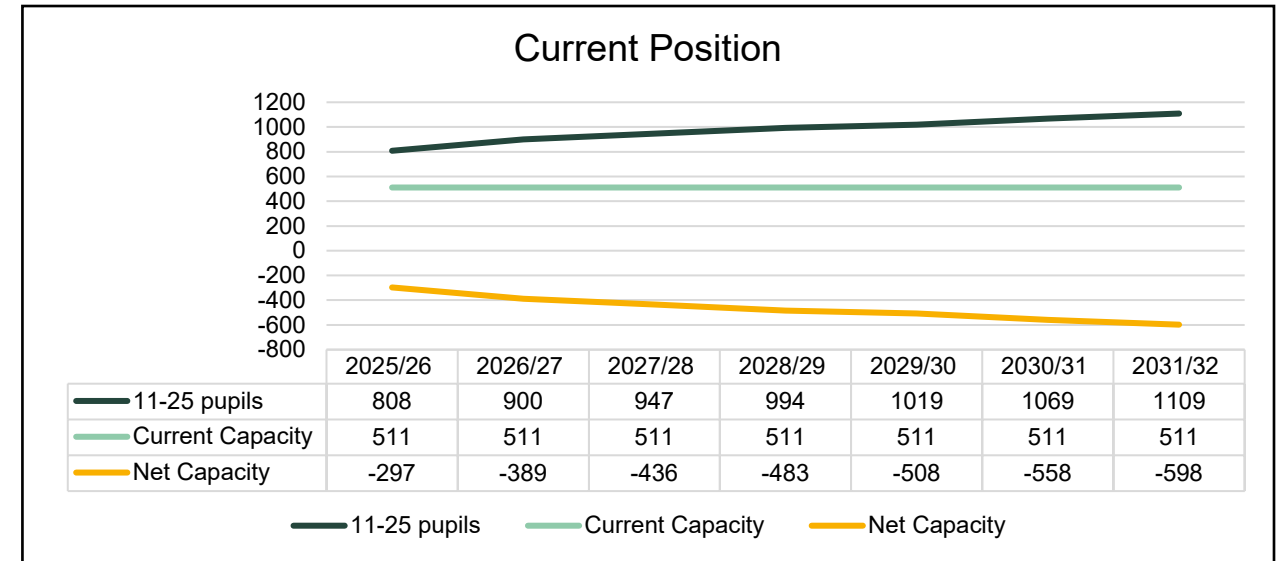
The inclusion challenge

- Ahead of national in the rate of primary age pupils with an EHCP in mainstream education
- Twice the national rate of resource bases in primary settings
- Ahead of national in the rate of secondary age pupils with and EHCP in mainstream education
- Half the national rate of resource bases in secondary settings



The inclusion challenge

- On the current assessment we are projecting a net deficit of secondary special places of 598 by 2031.
- Assuming all projected pupils would continue to need some form of specialist provision, meeting demand would require:
 - 390 new resourced provision places in secondary schools by 2031, and
 - 235 new special school places.



Core areas of need in Southwark

- Universal offer – clearly articulated and accessible universal offer
- Social communication needs/ASC
- SEMH – particularly at secondary
- Transition – particularly for children without an EHCP
- Complex needs (special school outreach)
- Secondary (children non attending, girls)
- Coaching at FE colleges

SEND Reforms and What They Mean for Us



SCHOOLS WHITE PAPER

Every child achieving and thriving



Three layers of support to deliver better outcomes for all children

Children & young people

The new offer

Child's experience

All children

Universal

- Newly trained, upskilled teachers
- First of kind National Inclusion Standards

Layers of support

Children who require some additional support from their setting, e.g. personalised materials, outlined in an Individual Support Plan

Targeted

- High quality support, on demand, in mainstream:
- Individual Support Plans
 - Support for transitions

Children who require additional support from their setting, with input from education and health care professionals, e.g. a speech and language therapist.

Targeted Plus

- Improved access to external expertise:
- Inclusion Bases
 - Experts at Hand

Children with the most complex needs, which cannot be met in the mainstream classroom

Specialist

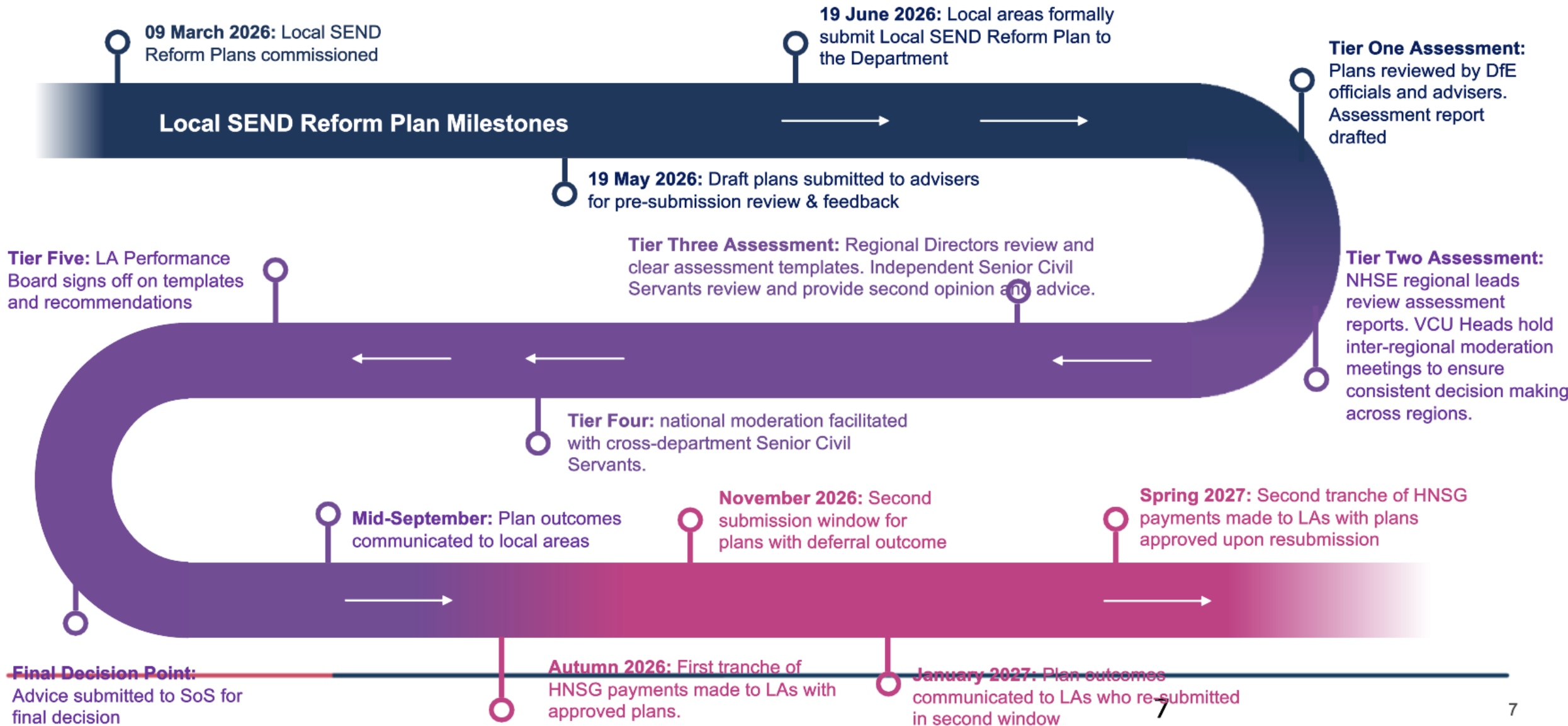
- Specialist provision packages
- EHCPs (in mainstream & specialist schools)
- Specialist bases
- Special school places

Repair and reform to this new system will be gradual with support in place before changes are made



Phase one: 2026 to 2028 Investment and building new system	Phase two: 2028 to 2029 Improved support	Phase three: 2029 onwards Future system
• Workforce training programmes for all staff. • Schools, Colleges and early years settings first receive £530m per year from Inclusive Mainstream Fund. • Experts at Hand comes on stream for all settings. • Specialist Provision Packages published • National Inclusion Standards published	• Mainstream legislation enacted • First assessments of children take place under reformed system.	• Independent special school price restrictions introduced. • EHCP, National Inclusion Standards and Individual Support Plan legislation enacted. • First children using Specialist Provision Packages. • 60,000 new places for children with SEND created.

A reminder of the key milestones for Local SEND Reform Plans



EAH model overview

The Southwark Experts at Hand model builds a multi-disciplinary team of education, health and care specialists, working across all areas of the borough and across 0-25 education settings, with the primary goal of promoting inclusion in mainstream settings for children and young people with SEND. The model will work collaborative with existing business as usual teams, services and managers to coordinate a whole system support offer to early years, school and post-16 settings.

The Experts at Hand team will work alongside practitioners in all settings to build resilience across the education system and develop 'individuals of excellence' in all our settings to support both self-improvement within individual settings, and the peer-to-peer capacity across our whole family of education.

Our vision: Over the next three years we will deliver reform through four connected shifts: **from late to earlier intervention; from distant and specialist to local and inclusive; from fragmented to shared delivery; and from reactive to evidence-led improvement.** This means aligning SEND reform with Family Hubs, Best Start in Life and neighbourhood health; expanding resourced provision across early years, primary and secondary; strengthening mainstream environments and inclusive practice; embedding outreach and multidisciplinary support; and improving governance, co-production, commissioning and use of shared performance data.



Co-production activity for EAH development

- Our Expert at Hands model has developed through a **series of workshops and co-production sessions** with our local area partnership professionals, 0-25 education leaders and our Parent Carer Forum.
- Over the summer term, we held **five roundtable sessions** with a range of stakeholders, presented at **key forums** (e.g. Headteacher's Briefing) and established an **Expert at Hands Design Group** meeting on a three-weekly basis to review the feedback from stakeholders and further iterate our Year 1 implementation plan.
- Co-production sessions described a clear need for both support at a **strategic level** to develop stronger inclusive practice across settings, but also **practical hands-on expertise** to work alongside education practitioners to upskill and develop inclusive ways of working directly.



Key challenges shared by stakeholders in roundtables:

For Education Settings:

- Advice alone is insufficient without operational support
- Hands-on, in-class modelling and coaching rather than one-off training
- Multiple services duplicating training without coordination
- Difficulty navigating complex referral systems and unclear pathways
- Variable access depending on knowledge and advocacy capacity
- Need for support across all ages, including FE and transition points.

For Parent Carer Forum:

- Inconsistent engagement and limited systematic involvement in design and decision-making
- A system that is difficult to navigate and often dependent on diagnosis for access
- Disconnect between what is reported strategically and actual lived experience

For Education, Health & Care Professionals:

- A fragmented system with poor coordination across agencies
- Over-reliance on diagnosis and assessment pathways
- Current services are often reactive and crisis-led
- Shortages in specialist roles (EPs, SALT, OT)
- Training is inconsistent and not always impactful

Stakeholder feedback on core areas of delivery model:

Workforce model

- Should be focused on capacity-building in schools with coaching, modelling and hands-on support
- Significant shortages in specialist roles (EP, SALT, OT)
- Training is inconsistent and not embedded in practice
- Risk that schools receive advice but lack capacity to implement it

Access routes and pathways

- Simple, transparent, equitable access routes
- Timely and responsive support
- Risk of over-centralised “front door” creating bottlenecks
- Regular multi-agency needs analysis and planning meetings at school and cluster/locality level
- Transparent decision-making processes

Governance and accountability

- Equity of access and outcomes
- Consistency across areas/clusters
- Clear accountability for decisions and impact

Progress to date

EAH model design - target areas for year 1

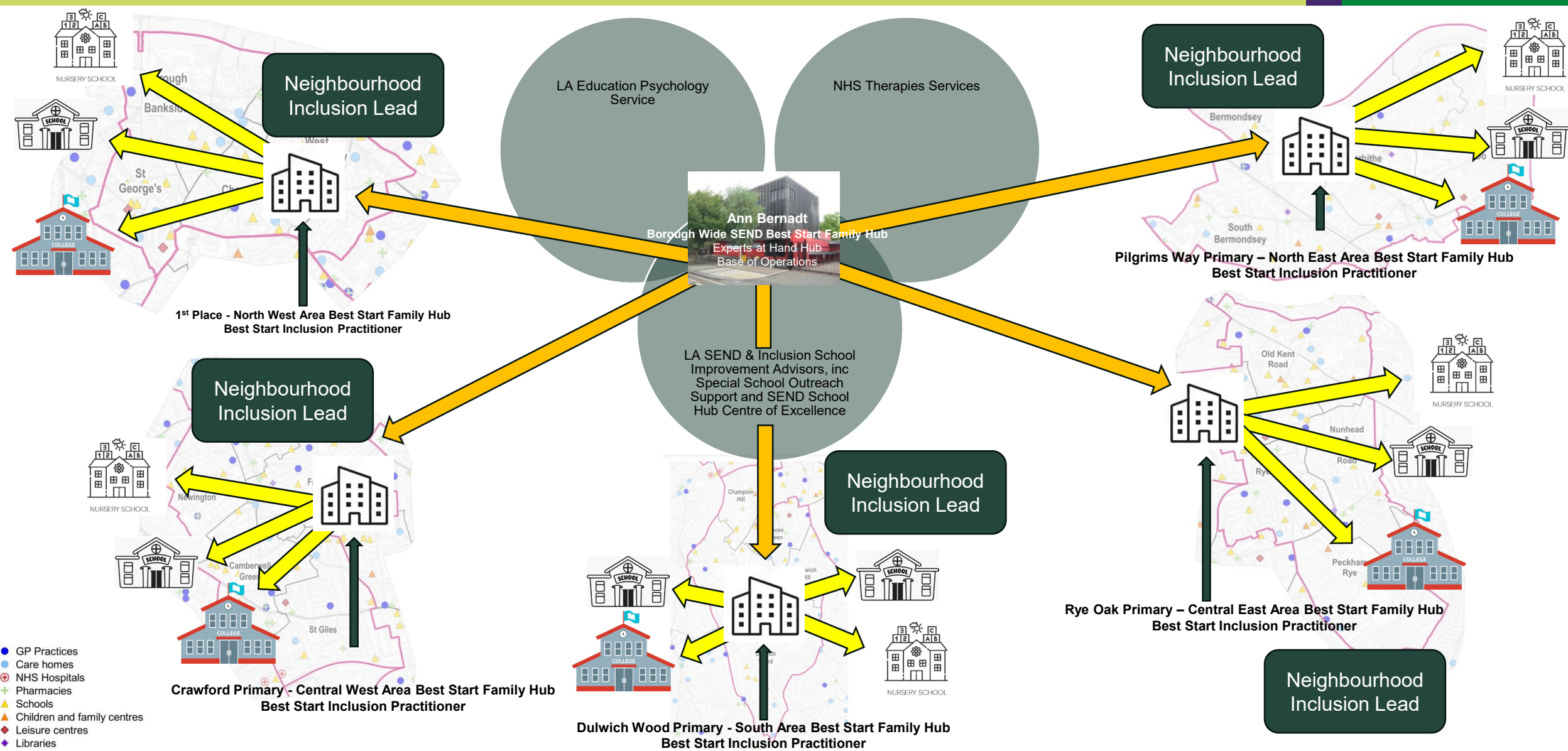
Through co-production and analysis of need in our borough, the following areas have been agreed as where support will be focused in year 1 of Expert at Hands delivery:

Transitions - early
years to primary,
secondary
transfer, school to
FE

ASD and/or social
communication

SEMH and
emotional wellbeing

EAH model design - 'Hub and Spoke' delivery



EAH model design – delivery offer

Our delivery offer in year 1 will be focused on these core areas of need, and provide support at three levels – cohort, setting, and system.

Targeted

Joint delivery of support for priority cohorts with settings

Targeted support for staff/settings with priority cohorts

Alternative Provision Specialist Taskforce
centrally delivered for Secondaries

Inclusion Base development support for Primaries

Numeracy and literacy support in Secondaries

Universal

Universal offer of SALT and OT

Improved support at system-level with refreshed universal training offer and access to advice

Neighbourhood Inclusion Lead for each locality area

EAH workforce profile

EAH posts	Organisation/Service	FTE
Expert at Inclusion Lead	LA	1
Neighbourhood Inclusion Lead*	LA	5
Speech and Language Therapy Advanced Practitioner	Cross-ICB	0.3
SALT Universal Offer	GSTT	1.1
OT Universal Offer	GSTT	0.3
SALT Targeted – inc. 1.0 FTE SALT Assistant	GSTT	1.9
OT Targeted	GSTT	0.3
Senior Educational Psychologist	LA, EPS	2
Educational Psychologist	LA, EPS	2
Assistant Educational Psychologist	LA, EPS	5
ASD Specialist Teaching Assistant (Early Years)	LA, AST	1
ASD Specialist Teacher	LA, AST	2
ASD Early Years Quality and Inclusion Lead	LA, AST	1
Specialist AP Taskforce Lead	LA	1
Advisory Outreach Teacher (SEMH)	LA	2
Behaviour Specialist	LA	2
Behaviour Specialist Teaching Assistant	LA	
Family Support Worker	LA	1

Strategic leads with oversight for delivery

*Funded through repurposing of existing posts

Universal and targeted SALT and OT

Educational Psychology Service

Autism Support Team

Alternative Provision Specialist Taskforce

What's next?

Autumn term

With further co-production roundtable sessions planned across the **autumn term**, we plan to focus on:

- Further co-production focusing on:
 - The **core areas of support** agreed for focus in Year 1
 - Core operating protocols for Expert at Hands
 - Engaging with our **Parent Carer Forum and families** across the borough
- Piloting neighbourhood model within existing capacity
- Recruitment
- Engagement with schools to develop Inclusion bases –Support bases and Specialist bases
- Feedback from DFE on Reform Plan
- <https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/work-us/events-training/events-training-calendar/rise-partnership-training-understanding-send>