



Notice of a Meeting

Education and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Friday, 30 January 2026 at 10.00 am

Room 2&3 - County Hall, New Road, Oxford OX1 1ND

These proceedings are open to the public

If you wish to view proceedings, please click on this [Live Stream Link](#).
However, that will not allow you to participate in the meeting.

Membership

Chair: Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE

Deputy Chair: Councillor Andy Graham

Councillors: Dr Izzy Creed Johnny Hope-Smith James Plumb
Rebekah Fletcher Emma Markham
Georgina Heritage Toyah Overton

Co-Optees: Fraser Long Peace Nnaji
Toby Long

Date of Next Meeting: 27 February 2026

For more information about this Committee please contact:

Committee Officer: Richard Doney

Email: scrutiny@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Martin Reeves
Chief Executive

January 2026

What does this Committee review or scrutinise?

The Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee focuses on the following key areas a) All services and preventative activities/initiatives relating to children, young people, education (including Home to School Transport and Special Educational Needs and Disability but excluding adult education), and support of families; b) The Council's statutory functions in relation to children's social care and safeguarding. This includes public health as they relate to children and young people where they are not covered by the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee; c) Matters relating to care leavers and the transition between children's and adult services d) The welfare of unaccompanied young asylum seekers e) Services for Young Carers

How can I have my say?

We welcome the views of the community on any issues in relation to the responsibilities of this Committee. Members of the public may ask to speak on any item on the agenda or may suggest matters which they would like the Committee to look at. **Requests to speak must be submitted to the Committee Officer below no later than 9 am 4 working day before the date of the meeting.**

About the County Council

The Oxfordshire County Council is made up of 63 councillors who are democratically elected every four years. The Council provides a range of services to Oxfordshire's 678,000 residents. These include:

schools	social & health care	libraries and museums
the fire service	roads	trading standards
land use	transport planning	waste management

Each year the Council manages £0.9 billion of public money in providing these services. Most decisions are taken by a Cabinet of 9 Councillors, which makes decisions about service priorities and spending. Some decisions will now be delegated to individual members of the Cabinet.

About Scrutiny

Scrutiny is about:

- Providing a challenge to the Cabinet
- Examining how well the Cabinet and the Authority are performing
- Influencing the Cabinet on decisions that affect local people
- Helping the Cabinet to develop Council policies
- Representing the community in Council decision making
- Promoting joined up working across the authority's work and with partners

Scrutiny is NOT about:

- Making day to day service decisions
- Investigating individual complaints.

What does this Committee do?

The Committee meets at least 4 times a year. It develops a work programme, which lists the issues it plans to investigate. These investigations can include whole committee investigations undertaken during the meeting, or reviews by a panel of members doing research and talking to lots of people outside of the meeting. Once an investigation is completed the Committee provides its advice to the Cabinet, the full Council or other scrutiny committees. Meetings are open to the public and all reports are available to the public unless exempt or confidential, when the items would be considered in closed session.

If you have any special requirements (such as a large print version of these papers or special access facilities) please contact the officer named on the front page, giving as much notice as possible before the meeting

A hearing loop is available at County Hall.

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence and Temporary Appointments**

To receive any apologies for absence and temporary appointments.

2. **Declaration of Interests**

See guidance note on the back page.

3. **Minutes (Pages 7 - 16)**

The Committee is recommended to **APPROVE** the minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2025 and to receive information arising from them.

4. **Petitions and Public Addresses**

Members of the public who wish to speak on an item on the agenda at this meeting can attend the meeting in person or 'virtually' through an online connection.

Requests to speak must be submitted no later than 9am three working days before the meeting, i.e. Tuesday, 27 January 2026.

Requests should be submitted to the Scrutiny Officer at scrutiny@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

If you are speaking 'virtually', you may submit a written statement of your presentation to ensure that if the technology fails, then your views can still be taken into account. A written copy of your statement can be provided no later than 9am on the day of the meeting. Written submissions should be no longer than 1 A4 sheet.

Where there are a number of requests from persons wishing to present similar views on the same issue, the Chair may require that the views be put by a single spokesperson. It is expected that only in exceptional circumstances will a person (or organisation) be allowed to address more than one meeting on a particular issue in any period of six months.

The public is reminded that the Committee is not a decision-making body and that it cannot investigate individual complaints. The Committee requests that no individual children are named when addressing the Committee.

5. **Local Area Partnership Monitoring and Priority Action Plan (Pages 17 - 58)**

The Committee has requested a report on the Local Area Partnership's SEND monitoring and Priority Action Plan and the opportunity to consider the Area SEND monitoring visit inspection report.

The Committee has invited Cllr Sean Gaul, Cabinet member for Children and Young People, Lisa Lyons, the Director of Children's Services, Matthew Tait, the Integrated Care Board's Chief Operating Officer, to attend to present the report as well as Annette Perrington, Interim Deputy Director for Education, Deborah Smit, Assistant Director: SEND and Inclusion, Steve Crocker, independent Chair of the Oxfordshire SEND Strategic Improvement and Assurance Board, and the Co-Chair of the Oxfordshire Parent Carer Forum.

The Committee is asked to consider the report and raise any questions, and to **AGREE** any recommendations it wishes to make to Cabinet on behalf of Local Area Partnership system partners arising therefrom.

6. Education Other Than At School Update

The Committee has requested a report setting out the draft guidance arising from the Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) Policy that was approved by Cabinet in July 2025.

Cllr Sean Gaul, Cabinet member for Children and Young People, Lisa Lyons, the Director of Children's Services, Annette Perrington, Interim Deputy Director: Education and Inclusion, and Deborah Smit, Assistant Director: SEND and Inclusion, have been invited to present the report.

The Committee is asked to consider the report and raise any questions, and to **AGREE** any recommendations it wishes to make to Cabinet arising therefrom.

Report not received at the time of publication.

7. Committee Forward Work Plan (Pages 59 - 62)

The Committee is recommended to **AGREE** its work programme for forthcoming meetings, having heard any changes from previous iterations, and taking account of the Cabinet Forward Plan and of the Budget Management Monitoring Report.

8. Committee Action and Recommendation Tracker (Pages 63 - 68)

The Committee is recommended to **NOTE** the progress of previous recommendations and actions arising from previous meetings, having raised any questions on the contents.

Councillors declaring interests

General duty

You must declare any disclosable pecuniary interests when the meeting reaches the item on the agenda headed 'Declarations of Interest' or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.

What is a disclosable pecuniary interest?

Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to your employment; sponsorship (i.e. payment for expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a councillor or towards your election expenses); contracts; land in the Council's area; licenses for land in the Council's area; corporate tenancies; and securities. These declarations must be recorded in each councillor's Register of Interests which is publicly available on the Council's website.

Disclosable pecuniary interests that must be declared are not only those of the member her or himself but also those member's spouse, civil partner or person they are living with as husband or wife or as if they were civil partners.

Declaring an interest

Where any matter disclosed in your Register of Interests is being considered at a meeting, you must declare that you have an interest. You should also disclose the nature as well as the existence of the interest. If you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, after having declared it at the meeting you must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Members' Code of Conduct and public perception

Even if you do not have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter, the Members' Code of Conduct says that a member 'must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself' and that 'you must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned'.

Members Code – Other registrable interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to the financial interest or wellbeing of one of your other registerable interests then you must declare an interest. You must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and you must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Wellbeing can be described as a condition of contentedness, healthiness and happiness; anything that could be said to affect a person's quality of life, either positively or negatively, is likely to affect their wellbeing.

Other registrable interests include:

- a) Any unpaid directorships
- b) Any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority.

- c) Any body (i) exercising functions of a public nature (ii) directed to charitable purposes or (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management.

Members Code – Non-registrable interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to your financial interest or wellbeing (and does not fall under disclosable pecuniary interests), or the financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate, you must declare the interest.

Where a matter arises at a meeting which affects your own financial interest or wellbeing, a financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate or a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under other registrable interests, then you must declare the interest.

In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied:

Where a matter affects the financial interest or well-being:

- a) to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
- b) a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest.

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.

EDUCATION AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Friday, 21 November 2025 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 12.34 pm.

Present:

Voting Members:

Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE - in the Chair
Councillor Andy Graham (Deputy Chair)
Councillor Dr Izzy Creed
Councillor Rebekah Fletcher
Councillor Georgina Heritage
Councillor Johnny Hope-Smith
Councillor Emma Markham
Councillor Toyah Overton
Councillor James Plumb

Co-Optee Members:

Peace Nnaji

**Other Members in
Attendance:**

Cllr Sean Gaul, Cabinet member for Children and Young People

Officers:

Lisa Lyons, the Director of Children's Services
Annette Perrington, Interim Deputy Director: Education
Kim Wilson, Assistant Director: Schools and Settings –
Standards, Effectiveness, and Performance
Charlotte Davey, Assistant Director – Children's Social
Care
Julie McNally, Service Manager: Fostering
Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer

The Council considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting and decided as set out below. Except insofar as otherwise specified, the reasons for the decisions are contained in the agenda and reports, copies of which are attached to the signed Minutes.

53/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 1)

Apologies were received from Katie N.

54/25 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

(Agenda No. 2)

Cllr Markham declared a non-pecuniary interest, in relation to the Fostering item.

55/25 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 3)

The Committee **APPROVED** the minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2025, as a true and accurate record.

56/25 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESSES

(Agenda No. 4)

There were none.

57/25 ATTAINMENT INCLUDING ATTAINMENT GAPS

(Agenda No. 5)

Cllr Sean Gaul, Cabinet member for Children and Young People, Lisa Lyons, the Director of Children's Services, Annette Perrington, Interim Deputy Director: Education, and Kim Wilson, Assistant Director: Schools and Settings – Standards, Effectiveness, and Performance, were invited to present the report and to answer the Committee's questions.

The Assistant Director presented provisional, unvalidated attainment data, explaining that, whilst Oxfordshire's attainment score of 46.2 was marginally above the national average (45.9), progress could not be measured owing to pandemic-related exam cancellations. She noted that white British children in Oxfordshire achieved at or above national levels across key metrics; however, disadvantaged children, particularly disadvantaged white British children, continued to lag behind, widening the attainment gap. The Assistant Director stressed that schools account for only around 20% of children's outcomes, with wider factors such as family health and deprivation having significant effects.

Members engaged in a wide-ranging discussion about the interventions available to support schools with attainment challenges. The Council's approach involved categorising schools by need, with improvement advisers working across more than 130 maintained schools. Those requiring strategic support benefited from tailored interventions, such as lead reviews and strategy meetings, while all schools have access to a school improvement partner. Intensive help was provided for those with greater needs, especially in leadership and governance, and new headteachers received mentoring. Finance and Special Educational Needs (SEN) teams also contributed to the support package. The Committee noted a strong emphasis on early years reading and writing, with ambitious targets to narrow the disadvantage gap, and initiatives like free book distribution to encourage reading.

Collaboration with external organisations was highlighted, particularly the Council's work with the Dolly Parton Foundation and the Welcome project, which addressed both literacy and child health. The conversation reflected on the importance of foundational skills in early reading and writing, recognising that development in these areas extended beyond formal instruction. Some Members voiced concerns about the risks of starting formal literacy too early, especially compared to international practices. The upcoming 2025 curriculum and assessment review was seen as an opportunity to modernise the curriculum, with a renewed focus on the arts.

Creativity and the arts were recognised as vital for child development, and Members considered how multi-agency interventions might reflect the growing emphasis on these areas. Schools would need to adapt to curriculum changes, and collaboration between safeguarding, education, and virtual school teams was seen as essential. The new inspection framework was identified as a key driver for schools to respond to evolving educational priorities.

Ambitious targets for good levels of development among children were discussed, with Oxfordshire aiming for 77.8%, surpassing the national average. The Cabinet Member drew attention to significant inequalities, particularly for children eligible for free school meals, whose development rates lagged behind their peers. He stressed the importance of closing this gap and described ongoing efforts to address disparities through strategic planning and collaboration within the Children's Trust Board.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on attainment scores and progress measurement was another focus. Members noted that a detailed analysis of attainment ranges, including rural and urban splits, would be possible once validated data became available. The reintroduction of progress measures by central government for the academic years 2026/27 and 2027/28 was welcomed, as it would restore the ability to track pupil progress over time.

The Committee also explored whether free school meals were a sufficiently comprehensive marker for disadvantage. Officers explained that eligibility was consistently identified through schools, with an auto-enrolment project underway to ensure uniformity. However, it was recognised that disadvantage extended beyond school criteria, encompassing factors such as home environment, health, and community context. Attendance and registering new arrivals were highlighted as important, alongside the new Ofsted framework's focus on inclusion and supporting the most disadvantaged pupils.

Creating happy, welcoming, and safe school environments was seen as crucial for pupil attainment. Members shared examples of schools excelling in this area and discussed the need to capture and share best practices. The new Ofsted framework's emphasis on inclusion and support for children who find school challenging was welcomed, and councillors were encouraged to engage with their local schools to better understand and support their approaches.

Building relationships with parents and caregivers emerged as another key theme. Strong parental engagement was recognised as essential for children's development, though approaches varied widely between schools. The Families First programme was introduced as an early intervention initiative designed to support parenting and early childhood development, aiming to fill gaps left by previous services and not restricted to any socio-economic group. Members noted a decline in children's school readiness following the pandemic, with issues such as lack of toilet training, basic self-care skills, and independence observed across all socio-economic backgrounds. Families First was seen as a valuable resource for providing information and support to parents, helping them understand what good development looked like and how to foster it at home.

Sharing best practice from other councils with higher attainment was considered important. The Council's approach to reviewing and adopting successful strategies from elsewhere was discussed, whilst also recognising the strengths of local schools, some of which are nationally recognised for behaviour and attendance. Partnerships with academy trusts and the Oxford Education and Inclusion Partnership were highlighted as ways to foster collaboration, share effective approaches, and develop strategies grounded in data, targets, and priorities.

Supporting children who fall behind at key milestones, particularly during transitions such as moving from primary to secondary school, was another area of focus. Schools have adapted their transition processes, sometimes starting support as early as Year 4 or 5, to ensure children begin new schools in a positive environment. Early intervention was emphasised as a means of preventing dips in attainment and to support mental health and well-being, reducing the risk of children developing a negative self-fulfilling prophecy about their academic abilities.

Safeguarding was recognised as a complex issue. Whilst schools were generally safe environments, Members acknowledged that some children do not perceive school as safe owing to bullying or not fitting in. The need for further work on safeguarding and the importance of recognising and addressing these exceptions was emphasised to ensure all children feel secure and supported.

Councillors reflected on the challenges of building relationships with local schools and gaining access, with some finding it difficult to visit schools even as experienced educationalists. Suggestions included providing practical tips or brokered introductions to help councillors connect with schools, similar to arrangements made for MPs. It was proposed that local Councillors should be informed when Cabinet Members or Officers visit schools to foster better engagement. Throughout the discussion, the importance of Councillors understanding their local schools to support children's attainment and well-being was repeatedly emphasised.

Members requested that, once school attainment data was validated, it should be reported back to the Committee, in addition to a private all-member briefing which would include comprehensive school-based data to enable councillors to understand performance in their divisions. The briefing would ideally also cover practical guidance for councillors on engaging with local schools, address the protocol for notifying councillors about school visits by cabinet members and officers, and present updates on the Oxfordshire Education and Inclusion Partnership's strategy. The importance of including safeguarding and curriculum review impacts in future committee discussions was also highlighted.

The Committee **AGREED** to recommendations under the following headings:

- adapting the protocol so local members are notified when cabinet members and officers visit schools, supporting and working with local schools,
- celebrating successes and sharing best practices across the family of schools
- developing the education and inclusion strategy with a focus on child safeguarding, protection, and the curriculum review.

58/25 VIRTUAL SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT

(Agenda No. 6)

Cllr Sean Gaul, Cabinet member for Children and Young People, Lisa Lyons, the Director of Children's Services, Charlotte Davey, Assistant Director – Children's Social Care, and Annette Perrington, Interim Deputy Director: Education, were invited to present the report and to answer the Committee's questions.

The Interim Deputy Director presented a retrospective report on the virtual school, reviewing the 2024/25 academic year with a focus on the progress and attainment of children in care and care leavers. She explained that, while the virtual school's remit had expanded to include support for children with social workers and those in kinship care, the report concentrated on its core statutory responsibilities. The main priorities identified were ensuring suitable school placements, improving attendance and reducing absences, supporting educational progress, and encouraging participation in cultural activities.

The Interim Deputy Director highlighted notable improvements, such as a reduction in the time children spent out of school following placement moves and an increase in the number of care leavers progressing to higher education. She reported that attendance rates in both primary and secondary phases were either above or improving on national averages, and that there had been a decrease in persistent absences and suspensions, with only one permanent exclusion recorded during the year.

The Interim Deputy Director emphasised the significance of trauma-informed practice and the ongoing training of designated teachers. While acknowledging the positive direction of travel, she concluded that the identified priorities would remain for the coming year due to persistent challenges.

During the discussion, Members sought clarification on the effectiveness of partnerships supporting the virtual school, requesting examples and information on how their impact was monitored. In response, the Interim Deputy Director explained that the strength of partnerships varied, particularly between in-county and out-of-county placements. She cited strong regional collaboration through the National Association of Virtual School Heads (NAVSH), which had proved instrumental in overcoming barriers for children placed outside Oxfordshire, and also referenced close working relationships with health professionals and the Corporate Parenting Board. The Director added that the virtual school maintained robust links with the Youth Offending Partnership Board and provided integrated support, including in-house psychological services, to ensure effective collaboration for vulnerable children.

Further points were raised regarding persistent absences among children supported by the virtual school, with particular interest in the actions that had contributed to reducing these rates and how the Council might further improve to meet the national average. The Interim Deputy Director explained that attendance had been a central focus, with each child's attendance discussed at personal education plan meetings to identify and address barriers. She stressed the importance of targeted, individual interventions, reasonable adjustments, and multi-professional collaboration. The

Director and Assistant Director added that social care teams closely monitored absences on a weekly basis, worked directly with families and carers, and utilised support services to encourage attendance, attributing improvements to this detailed, hands-on approach.

The Committee also explored how the system supported the Council as corporate parent in fulfilling informal parental duties, such as attending parents' evenings and engaging at the school gate. The Director and Assistant Director explained that carers, key workers, and social workers were expected to build close relationships with schools and participate in typical parental activities, thereby helping looked-after children feel included. They described how staff and carers were encouraged to attend events, communicate with teachers, and support children informally, aiming to replicate the experience of children in their birth families as closely as possible.

Concerns were also expressed about internal, informal, and permanent exclusions of children in care. The Director reported that the team regularly engaged with schools to challenge and address practices such as isolation or informal exclusions, ensuring these were not used routinely. She acknowledged that, while some children might require a short break during the school day, persistent informal exclusion was not acceptable. The Interim Deputy Director confirmed that the past year had seen a reduction in absences due to suspensions, with only one permanent exclusion, and that focused work continued to keep children in school through trauma-informed approaches and individual support.

The Committee AGREED to the following recommendations:

- That the Council should continue to work on improving attendance of those who are part of the Virtual School;
- That the Council should continue to highlight the work of the virtual school with governing boards and social workers to ensure they are well informed and engaged in supporting the education of children in care.

The Committee adjourned at 11:31 and reconvened at 11:40.

59/25 FOSTERING (Agenda No. 7)

Cllr Sean Gaul, Cabinet member for Children and Young People, Lisa Lyons, Director of Children's Services, Charlotte Davey, Assistant Director, and Julie McNally, Service Manager: Fostering, were invited to present the report and to answer the Committee's questions.

The Assistant Director outlined the fostering service's scope, covering mainstream fostering, kinship care, relief carers, and special guardianship assessments. Kinship carers, often relatives or friends, commonly took on care roles unexpectedly. The service saw a reduction in registered foster carers in 2024/25, mainly due to retirements and adoptions. In response, a Fostering Improvement Board was formed to address standards. Persistent challenges remained in recruiting carers for adolescents, sibling groups, and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

Recruitment, training, and support had been prioritised, with successes including bringing children formerly placed out of county back to Oxfordshire families.

The Director addressed the specific difficulties faced by the Council in fostering, noting that the county, like others nationally, had experienced a decline in foster carers. Only children with complex needs were entering care, necessitating careful matching. The Council was found to have fewer fostering and residential beds compared to other areas, a situation partly attributed to higher property costs, which made it more difficult to attract independent providers. Nevertheless, the service's offer was described as highly competitive, with remuneration and support packages comparable to those in London, alongside a robust training programme. Additional options included fostering-friendly policies, flexible and respite care, and enhanced support for kinship carers and those under special guardianship orders.

Concerns were raised regarding the fact that nearly twice as many foster carers were leaving the Oxfordshire system as were joining, and the implications this held for future recruitment. The 2024/25 report indicated a high proportion of carers over the age of 50, with many departing for personal reasons such as retirement and financial pressures. Efforts to attract younger carers had been undertaken, including locality campaigns, word-of-mouth referrals, and financial incentives. The appointment of a marketing officer aimed to address the recruitment gap and the shortfall in provision for specific groups.

It was clarified that kinship carers had always existed, but recent government recognition highlighted that their support had been lacking nationally. The Council had responded by establishing a dedicated team for kinship carers, offering bespoke support and matching fostering allowances for those transitioning to permanent arrangements. This initiative had led to a significant increase in special guardianships.

It was explained that "personal circumstances" as a reason for foster carers leaving the service encompassed a wide range of factors, not limited to kinship carers. These included retirement, adoption, and other individual situations. While conversions from kinship to permanent arrangements had not significantly contributed to deregistrations in 2024/25, it was anticipated that this trend might become more apparent in future years as more carers transitioned to permanent roles.

Further clarification was provided regarding the meaning of "standards of care" in relation to foster carer deregistrations. It was emphasised that this term covered various scenarios, such as carers developing health issues, experiencing increased stress, or undergoing significant life changes like divorce or relocation. Such circumstances sometimes led to discussions about whether carers should continue, alter the type of care they provided, or cease fostering, with the child's best interests always being paramount. It was not simply a matter of carers suddenly being deemed unsuitable.

The training and support available for foster carers, particularly in managing children with significant mental health needs, were outlined. Foster carers received trauma-informed training delivered by the clinical team, Attach, and completed skills training addressing the complexities of caring for vulnerable children. Carers were expected

to keep their training up to date and had access to regular newsletters, support groups, one-to-one support, and reflective sessions. The training offer was extended to both in-house and kinship carers.

Carers received regular supervision and reflective sessions with their allocated social worker, and the deregistration process spanned several months, including assessments and panel reviews during which reasons for leaving were discussed. The service maintained ongoing conversations with carers to support them and gather insights, which informed the data on reasons for departure.

In conclusion, the Cabinet Member highlighted ongoing efforts to improve the fostering offer and attract more foster parents. He referenced discussions about introducing a dedicated on-call helpline for foster carers and exploring the ambitious idea of a council tax offer, which would require collaboration with district councils. The importance of councillors acting as advocates for the fostering service was emphasised, with a suggestion that a simple summary of the package be provided to members to enable confident promotion. These steps were intended to strengthen support for carers and enhance recruitment across Oxfordshire.

The Committee **AGREED** to recommendations under the following headings:

- Committing to fostering friendly Oxfordshire and continuing to work with district councils and other key stakeholders to achieve this
- exploring in more detail the possibility of a council tax-related offer for foster carers.

60/25 CO-OPTEE RECRUITMENT UPDATE

(Agenda No. 8)

The Committee received a report updating them on the co-opted membership. The Committee **NOTED** recommendation 1.1 and **AGREED** to recommendations 1.2 and 1.3.

61/25 COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PLAN

(Agenda No. 9)

After initially discussing holding an additional meeting in December 2025, the Committee resolved to add an additional meeting in January 2026 to consider the SEND Local Area Partnership report and the refreshed Priority Action Plan. The Committee agreed that the EOTAS Guidance could also be considered at that meeting.

The Committee also decided that the Oxfordshire Education Inclusion Partnership strategy and related items, such as safeguarding in schools and the curriculum review, could be scheduled for February and March, with flexibility to adjust timings as needed. The policy review was suggested for the summer.

The Committee agreed that the Scrutiny Officer and the Director should discuss practicalities of timings, in consultation with the Chair.

The Committee **AGREED** its forward work programme.

62/25 COMMITTEE ACTION AND RECOMMENDATION TRACKER

(Agenda No. 10)

The Committee **NOTED** the action and recommendation tracker.

63/25 RESPONSES TO SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS

(Agenda No. 11)

The Committee **NOTED** the cabinet responses to the Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee reports on School Catering Services and Corporate Cleaning Services, and the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Report.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing

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EDUCATION AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

– 30 January 2026

Local Area Partnership Monitoring and Priority Action Plan

Report by Director of Children's Services

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Education and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee is RECOMMENDED to**
 - a) Note the progress made by the local area partnership in addressing the issues raised by the 2023 SEND inspection. Thank all partners, particularly Oxfordshire Parent Carer Forum and the SEND Youth Forum for their participation and hard work.
 - b) Recognise the continuing challenges faced by the local area partnership, acknowledging that some of those challenges are national and some are specific to Oxfordshire.
 - c) Note the new SEND Priority Action Plan to further progress our improvement journey in Oxfordshire.

Executive Summary

2. This report outlines progress made by the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) local area partnership since the previous report to Scrutiny in February 2025.

Progress

3. We have been working closely with partners to strengthen SEND services in Oxfordshire since the SEND inspection of 2023 which highlighted 'systemic failures' in the local area partnership.
4. Following the SEND inspection, the Department for Education issued an improvement notice to Oxfordshire County Council, which remains in place. This required the creation of our SEND Improvement and Assurance Board as well as regular priority action deep dives and stocktake reviews to oversee and monitor progress against the identified areas for improvement. This has been supplemented by our Ofsted annual conversations.
5. Following the inspection in 2023, a Priority Action Plan was developed to address the areas of significant weaknesses. The plan formed part of a wider SEND improvement programme which was designed to bring together the key

stakeholders in the partnership to ensure a step change in our approach to SEND.

6. At the centre of this is a commitment to the voice of children and young people and parent carers. Oxfordshire Parent Carer Forum (OxPCF) is an integral part of the local area partnership and is represented on all working groups, themes and boards, including the SEND Improvement & Assurance Board (SIAB). The SEND Youth Forum likewise is a core part of our improvement journey and we work closely to design services and hear young people's feedback.
7. In September-October 2025, we had a local area SEND monitoring inspection. The inspectors found that the local area has taken "effective action" to address all five areas for priority action identified at the initial inspection ([link to full report](#)). Ofsted and CQC recognised strengthened governance, improved communication and enhanced opportunities for children, young people and their families to contribute to service planning and evaluation.
8. We know there is still more we can and must do to further improve SEND services in Oxfordshire for every child and family. As such, we have prepared an updated Priority Action Plan to respond to latest feedback and to take us forward on the next stage of our improvement progress. This is attached as an appendix.
9. Our transformation programme is currently grouped into four themes:
 - (a) Theme 1: Right Support, Right Time
 - (b) Theme 2: Right Plan, Right First Time, Every Time
 - (c) Theme 3: Right Provision, Right Time
 - (d) Theme 4: Preparation for Adulthood

The new Priority Action Plan proposes some minor changes to the scope of the themes to align work areas and to simplify the theme names.

10. The remainder of this report outlines the five key areas for priority action identified in 2023, the progress made to date, and the planned next steps to further strengthen services.
11. **Area for Priority Action 1:** Leaders in the local authority, ICB and education, health and care providers should urgently prioritise systems to gather the views of children and young people with SEND effectively. Leaders should use these views to inform their strategic planning for, and evaluation of SEND services that improve the outcomes and experiences of children and young people with SEND and their families.
12. Good progress has been made with establishing our SEND Youth Forum, this now meets regularly with a core group of children and young people who are passionate about improving services. There are opportunities for children and young people to directly shape the strategic direction of services, including

through connection with SIAB and Scrutiny. We work with Oxfordshire Parent Carer Forum (OxPCF) to help the voice of children, young people and families to be heard, including through the co-design of our new SEND vision and strategy. We have also developed our SEND local offer and provide more accessible information to families about our services. Our Education, Health and Care Plans aim to place the child at the centre and we take proactive steps to hear their voice.

13. The next step is to consider ways we can broaden and expand the group of children and young people that we hear from to shape our SEND services, including through working in partnership with schools. There is also some work planned to strengthen the voice of every child in the annual review process for Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans.
14. **Area for Priority Action 2:** Leaders in the local authority, ICB and education, health and care providers should develop communication systems across the partnership to improve the efficiency and quality of their information-gathering processes to ensure that children's and young people's needs are understood and met effectively through coordinated approaches.
15. Inspectors found that we have put in place "clear communication structures to improve partnership working". Our board structure and theme working groups are working effectively, and we are beginning to see the impact from professionals and services working together more closely. For example, our SEND Together conference in the Spring was a success in bringing together approximately 200 partnership professionals and parent carers to share information about services, and received highly positive feedback.
16. We know there is more we can do to strengthen our shared partnership communication approaches and to embed our values in each interaction, so that every family has a positive experience. This will be a priority area for the coming year.
17. **Area for Priority Action 3:** Leaders across the partnership should establish rigorous processes to help ensure the improved timeliness and quality assurance of EHC plans. Leaders should use this learning to improve the quality of new and existing EHC plans.
18. Since the inspection in 2023, we have introduced a new quality assurance framework for Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans. The waiting times for needs assessments has improved, as has the timeliness of issuing new plans.
19. However, there is still more we must do to improve timeliness and increase consistency in the quality of plans, as well as to strengthen partnership contributions to the annual review process. We are progressing this work through theme 2 of our improvement plan and with our multi-agency quality assurance forum.

20. **Area for Priority Action 4:** Leaders across education, health and care should improve the commissioning of services to ensure that children, young people and their families receive sufficient support to better meet their needs and improve parental confidence in the SEND system.
21. Inspectors found that “the local area partnership has jointly commissioned a range of appropriate services since the last inspection [...] Leaders have created improved oversight to ensure that children and young people with SEND use suitable and safe provision that meets their needs more effectively. This includes placements in residential special schools and alternative provision.” We continue to progress this work including to ensure sufficiency and sustainability of specialist services.
22. Initiatives such as our enhanced pathways, special school outreach and further work to embed the graduated approach across all schools and settings, mean that the needs of more children and young people with SEND are being met effectively in mainstream settings. A review of school place sufficiency is currently underway which will enable more mainstream schools to effectively support children’s SEND needs.
23. We have piloted a speech and language screening tool to help identify children’s needs earlier. However, we know the wait times are still too long for some health services, and we are beginning to explore how as a partnership we could move to a needs-led approach, drawing on national best practice.
24. **Area for priority action 5:** Leaders, including education, health and care providers, should identify the steps that they will take to collectively monitor and measure the impact of their strategy and actions. These plans should be co-produced with and communicated clearly to children, young people and their families so that their experiences and outcomes improve.
25. We monitor and measure the impact of our work through the four theme groups, reporting to Partnership Delivery Group and the SEND Improvement and Assurance Board. Power BI data dashboards have been developed to monitor key metrics and key performance indicators have been agreed for each theme. Work is ongoing to co-design our new SEND strategy, and we have worked closely with children, young people and their families on priority priorities.
26. We want to bring all children, young people and families with us on our improvement journey and provide meaningful opportunities for engagement. As such, widening the reach of our co-production and engagement activity is a key priority for the coming year. We also have some work planned to strengthen the way we capture and measure impact, including qualitative metrics.

Next steps

27. The revised Priority Action Plan to be progressed, with a robust programme management approach to delivery. All four themes will continue to provide

monthly highlight reports to the SEND Improvement & Assurance Board, including tracking key performance indicators and impact.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

28. Progress on our SEND improvement journey is absolutely a core part of how we deliver our fairer and healthier Oxfordshire vision. The partnership work ongoing by the SEND local area partnership falls under the broader strategy set by the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Children's Trust Board.

Financial Implications

29. The updated SEND Priority Action Plan (PAP) is addressing the statutory recommendations arising from the Ofsted SEND inspection. The local authority is required to secure improvements where weaknesses are identified. While the quality improvements set out within the revised PAP are necessary to ensure compliance with these statutory duties, the financial implications of the improvements delivered to date have not been explicitly costed within this report. Likewise, the further amendments proposed to the SEND PAP have not yet been fully quantified and will have implications across the General Fund and the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).
30. Indicative budget pressures for 2026/27 have been identified in relation to SEND statutory services, including the £0.8m for the SEND Casework Team and £1.0m for the Educational Psychology Service. These pressures arise from increased statutory demand associated with EHCP assessment and review activity, quality & timeliness improvements.
31. The updated SEND Priority Action Plan contains statutory improvement requirements that will continue to have financial implications for both the DSG and General Fund. To ensure full regulatory compliance and financial transparency, all impacts arising from the SEND improvement programme must be incorporated into the forthcoming review of the DSG Management Plan and the Council's 2027/28–2029/30 budget planning cycle.

Comments checked by:

Jane Billington, Strategic Finance Business Partner,
jane.billington@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

32. The local authority's approach to SEND is governed by a variety of legislation, including the Children and Families Act 2014, supporting regulations and codes of practice in particular the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (the 'SEND' Code of Practice).

33. This report provides an update on the outcome of the most recent Area SEND monitoring inspection, and the Priority Action plan in place to address the concerns identified by the Inspectorate in 2023. Whilst the Inspection report identifies that the *'local area has taken effective action ... to address all the areas for priority action identified at the initial inspection'* the report also states that this *'does not mean that the area for priority action is no longer a concern or that the local area can stop taking action to address it'*. Accordingly, this report further sets out the actions proposed to continue to address areas for improvement and ensure ongoing progress.

Comments checked by:

Janice White, Principal Solicitor (ASC, Education and SEND),
janice.white@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Staff Implications

No staff implications.

Amy Warner, Strategic People Partner, amy.warner@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Equality & Inclusion Implications

34. The improvement work that the local area partnership is progressing will make a positive difference to the experience of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

Sustainability Implications

35. There are no sustainability implications.

Risk Management

36. For each theme, risks and their mitigations are recorded on a monthly basis. In addition, risks are escalated to the SEND Improvement and Assurance Board if appropriate. The overall programme risk is also recorded monthly on the Council's risk register.

Lisa Lyons
Director of Children's Services

Annex: Annex 1: Priority action plan 2026-2029

Background papers: [Local Area Partnership SEND update February 2025 \(link: <https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/documents/s75280/Report%20to%20EYP%20OSC%20-%20Local%20Area%20Partnership%20SEND%20Update.pdf>\)](https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/documents/s75280/Report%20to%20EYP%20OSC%20-%20Local%20Area%20Partnership%20SEND%20Update.pdf)

Contact Officer: Annette Perrington, Deputy Director of Education and Inclusion

January 2025

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SEND Priority Action Plan 2026-2028

Introduction

Every child and young person in Oxfordshire deserves the chance to thrive, whatever their needs or circumstances. The **Oxfordshire SEND Priority Action Plan 2026-2028** represents our shared commitment across education, health, and care partners to transform the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Building on our vision of **inclusion, empowerment, and partnership**, this plan sets out priorities and actions to tackle local challenges, respond to national reforms, and ensure children, young people and families are valued, respected, and supported at every stage. Through strong collaboration, transparent governance, and a relentless focus on continuous improvement, we aim to create a SEND system that is fit for the future and shaped by the voices and aspirations of Oxfordshire's children, young people, and their families.



About our Local Area Partnership

Together, the Local Area Partnership will deliver the priorities and actions of the Priority Action Plan; celebrating and supporting children and young people with SEND to achieve their wishes and aspirations.

The Local Area Partnership is made up of:

- Oxfordshire County Council
- NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB)
- Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust
- Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (OUH)
- Education settings and schools
- Oxfordshire Parent Carer Forum (OxPCF), the official body for the voice of parent carers
- SEND Youth Forum, representing the views of children and young people.

Oxfordshire County Council and BOB ICB are jointly responsible for the planning and commissioning of services for children and young people with SEND in Oxfordshire.

Partnership Vision

This Priority Action Plan is part of a wider strategic context, including our children and young people's plan, education and inclusion strategy, and our new SEND strategy (currently in development). These strategies reflect a shared vision: that Oxfordshire is a place where all children and young people are safe, healthy, supported, and able to achieve their full potential.

As a local area partnership, we have co-produced our vision for services that support children and young people with SEND, and this approach and vision underpin this Priority Action Plan.

Local Area Partnership

We are committed to taking accountable and purposeful **action** to ensure that children and young people with SEND, along with their families, are **valued, respected, and empowered** to thrive in an inclusive and supportive community.

Our Approach

Together, we embrace a holistic perspective that **celebrates individuals' strengths**, aspirations, and achievements.

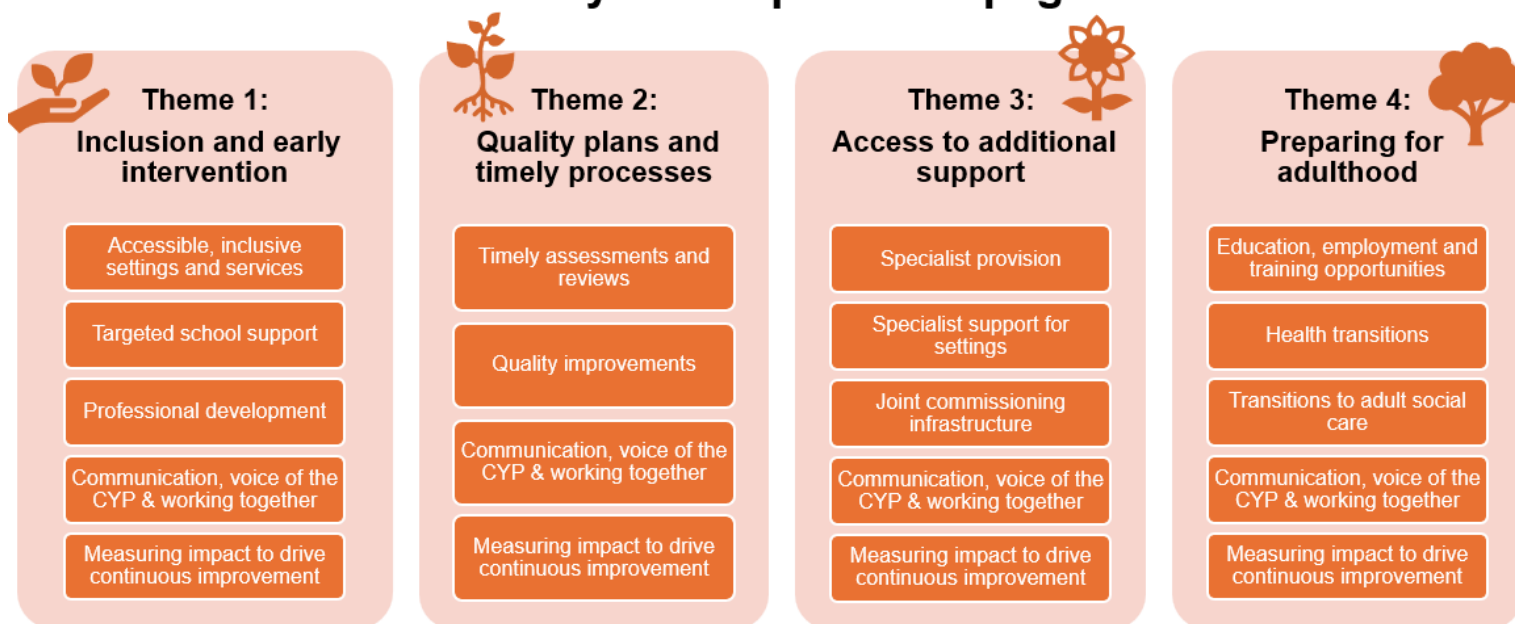
Through **partnership, involvement and collaboration**, we support children and young people with SEND, their families and carers to fulfil their wishes and aspirations.

Delivering our SEND Priority Action Plan

The content of this Priority Action Plan (PAP) responds to the SEND local area partnership inspection of 2023 and the follow-up monitoring inspection in Autumn 2025. As such, the plan is structured in response to the areas for priority action and improvement areas identified, with the acknowledgement that there will naturally be some crossovers and synergies between the different areas.

This Priority Action Plan will be delivered through a robust programme management approach, with all tasks assigned to one of the four theme groups for progression. There is a mature governance structure in place, with all four theme groups reporting monthly to our Partnership Delivery Group (PDG) and SEND Improvement and Assurance Board (SIAB). This will include reporting on SMART KPIs, with some further scoping work required in certain areas to set specific targets (this will be complete by the end of March 2026).

Priority action plan on a page



Priority Action Plan

APA 1: Leaders in the local authority, ICB and education, health and care providers should urgently prioritise systems to gather the views of young people with SEND effectively. Leaders should use these views to inform their strategic planning for, and evaluation of, SEND services that improve the outcomes and experiences of children and young people with SEND and their families.					
What is our aim?	What are we doing?	What does success look like?	How will we know we've been successful?	Who will lead this?	When will we achieve this by?
<p>To ensure that children, young people, and their families are at the heart of SEND planning and service delivery by embedding robust feedback mechanisms, fostering transparent communication, and promoting collaborative working across all partners.</p> <p>Build trust through clear, timely communication and meaningful participation of children, young people and families.</p>	<p>Improve two-way communication with parents and carers about pathways, funding and decisions.</p> <p>Reform consultation and engagement processes to be timely and transparent.</p> <p>Further strengthen child and young person voice, including expanding the reach of our SEND Youth Forum.</p> <p>Parent/carer SEND survey embedded and rolled out with a framework for action following it (You Said, We Did).</p> <p>Develop a child and young person feedback mechanism following involvement from a SEND professional.</p> <p>Develop child and young person and parent/carer</p>	<p>A well embedded feedback loop between the SEND Youth Forum and SIAB that leads to measurable improvements for CYP with SEND across the system.</p> <p>Increased parental confidence (and improved two-way communication).</p> <p>Fewer complaints linked to communication breakdown. Children and young people report being listened to and see change as a result.</p> <p>Parent and carers report that they were listened to during the involvement and that the child and young person's needs are well understood and appropriate services in place to support the child.</p>	<p>Increased engagement on key feedback channels and communication items.</p> <p>20% increase in the number of young people contributing to SEND Youth Forum activities.</p> <p>Increase to a 30% return on feedback surveys from parent/carers following an involvement from a SEND professional, which indicates a 70% overall satisfaction with the involvement.</p> <p>100% return on surveys from children's young people and their families for those who access an enhanced pathway.</p>	<p>Assistant Director SEND and Inclusion</p> <p>CEO of Acer Trust</p> <p>Theme 1</p>	<p>Spring 2027</p>

APA 1: Leaders in the local authority, ICB and education, health and care providers should urgently prioritise systems to gather the views of young people with SEND effectively. Leaders should use these views to inform their strategic planning for, and evaluation of, SEND services that improve the outcomes and experiences of children and young people with SEND and their families.					
What is our aim?	What are we doing?	What does success look like?	How will we know we've been successful?	Who will lead this?	When will we achieve this by?
	feedback for those in an enhanced pathway.	Regular cycle of review to ensure themes from survey feedback are used to improve service delivery 'You Said. We Did' Good engagement from parents and carers on the range of communication channels that show diverse representation.	Positive qualitative feedback on the communication from the school to parent/carer whilst child is in an enhanced pathway. Significant increase in the diversifying of parent carer groups, tracked through audits and targeted engagement opportunities.		
We capture and evidence the views of children and young people and their families throughout statutory processes.	Review of the Annual Review processes to ensure that these are person-centred, that the Annual Review meeting is high quality with good professional involvement, and that EHCPs following Annual Reviews remain high quality. Roll-out of surveys, including young person voice (Youth Forum) and via OxPCF. EHCNA and Annual Review survey to be rolled and embedded within statutory process.	Children, young people, and their parents/carers are involved in development of outcomes and able to contribute their views during the drafting of the EHCNA, EHCP, and the Annual Review process. Plans are updated with the child and young person's wishes and views following an Annual Review.	More than 50% positive survey responses (SEND and post EHCNA) and increased percentage of Annual Reviews that capture the voice of children and young people with SEND. Aiming for a +90% CYP participation in Annual Review process; We want more than 50% CYPs giving positive feedback on their level of involvement in their	Assistant Director SEND and Inclusion Designated Clinical Officer Theme 2	+50% by Spring 2027 +75% by Spring 2028

APA 1: Leaders in the local authority, ICB and education, health and care providers should urgently prioritise systems to gather the views of young people with SEND effectively. Leaders should use these views to inform their strategic planning for, and evaluation of, SEND services that improve the outcomes and experiences of children and young people with SEND and their families.					
What is our aim?	What are we doing?	What does success look like?	How will we know we've been successful?	Who will lead this?	When will we achieve this by?
		<p>All annual review data will be accessible through the SEND dashboard.</p> <p>Positive feedback from parents/carers through OxPCF, SENDIASS, and EHCNA and Annual Review surveys.</p> <p>Contents of EHCPs are familiar to parent carers and they feel the provision accurately reflects the needs described.</p>	<p>Annual Reviews and working towards 75% positive by 2028.</p> <p>75% of parents will report they feel EHCPs accurately reflect needs via survey responses.</p>		
Ensure young people with SEND and their families are fully informed, involved, and supported through clear communication and collaborative planning at every stage of the transition to adulthood, empowering them to shape decisions and access opportunities for education, employment, health, and independent living.	<p>Develop and maintain comprehensive Preparation for Adulthood resources and promote them through multiple channels.</p> <p>Involve the youth forum and other young people in designing and reviewing content and transition processes.</p>	<p>Year on year increase in young people accessing education, employment, training or independent living opportunities post 16.</p> <p>Positive feedback from children and young people on the information they are receiving.</p>	<p>% young people and families attending transition planning meetings and contributing to decisions (target % to be confirmed).</p> <p>Feedback from young people leads to at least 2 documented improvements in transitions processes per year.</p>	<p>Service Manager Adult Social Care</p> <p>Service Manager for Children with Disabilities</p> <p>Theme 4</p>	Spring 2027

APA 2: Leaders in the local authority, ICB and education, health and care providers, should develop communication systems across the partnership to improve the efficiency and quality of their information-gathering processes to ensure that children and young people's needs are understood and met effectively through co-ordinated approaches.					
What is our aim?	What are we doing?	What does success look like?	How will we know we've been successful?	Who will lead this?	When will we achieve this by?
To work in partnership with children, young people, and their families to design inclusive services, settings and spaces, and to develop effective communication systems that ensure needs are understood and met through co-ordinated approaches.	<p>Expand on the work of SEND youth forum to support accessible spaces, for example reasonable adjustments in primary care.</p> <p>Create and use tools like 'pupil passports' to centre the child's perspective. Scope the possibility of a 'Tell us once/health care passports'.</p>	<p>Children, young people and their families are at the centre of planning and designing accessible and inclusive services and spaces.</p> <p>Children and young people and their families have access to tools that enable them to share their views/history once, supporting multi agency working.</p> <p>We will understand the best way to support parents in telling their stories once and will co-produce a tool to support that.</p>	<p>Significant increase in the use of 'Tell us Once' overviews and other tools. Success is evident by the consistent use of the new tool by parents and carers.</p> <p>Increase the number of organisations engaged with the SEND Youth Forum to discuss accessibility.</p>	<p>Assistant Director SEND and Inclusion</p> <p>CEO of Acer Trust</p> <p>Theme 1</p>	Spring 2027
There are clear systems in place to communicate statutory processes and associated decision-making, which are accessible and understood by professionals, parents/carers, children and young people.	Publish accessible documentation outlining panels and processes and timelines around communicating outcomes. Liquid Logic portal updated to support communication of statutory processes with parents and carers.	Parents and carers will be fully informed of any processes and decision making in relation to their child's EHCNA/EHCP, including decision making at panels.	<p>Autumn 2026: 100% of statutory decisions and updates to EHCP processes communicated within agreed timescales.</p> <p>Spring 2027: Collecting and acting on feedback from parents/carers through,</p>	<p>Assistant Director SEND and Inclusion</p> <p>Designated Clinical Officer</p> <p>Theme 2</p>	Spring 2027

APA 2: Leaders in the local authority, ICB and education, health and care providers, should develop communication systems across the partnership to improve the efficiency and quality of their information-gathering processes to ensure that children and young people's needs are understood and met effectively through co-ordinated approaches.

What is our aim?	What are we doing?	What does success look like?	How will we know we've been successful?	Who will lead this?	When will we achieve this by?
	<p>Communication Pledge developed and embedded.</p> <p>Review of communications pathway for key decisions within EHCP process to identify gaps and implement improvements.</p> <p>Collaborate with schools to review and improve the EHCP consultation process, ensuring it is more collaborative and responsive.</p>	<p>All relevant information is on the Local Offer and accessible to all.</p> <p>Documents and communication tools are developed in consultation with parents and carers.</p> <p>Annual Review meetings shall be held by education settings, well within the 12 month AR decision deadline</p>	<p>OxPCF, SENDIASS, and EHCNA and Annual Review surveys (establish baseline in 25/26), utilising a "You Said, We Did" approach.</p> <p>Outputs from the communication tools developed.</p> <p>Improved officer response rates and timeliness to contact from families</p>		
We further develop and better communicate our graduated approach to early help and social care to meet the needs of children with disabilities, including our short breaks provision.	<p>Gap analysis of current offer in early help and social care for SEND to design an offer that reduces the risk of crisis or need for statutory support, linking to the Families First reforms and Family Hubs.</p> <p>Identify where/what support is currently provided through voluntary and community sector and evidence of impact that could be</p>	<p>Families needs are considered holistically rather than each child or young person's needs individually meeting a particular diagnostic threshold.</p> <p>Families understand our early help and social care offer and how to access key services.</p>	Increased number of families supported by our wider early help offer.	<p>AD Partnership Development</p> <p>Lead for Start Well Commissioning</p> <p>Theme 3</p>	Spring 2027

APA 2: Leaders in the local authority, ICB and education, health and care providers, should develop communication systems across the partnership to improve the efficiency and quality of their information-gathering processes to ensure that children and young people's needs are understood and met effectively through co-ordinated approaches.					
What is our aim?	What are we doing?	What does success look like?	How will we know we've been successful?	Who will lead this?	When will we achieve this by?
	<p>replicated across the local area.</p> <p>Share information with parents and carers to improve understanding of our offer and how/when to access services.</p>				
Establish and embed cross-partnership communication systems that foster collaboration and mutual understanding among professionals across local authority, ICB, and education, health, and care providers.	<p>Co-production stocktake, aiming to standardise understanding of co-production across partners.</p> <p>Communication strategy and channels review. Implement solutions from review.</p> <p>Co-production of a shared Local Area Partnership narrative about where we are in our improvement journey and key messages.</p> <p>Development of partnership infrastructure to coordinate our approaches to communication.</p>	<p>A comprehensive review completed with clear recommendations documented, allowing targeted improvements and ensures messages across the partnership are aligned, reducing confusion for families and professionals.</p> <p>Stronger relationships are built with children, young people and families.</p> <p>A shared narrative is developed collaboratively with input from children, young people and families and partners.</p>	<p>At least 2 initiatives are implemented from the co-production stocktake.</p> <p>Stakeholder feedback confirms that the review addressed gaps and improved clarity.</p> <p>At least 80% of the identified improvements from the communication channels review are implemented within agreed timelines.</p> <p>Winter 2026: Evidence of improved engagement metrics.</p> <p>Stakeholders report improved understanding of</p>	Enabler Workstream Communication, voice of the child & working together – Chair to be confirmed	Spring 2027

APA 2: Leaders in the local authority, ICB and education, health and care providers, should develop communication systems across the partnership to improve the efficiency and quality of their information-gathering processes to ensure that children and young people's needs are understood and met effectively through co-ordinated approaches.

What is our aim?	What are we doing?	What does success look like?	How will we know we've been successful?	Who will lead this?	When will we achieve this by?
		Regular communication planning meetings take place and are documented. Shared portal/database for non-sensitive information for LAP partners.	the improvement journey and key messages. Information available to all LAP partners for use across workstreams added to a central location.		
We ensure that young people, families, carers, and professionals can easily access comprehensive and up-to-date information about SEND services and support through the local offer website.	Evaluate progress to date on our local offer refresh and identify any gaps for further development.	Our local offer is well-used and well-known by families. The information on our local offer is high quality, in-depth and up to date.	Increased dwell time on information-containing local offer pages: information is relevant to the user. Average number of click-throughs during a user visit is low: finding information with ease. Increase awareness of local offer website to 90% (currently 72%). By Winter 2026 we will see: Increase of 60% from baseline in overall views on the local offer site.	Enabler Workstream Communication, voice of the child & working together	Spring 2027

APA 3: Leaders across the partnership should establish rigorous processes to help ensure the improved timeliness and quality assurance of EHC plans. Leaders should use this learning to improve the quality of new and existing EHC plans.					
What is our aim?	What are we doing?	What does success look like?	How will we know we've been successful?	Who will lead this?	When will we achieve this by?
Children and young people's needs are accurately identified and assessed within statutory timeframes.	<p>Quarterly assurance through multi-agency quality assurance forum (MAQA).</p> <p>Embed our updated multi-agency Quality Improvement Framework.</p> <p>Using Power BI dashboard to monitor trends to improve compliance.</p> <p>Explore technology options to make best use of resources and provide a quality, timely service for all.</p> <p>Embed the outcomes from the review of the Annual Review process to make this a more robust and comprehensive process.</p> <p>Promotion of the use of Annual Review Portal by schools.</p>	<p>Quality professional advice informs robust decision making to support CYP, families and settings within statutory timeframes.</p> <p>Schools sending through Annual Review paperwork within two weeks of the Annual Review meeting.</p> <p>Annual Review paperwork processed in a timely way with decisions made within 4 weeks of the Annual Review meeting.</p>	<p>Aim for 100% compliance with statutory timelines for issuing new EHCPs.</p> <p>Where full compliance is not feasible due to exceptional circumstances, our minimum performance threshold is to meet or exceed the national average for EHCP timeliness (46% in 2024), as reported by the DfE.</p> <p>Increased number and % of annual review advice will have been quality assured.</p> <p>Increase in the number of EHCPs graded overall as silver and gold standard by Invision 360.</p> <p>90%+ of Annual Reviews (ARs) to clearly capture the voice of CYPs. With a target of 100% engagement for all Phased Transfer AR meetings.</p> <p>60% of AR meetings being appropriately held within the 12-</p>	<p>Assistant Director SEND and Inclusion</p> <p>Designated Clinical Officer for SEND</p> <p>Theme 2</p>	Spring 2027

			<p>month deadline. Target of 100% by 2028.</p> <p>60% of schools sending Annual Review reports to the Local Authority within 2 weeks of the Annual Review meetings. 100% of Annual Review decisions made within 4 weeks of the Annual Review meeting.</p> <p>100% of amended Plans issued within 12 weeks of the Annual Review meeting.</p> <p>30% of all EHC Plans annual reviews are recorded through the portal in year 1.</p>		
<p>Deliver high-quality, person-centred EHCPs that accurately describe each child or young person, ensuring their needs are met effectively, supported by robust improvement processes to monitor and continually enhance the quality of plans and contributing advice.</p>	<p>Quality assurance Audit tool embedded across the partnership.</p> <p>Quality assurance process supports the identification of gaps in knowledge and skills and implementation of specific training for professionals.</p> <p>Robust improvement processes are in place to ensure the quality of EHCPs and contributing advice is routinely moderated through the MAQA forum.</p> <p>Joint partnership quality assurance moderation sessions through Invision360.</p>	<p>All EHCPs and annual reviews incorporate the perspectives of education, health, social care agencies and settings to ensure high quality and timely completion.</p> <p>Continued engagement from all partners at the multi-agency quality assurance forum.</p> <p>All EHC plans accurately reflect the needs of the child or young person, with descriptions that are specific, sufficiently detailed, and include</p>	<p>Increase in staff knowledge through pre/post survey at training.</p> <p>Increase in the number of EHCPs graded overall as silver and gold standard by Invision 360.</p>	<p>Assistant Director SEND and Inclusion</p> <p>Designated Clinical Officer</p> <p>Theme 2</p>	<p>Winter 2026</p>

	<p>Embedding site setting visits to undertake QA audits, reviewing specified provision as part of multi agency quality improvement framework (QIF).</p>	<p>contributions from all agencies.</p> <p>The provision detailed in the child and young person's EHCP is specific, quantifiable, and directly addresses the identified needs.</p> <p>Plans are legally compliant, outcome-focused, and implemented in practice, with access to the provision specified.</p>			
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APA 4: Leaders across education, health and care should improve the commissioning of services to ensure that children young people and their families receive sufficient support to better meet their needs and improve parental confidence in the SEND system.					
What is our aim?	What are we doing?	What does success look like?	How will we know we've been successful?	Who will lead this?	When will we achieve this by?
We support schools and settings to provide high quality targeted support that meets the needs of children and young people with SEND.	<p>Expand and refine special school outreach, ensuring it is targeted, sustained and financially viable.</p> <p>SENDCo Helpdesk and Specialist Clinics: Strengthen the SENDCo Helpdesk, including clear escalation routes and child specific advice, and enhance by gathering specific feedback from schools (e.g., via chat) on preferred topics and formats for clinics.</p> <p>Roll out the Relational Schools Programme systematically by developing a shorter, targeted relational support offer.</p> <p>Align targeted support to the graduated approach and ordinarily available provision.</p>	<p>More children and young people with EHCPs remain in mainstream settings and have their needs met and make good educational progress.</p> <p>100% of schools are engaged in one or more of the initiatives on offer to support inclusion.</p> <p>Decrease in suspension and exclusion rates of children and young people with SEN support and EHCP.</p> <p>See an increase in parents' confidence in the system.</p> <p>Good practice is shared through an effective network and followed up to ensure it is having the desired impact.</p>	<p>100% of schools are engaged in one or more of the initiatives on offer to support inclusion.</p> <p>Increase in attendance rates of children and young people with SEN Support and EHCP.</p> <p>Decrease in suspension and exclusion rates of children and young people with SEN Support and EHCP.</p> <p>Increased % of children to reach a good level of development by the end of reception.</p> <p>Decrease in requests for Special School Placements where the child is in the enhanced pathway.</p> <p>Decrease in parental requests for Special School Placement (Change of place requests).</p> <p>Decrease in requests for Special School Placements (Change of place requests) (by school).</p>	<p>Assistant Director SEND and Inclusion</p> <p>CEO of Acer Trust</p> <p>Theme 1</p>	Spring 2027

APA 4: Leaders across education, health and care should improve the commissioning of services to ensure that children young people and their families receive sufficient support to better meet their needs and improve parental confidence in the SEND system.					
What is our aim?	What are we doing?	What does success look like?	How will we know we've been successful?	Who will lead this?	When will we achieve this by?
	<p>Continued work of the Behaviour Inclusion Officers.</p> <p>Further embed the SEND Framework.</p> <p>SLT screening and intervention in primary schools – roll out of Wellcomm.</p> <p>Small School Enhanced Pathway Models: Investigate and support creative solutions, such as cluster models, to enable small schools to participate in enhanced pathway provisions.</p>		<p>More than 50% of feedback from families reflects that they are being heard and children's needs put first.</p> <p>Improved school confidence in supporting complex pupils.</p> <p>Increased number of schools using Wellcomm and a reduction in reds, and ambers, and increasing green.</p>		
We develop ways of working across organisational boundaries to provide holistic and joined-up support for children and young people with multiple and complex needs.	Progress CAMHs transformation programme to meet young people's mental health needs in a timely way. Children's Integrated Therapies (CIT): review of eligibility, criteria and demand management.	Children have access to specialist health services within a reasonable timeframe.	<p>Waits for specialist health services are within 18 weeks.</p> <p>Children's integrated therapies: Median wait time <18 weeks (The time for a patient to be seen, for services; CYP Occupational Therapy, CYP Physiotherapy, CYP Speech and Language).</p>	<p>AD Partnership Development</p> <p>Lead for Start Well Commissioning</p> <p>Theme 3</p>	Spring 2027

APA 4: Leaders across education, health and care should improve the commissioning of services to ensure that children young people and their families receive sufficient support to better meet their needs and improve parental confidence in the SEND system.					
What is our aim?	What are we doing?	What does success look like?	How will we know we've been successful?	Who will lead this?	When will we achieve this by?
			25% increase from the baseline in positive feedback from education settings on the provision of specialist health services. Reduction in spend on private therapy assessments.		
To develop a shared local area partnership plan to move towards identifying neurodevelopmental conditions using a needs-led approach.	Neurodevelopmental conditions pathway redesign to move towards a needs-led approach to assessing children. Increased resources for families on the waiting list for assessment including points of contact, monitoring and tangible support where clinically necessary.	Shift focus from diagnosis to needs-led support. Needs met in settings and at home without a diagnosis from clinical and non-clinical resources. CYP are supported as early as possible, avoiding crisis/burnout. Families are aware of options available and the differences of each, including needs-led approach, CAMHS neurodevelopmental conditions pathway, Right to Choose and private assessment.	20% reduction from the baseline in the waiting time for the support following a neurodevelopmental conditions assessment for children and young people requiring a diagnosis. Decrease in right to choose assessments. More than 50% positive feedback from education settings and parents/ carers on the needs-led approach. Increase in school attendance. Reduction in permanent exclusions.	AD Partnership Development Lead for Start Well Commissioning Theme 3	Spring 2027
We work in partnership to improve the education	Equipment Policy to be extended to Special Schools and Early Years settings.	Improved education outcomes for children in special schools and early years settings	Reduced absence in special schools related to long-term health	AD Partnership Development	Spring 2027

APA 4: Leaders across education, health and care should improve the commissioning of services to ensure that children young people and their families receive sufficient support to better meet their needs and improve parental confidence in the SEND system.

What is our aim?	What are we doing?	What does success look like?	How will we know we've been successful?	Who will lead this?	When will we achieve this by?
experience and outcomes for children with complex needs in all education settings.	Roll out new framework for delegated health care tasks (DHCT). Progress review of Special School Nursing resource.	whereby equipment is required to access education. Education settings have access to training to perform DHCT relevant to the child and the ICB financially support the delivery of these tasks where the individual is competent to. Improved education outcomes for children in special schools.	conditions (i.e. not appointment-related). More than 50% positive feedback from education settings on the implementation policy and DHCT framework.	Lead for Start Well Commissioning Theme 3	
We jointly commission services and develop our joint commissioning infrastructure across health, education, and social care.	Review of Section 75 (S75) pooled budget arrangements.	Commissioning arrangements are clearly understood across the partnership. Pooled budget arrangements in the S75 and utilised appropriately.	S75 arrangements signed off by Joint Commissioning Executive and in place. Spend is monitored via Performance and Finance monthly meeting.	AD Partnership Development Lead for Start Well Commissioning Theme 3	Winter 2026

APA 5: Leaders, including education, health and care providers, should identify the steps that they will take to collectively monitor and measure the impact of their strategy and actions. These plans should be co-produced with and communicated clearly to children, young people and their families so that their experiences and outcomes improve.					
What is our aim?	What are we doing?	What does success look like?	How will we know we've been successful?	Who will lead this?	When will we achieve this by?
System leaders make best use of evidence, national good practice and data to drive continuous improvement.	<p>Development of revised SEND strategy and new education & inclusion strategy, with a clear focus on impact.</p> <p>Make good use of data dashboards, self-assessment tools and other reports. Evaluate services, identify gaps and share learning across the local area partnership.</p> <p>Measure impact through clear metrics and KPIs and publish impact findings in accessible formats.</p> <p>Use of data for cohort planning: Explore and implement the use of data to inform future provision planning.</p>	<p>Regular impact reports produced and shared with stakeholders, including CYP and families.</p> <p>Year on year improvements demonstrated in key indicators.</p> <p>All actions have designed outcomes, indicators and targets as appropriate.</p>	<p>Summer 2026: Education and inclusion strategy published with clear implementation plans and governance.</p> <p>Clear governance structure in place with consistent representation across the Local Area Partnership.</p> <p>Clear KPIs that are reviewed quarterly or annually.</p> <p>Winter 2027: Revised SEND strategy published.</p>	<p>Director of Children's Services</p> <p>Director of Performance and Delivery</p>	Winter 2027
We are confident using co-production and collaborative ways of working across the partnership, choosing the	We deliver further co-production training for local area partners and share resources.	All local area partners complete the additional co-production training within the agreed timeframe.	Post training feedback shows at least 80% of participants feel more confident in applying co-production principles.	Enabler Workstream - Communication, voice of the	Spring 2027

APA 5: Leaders, including education, health and care providers, should identify the steps that they will take to collectively monitor and measure the impact of their strategy and actions. These plans should be co-produced with and communicated clearly to children, young people and their families so that their experiences and outcomes improve.

What is our aim?	What are we doing?	What does success look like?	How will we know we've been successful?	Who will lead this?	When will we achieve this by?
right engagement activities for the task.	<p>We contribute to the co-production stocktake and seek to learn from its findings.</p> <p>We use the engagement tracker to log and share upcoming activities. Lessons learnt are shared with all stakeholders.</p>	<p>Training resources are shared and accessible on a common platform. Stakeholder report improved visibility and coordination of engagement activities.</p> <p>Families and local area partners report a shared understanding of what good co-production is and what it is not.</p> <p>Workstreams clearly define from the outset the intended level of engagement from families and their representative groups: co-production, co-design, or consultation.</p>	<p>Findings from the stocktake are reviewed and translated into at least 2 actionable improvements in practice or policy.</p> <p>Documented % increase of LAP members who have attended co-production training.</p> <p>Success is evidenced by increased confidence and understanding of co-production among families and partners, clear examples of feedback shaping decisions, and learning from the co-production stocktake leading to measurable improvements in practice.</p>	child & working together	
We celebrate successes and share information across the local area partnership, making sure our communication approaches reach families, professionals and children and young people with SEND.	<p>Communication strategy and channels review.</p> <p>Implement solutions from review, including developing new forms of media to reach families, professionals and children and young people with SEND.</p>	<p>Increased levels of engagement across our communication channels, leading to increased awareness about our improvement journey & offer.</p> <p>Resources are aligned with the most effective communication channels.</p>	<p>Surveys and feedback mechanisms in place.</p> <p>Increase % aware of SEND improvement work, and details of the work to more than 50% (41%).</p>	Enabler Workstream - Communication, voice of the child & working together	Winter 2026

Improvement areas

What is our aim?	What are we doing?	What does success look like?	How will we know we've been successful?	Who will lead this?	When will we achieve this by?
Improvement area 1: The Local area partnership should evaluate the quality and impact of services and joint working more effectively to inform improvements that lead to better outcomes and experiences for children and young people with SEND.					
This is addressed in APA 1, 2 and 5 above.					
Improvement area 2: Leaders should improve their strategic approach to transition planning at all ages so that children and young people receive the right help and support they need to lead successful lives.					
We develop and expand our support and offer for post-16, so that more young people with SEND can access education, employment and training opportunities.	<p>Deliver outreach and training to help employers identify and create meaningful work experiences and internships for young people with SEND, including Community of Practice online sessions and a Reverse Recruitment Fair.</p> <p>Develop and publish an Employer Toolkit for supporting young people with SEND into the world of work.</p> <p>Drawing on national best practice, develop our approach for engaging young people with SEND with education and employment opportunities.</p> <p>Expand provision and reach of key initiatives including supported employment, Connect to work and SMART internships programme.</p>	<p>More young people with SEND have access to high-quality career support, meaningful work experience and inclusive employment.</p> <p>An increase in employers across Oxfordshire who are confident and equipped to offer accessible pathways, supported by training and toolkits.</p> <p>More young people with SEND move successfully into EET, with increasing participation in supported employment programmes and reduced number who are NEET.</p> <p>Transition planning starts early, and young people with SEND and their families understand the steps needed to access education,</p>	<p>Number of YP with SEND participating in a Supported Internship (SMART and Oxfordshire supported internships) (Target: 50 participants)</p> <p>% of young people who are 'Not Known'. (Age 16-18). (Target: <15.4% - Below National average)</p> <p>% of young people who are "not known" aged 16-18 with an EHCP. (Target – Equal to or below national average).</p> <p>% of young people who are "not known" aged 16-18 with SEN support. (Target – Equal to or below national average).</p> <p>% of young people who are NEET age 16-18. (Target: % - Below National average)</p>	<p>Service Manager Adult Social Care</p> <p>Service Manager for Children with Disabilities</p> <p>Theme 4</p>	Spring 2027

What is our aim?	What are we doing?	What does success look like?	How will we know we've been successful?	Who will lead this?	When will we achieve this by?
	<p>Monitor and support progress against the Gatsby Benchmarks in schools and colleges to ensure high-quality careers programmes are in place.</p> <p>Implement and monitor the introduction of post-19 officers to support the transition from children's to adult social care, ensuring continuity of care and planning for young people leaving special education.</p>	employment and training opportunities.	<p>% of young people who are NEET aged 16-18 with an EHCP. (Target – Equal to or below national average).</p> <p>% of young people who are NEET aged 16-18 with SEN support. (Target – Equal to or below national average).</p> <p>% of young people with EHCP support who are in education employment or training (Age 19-25) (Target: 80%).</p> <p>Completion of the Gatsby benchmark evaluations (Target: 100% by Sep26)</p> <p>% of schools meeting Gatsby benchmark 8: (Personal Guidance). (Target: 67% by Sep26)</p>		
We plan early and work together in a joined-up way to support children and young people through transitions in services, particularly as they turn 18.	<p>Complete mapping of all the health, education and social care transition pathways on a page and publish on the local offer. Communicate these to families, schools and settings directly where possible.</p> <p>Work to improve transitions process between health services particularly in CAMHS.</p>	Children, young people and their families have a clear understanding of the transition process, and opportunities for each service they are supported by as a child and understand roles and responsibilities of staff across the LEA system published on the local offer.	<p>25% increase of positive feedback from professional stakeholders and parents/carers on the transition process.</p> <p>25% Reduction in PALS complaints on the gaps in service areas during the transition process.</p>	<p>Service Manager Adult Social Care</p> <p>Service Manager for Children with Disabilities</p> <p>Theme 4</p>	Spring 2027

What is our aim?	What are we doing?	What does success look like?	How will we know we've been successful?	Who will lead this?	When will we achieve this by?
We will provide accessible, extensive information for young people and their families about Preparing for Adulthood (PfA), ensuring clarity on available support, how to access services, and what to expect throughout the transition process.	<p>Develop and maintain accessible and comprehensive webpages covering the full breadth of PfA content.</p> <p>Use a range of communication tools and channels to promote PfA pages.</p> <p>Involve the SEND Youth Forum and other young people in designing and reviewing PfA content.</p> <p>Collaborate with Oxme.info and other partners to improve reach, share content, and ensure consistent signposting across platforms. Promote new PfA features (guides, videos) via social media and Oxme news.</p>	<p>Young people and their families have access to comprehensive, easy-to-understand information regarding transition pathways and post-16 options, leading to informed decision-making.</p> <p>Information on transition pathways is offered early to aid decision making and for families to consider available options.</p>	<p>Average Dwell time (Target >30 seconds)</p> <p>Total views of the Youth Hub webpage. (Target -400 per month. Baseline -250 Oct25)</p> <p>'Mystery Shopper' style accessible Navigation survey feedback conducted with the SEND Youth forum semi-annually;</p> <p>. Survey Question 1: How easy was it to navigate the Youth Hub – Very Easy & Easy (Target 80%. Baseline 57% Jul25)</p> <p>. Survey Question 2: Did you find the information you were looking for – Yes (Target 75%. Baseline 33% Jul25).</p>	<p>Service Manager Adult Social Care</p> <p>Service Manager for Children with Disabilities</p> <p>Theme 4</p>	Spring 2027
To ensure a seamless and supportive transition for young people with mental health, physical, and learning disabilities as they move from children to adult health services.	<p>Review of transitions process between children's services and adult social care, including pathways to access suitable accommodation.</p> <p>Multi-agency placements and achieving stability in care for children living in placements panel (panel 4): improvement action plan.</p>	Relevant young people have a Care Act assessment and Adult Social Care support plan in place by their 18th birthday.	<p>% of YP who have a Care Act assessment in place by their 18th birthday (Target: 100%).</p> <p>% of YP who have an Adult Social Care support plan in place by their 18th birthday (Target: 100%).</p>	<p>Service Manager Adult Social Care</p> <p>Service Manager for Children with Disabilities</p> <p>Theme 4</p>	Spring 2027

What is our aim?	What are we doing?	What does success look like?	How will we know we've been successful?	Who will lead this?	When will we achieve this by?
	Adult health and social care teams for 18-25.		Average age Care Act assessment completion (Target: age 17yrs & 6ms). % of Pathway plan needs assessments completed by age 16 (CWCF) (Target: 100%).		
Improvement area 3: Leaders must continue to develop their oversight, strategy and commissioning arrangements of suitable alternative provision so that there is sufficient suitable provision that meets the needs of children and young people with SEND.					
Access to timely, quality Alternative Education Provision (AEP) and where appropriate, clear reintegration plans back to mainstream education.	AEP multi agency board established with clear links to the Education and Inclusion partnership. Refresh of the AEP commissioning framework to onboard new quality assured providers. Creating a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities within AEP provision and a shared vision of what AEP looks like.	CYP and parents have a clear understanding of AEP processes. CYP and parents have a range of choice for AEP that meets the needs of the CYP. Shared quality assurance process of unregistered of AEP.	Timeliness of AEP placement; progress metrics through use of AEP for children and young people. Reduction of spot purchasing of AEP. No. of new placements within AEP per term. No. of successful transitions back into mainstream school per term. No. of transitions into Resource Base placement per term. No. of transitions into maintained Special School per term.	Alternative Education Provision Board	Spring 2027
Improvement area 4: Leaders across the partnership should continue to address the long waiting times for children and young people requesting support from health services. The local area partnership should ensure that support is in place from health services for children and young people who are awaiting assessments.					
This is addressed in APA 4 above.					

23 October 2025

Lisa Lyons, Director of Children's and Families' Services, Oxfordshire County Council
Nick Broughton, Chief Executive Officer, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and West
Berkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB)

Area SEND monitoring inspection to Oxfordshire Partnership

Between 29 September and 1 October 2025, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) revisited Oxfordshire to decide whether effective action has been made in relation to each of the areas for priority action detailed in the inspection report published on 15 September 2023. The inspection was conducted under section 20 of the Children Act 2004.

I write on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) of Education, Children's Services and Skills and the Chief Inspector of Primary Medical Services and the Chief Inspector of Primary Care and Community Services of the CQC.

As a result of the findings of the initial inspection and in accordance with the Children Act 2004 (Joint Area Reviews) Regulations 2015, HMCI required the local area partnership to prepare and submit a priority action plan (area SEND) to address the five identified areas for priority action.

The local area has taken effective action as it has taken reasonable steps to address all the areas for priority action identified at the initial inspection. This letter outlines our findings from the monitoring inspection.

The inspection was led by one of His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) from Ofsted, accompanied by a further HMI; and two Children's Services Inspectors from the CQC.

During the inspection, we spoke to local area leaders, parents and carers of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and education, health and social care professionals. We also met with representatives of the parent carer forum (PCF), the Department for Education (DfE) and regional NHS England. We examined relevant documents and correspondence about the performance of the area in addressing the areas for priority action identified at the initial inspection, including the area's priority action plan and self-evaluation.

Findings

Area for priority action 1

Leaders in the local authority, ICB and education, health and care providers should urgently prioritise systems to gather the views of children and young people with

SEND effectively. Leaders should use these views to inform their strategic planning for, and evaluation of, services that improve the outcomes and experiences of children and young people with SEND and their families.

Outcome: Effective action

The local area partnership has a strong strategic focus and vision. Leaders have taken several actions to gather the views of families and children and young people with SEND. The partnership has strengthened governance and leadership structures to ensure stable representation of partners and stakeholders, including the PCF, at the SEND Improvement and Assurance Board. Leaders have developed a range of groups and committees which feed into this board. Data collection and analysis have improved to better identify children and young people's needs and monitor progress towards identified improvement outcomes.

Leaders have increased opportunities for families to meet with them, such as at 'SEND Together' events. These allow families to learn about and shape improvements. Staff are supported to develop various communication tools to engage children and young people actively in planning and decision-making.

Children and young people with SEND who are members of the Youth Forum are inspirational and proactive. They contribute to partnership developments. Members of the forum benefit from leaders' support to understand and review information and provide feedback. For example, they have improved areas of the local offer using their own experiences and outcomes to help others access information and understand how they can feedback.

School leaders, SEND coordinators (SENCOs) and practitioners gather children and young people's views and needs to feed into system-wide developments. Leaders have improved oversight and understanding of the views and needs of children and young people with SEND who do not attend full-time education, increasing their chances of receiving the provision that they need. For example, children and young people have contributed to the planning of family hubs and the development of the recommissioned children's home.

Despite these actions that have provided several additional opportunities to gather and use children's and young people's views, some parents reported that their child's voices remain unheard. The PCF confirms this concern in their representation of families' views. Furthermore, leaders recognise the need to expand membership of the Youth Forum to capture a wider perspective, including children and young people with SEND who are in care.

Area for priority action 2

Leaders in the local authority, ICB and education, health and care providers should develop communication systems across the partnership to improve the efficiency and quality of their information-gathering processes to ensure that children's and young people's needs are understood and met effectively through coordinated approaches.

Outcome: Effective action

Leaders have put in place clear communication structures to improve partnership working. Information-sharing has been strengthened from board level through to the improvement groups. This established structure supports the flow of information and continuous improvement planning. As a result, professionals have a better understanding of their roles within the local area partnership. However, some inconsistencies in communication between health and education remain despite these relationships and communication methods improving.

Professionals and services are working together more closely. This is starting to improve experiences for children and young people with SEND and their families. Leaders use learning from quality assurance processes and feedback to support professionals to work together more effectively. This is helping children and young people with SEND and their families experience a more integrated approach to planning and decision-making. For example, leaders have developed networking and training events that have strengthened professionals' knowledge of SEND. However, school leaders continue to find that children's and young people's needs and provision are not recorded accurately.

Professionals across services are beginning to improve their use of children's and young people's views to help plan their support. For example, children and young people with complicated situations, complex needs and/or barriers to education now benefit from multi-agency working to identify and meet their ongoing needs. Families' experiences still depend on which practitioners provide their support.

Area for priority action 3

Leaders across the partnership should establish rigorous processes to help ensure the improved timeliness and quality assurance of education, health and care (EHC) plans. Leaders should use this learning to improve the quality of new and existing EHC plans.

Outcome: Effective action

Leaders have taken effective steps to improve both the timeliness and quality of EHC plans. Following the last inspection, action was taken to review quality assurance

processes, identifying sensible improvement actions. These improvements are continuous. As a result, waiting times have improved for children and young people on the EHC plan process to have their needs assessed. The timeliness of newly issued EHC plans has improved. Although stakeholders, including some parents and carers, have experienced swifter decision-making, they and settings still experience inconsistencies in the quality of, and detail included in, EHC plans. In some cases, the quality has been impacted by rushed plans to meet timeliness.

The quality assurance processes for EHC plans include broad representation of stakeholders, including the PCF and links directly to the Youth Forum. The process is cyclical and provides opportunities for regular, effective feedback. This enables leaders to make further improvements across services.

Most EHC plans sampled during this inspection were timely and up to date. However, their quality continues to be variable. Contributions from children's social care and health practitioners often lacked relevant detail, limiting the ability of stakeholders to fully support children and young people with SEND. In some cases, there was still a lack of evidence for the most vulnerable children and young people with SEND, such as appropriate contributions from the virtual school.

Leaders and stakeholders in the partnership are clear on what further improvements are needed to EHC plan timeliness and quality. Although annual reviews are now completed within appropriate timescales, improvements have not yet had an impact on this process. Practitioners do not always contribute to annual reviews so that a child or young person's changing needs are identified and supported effectively.

Area for priority action 4

Leaders across education, health and care should improve the commissioning of services to ensure that children, young people and their families receive sufficient support to better meet their needs and improve parental confidence in the SEND system.

Outcome: Effective action

The local area partnership has jointly commissioned a range of appropriate services since the last inspection. There are clear processes in place to help ensure that children and young people with SEND only access services that have been quality assured by the local authority. Leaders have created improved oversight to ensure that children and young people with SEND use suitable and safe provision that meets their needs more effectively. This includes placements in residential special schools and alternative provision.

School leaders have benefited from increased training provided by the partnership. In some schools, partnership-funded enhanced pathways have been implemented to support the inclusion of all children and young people with SEND. As a result, many children's and young people's needs are being more effectively met in mainstream settings.

Joint commissioning arrangements to reduce long waiting times for health services have started to have a positive impact on children's and young people's experiences. The pilot of a screening tool for speech and language needs in primary schools has been well received and used to identify young children's needs more quickly. The Community Wisdom pilot has supported swifter triage of children's and young people's needs to inform referrals to the children's and adolescents' mental health service and improves the efficiency of neurodevelopmental assessments.

The progress of these initiatives is being monitored by the partnership at monthly reviews where parents are appropriately represented. Stakeholders are concerned about the longevity and sustainability of some projects, including ensuring the sufficiency of specialist provision.

Area for priority action 5

Leaders, including education, health and care providers, should identify the steps that they will take to collectively monitor and measure the impact of their strategy and actions. These plans should be co-produced with and communicated clearly to children, young people and their families so that their experiences and outcomes improve.

Outcome: Effective action

Partnership leaders now have effective oversight of the progress and impact of initiatives designed to improve the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND. Through this, they can adapt to emerging needs and respond to actions that have not had the desired impact. The strengthened partnership structure brings together health, social care, education and parents, productively enabling a move toward more effective collaborative working. In this way, the foundations for improvement are now stable and systems to monitor and measure the impact of partnership work are in place.

Leaders have improved opportunities for stakeholders to engage in activities to contribute to strategic and operational planning and implementation. For example, the PCF were consulted and actively involved in the review, design and award of contracts of short breaks services. This piece of work ensures that service delivery is directly informed by the needs of children and young people and their families.

Although leaders have clarified their definitions in terms of working with stakeholders, there is still confusion and a feeling among some parents that their views and the views of their children and young people with SEND are not sought or considered. Leaders know they have more work to do to gain the confidence of all families and to truly make use of their valuable opinions and those of their children and young people with SEND in the improvements that are to come.

Next steps

Inspectors will reach an effective action outcome if, having gathered and evaluated evidence, they find that the local area partnership has taken reasonable steps to address the area for priority action since the full inspection, based on the relevant evaluation criteria.

Effective action does not mean that the area for priority action is no longer a concern or that the local area can stop taking action to address it. Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation. Areas for priority action that receive an effective action outcome may still be identified as areas for priority action in future inspections. This can happen if the local area does not continue to take action and/or the action has not continued to have a positive impact on the experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

Ofsted and CQC ask the local area partnership to update their priority action plan (area SEND) as a result of this inspection.

I am copying this letter to the DfE and regional NHS England.

Yours sincerely

Emma Leavey

His Majesty's Inspector, Ofsted, Lead inspector

Nicki Shaw

His Majesty's Inspector, Ofsted

Andrea Crosby-Josephs

Children's Services Inspector, CQC

Kirsty Smith

Children's Services Inspector, CQC

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Work Programme 2025/26

Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Cllr Liz Brighthouse, OBE, Chair | Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer, richard.doney@oxfordshire.gov.uk

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Topic	Relevant strategic priorities	Purpose	Type	Report Leads
30 January 2026				
OfStEd report – SEND Local Area Partnership monitoring report and Priority Action Plan update	Create Opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential; prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents; support carers and the social care system; tackle inequalities	To scrutinise the report and to receive an update on work arising from the Priority Action Plan	Overview and Scrutiny	Lisa Lyons, Annette Perrington; Deborah Smit.
EOTAS Guidance	Create Opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential; prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents; support carers and the social care system; tackle inequalities	To review the EOTAS guidance before it is submitted to Cabinet	Overview and Scrutiny	Lisa Lyons, Annette Perrington; Deborah Smit.
27 February 2026				



Early Years	Create Opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential; prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents; support carers and the social care system; tackle inequalities	<i>Scope to be confirmed</i>	Overview and Scrutiny	Lisa Lyons, tbc
s.19 Monitoring Report	Create Opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential.	To ensure accountability and improvement	Overview and Scrutiny	Lisa Lyons, Annette Perrington
tbc				
		27 March 2026		
Harm Outside the Home	Create Opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential; prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents; support carers and the social care system; tackle inequalities	<i>Scope to be confirmed</i>	Overview and Scrutiny	Lisa Lyons, Delia Mann
EOTAS Policy Review	Create Opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential.	To review progress of policy implementation	Overview and Scrutiny	Lisa Lyons, Annette Perrington

SUB GROUP / WORKING GROUP

SUB GROUPS / WORKING GROUPS				
Name	Relevant strategic priorities	Description	Outcomes	Members
Lessons Learned from Woodeaton	Create Opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential	Tbc – but to reflect on communications, particularly with parents. How does the Council exercise its oversight?		tbc

BRIEFINGS FOR MEMBER INFORMATION

BRIEFINGS				
Name	Relevant strategic priorities	Description	Outcomes	Members

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Recommendation Tracker

Education and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Cllr Liz Brighthouse OBE, Chair | Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer, richard.doney@oxfordshire.gov.uk

The recommendation update tracker enables the Committee to monitor progress accepted recommendations. The tracker is updated with recommendations accepted by Cabinet. Once a recommendation has been updated, it will be shaded green and reported into the next meeting of the Committee, after which it will be removed from the tracker. If the recommendation will be update in the form of a separate item, it will be shaded yellow.

KEY	Due to Cabinet	With Cabinet	Complete
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Recommendations:

Meeting Date	Item	Recommendation	Lead	Update/response
21-Nov-25	Virtual School Report	1. That the Council should continue to work on improving attendance of those who are part of the Virtual School. 2. That the Council should continue to highlight the work of the Virtual school with governing boards and social workers to ensure they are well informed and engaged in supporting the education of children in care.	Lisa Lyons; Delia Mann; Charlotte Davey	Submitted to Cabinet January
21-Nov-25	Fostering	1. That the Council should commit to 'Fostering Friendly Oxfordshire' and continue to work with district councils and other key stakeholders to achieve this.	Lisa Lyons; Annette Perrington; Clare Pike	Submitted to Cabinet January

KEY	Due to Cabinet	With Cabinet	Complete
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Meeting date	Item	Recommendation	Lead	Update/response
		2. That the Council should explore in more detail the possibility of a council tax-related offer for foster carers.		
21-Nov-25 Page 64	Attainment	1. That the Council should adapt its protocol so that local members are notified when Cabinet members and senior officers visit schools within their division.	Lisa Lyons; Annette Perrington; Kim Wilson	Submitted to Cabinet January
		2. That the Council should celebrate successes and share best practice across the family of schools in the area.		
		3. That the Council, in developing the Oxfordshire Education and Inclusion Strategy, should ensure that sufficient attention is given to child safeguarding and protection as well as the curriculum review.		

Action Tracker

Education and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Cllr Liz Brighthouse, Chair | Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer, richard.doney@oxfordshire.gov.uk

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KEY	Delayed	In progress	Complete
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Actions:

Meeting date	Item	Action	Lead	Update/response
There are no outstanding action items				

Recommendation Update Tracker

Education and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Cllr Liz Brighthouse OBE, Chair | Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer, richard.doney@oxfordshire.gov.uk

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KEY	Update Pending	Update in Item	Updated
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Cabinet Response Date	Item	Recommendation	Lead	Update
17-Jun-25	Local Area Partnership SEND Update	1. The Council will publish the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as well as the RAG Rated Priority Action Plan Tracker and ensure they are accessible to the public. 2. The Council will set out how the views of the SEND Youth Forum, and its members, will be taken into account and how they will be presented, including any consultation prior to the publication of any reports about the Forum.	Lisa Lyons; Kate Reynolds; Matthew Tait	Update in January
16-Sep-25	Update of Children's Homes	That the Council should encourage Ofsted to ensure the registration period for children's homes is as short as possible and thereby expedite the process of placing children in registered settings.	Lisa Lyons; Jean Kelly; Charlotte Davey	Progress update to be provided
16-Sep-25	EOTAS Policy	That the Council, if the draft EOTAS Policy is approved by Cabinet, should commit to co-producing the parent carer	Lisa Lyons	Update in January

KEY	Update Pending	Update in Item	Updated
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Cabinet Response Date	Item	Recommendation	Lead	Update
		guidance relating to the policy in a timely fashion with it being reviewed by the Committee before it is submitted to Cabinet.		
16-Sep-25	s.19 of Education Act	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That, notwithstanding the complexity of the processes being set out, the Council should ensure that the process chart at Annexe B is re-designed to make it clearer and easier to follow. 2. That the Council should highlight how there will be sufficient resource – both financial and practical – to ensure the s.19 approach and Pathway of Action can function adequately. 	Lisa Lyons	Progress update to be provided
16-Sep-25	Home to School Transport	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Council should work at pace to organise personal transport budgets with appropriate flexibility to take account of individual circumstances. 2. That the Council should ensure regular review of the policy is to mean 'annual', subject to legislative changes. 	Lisa Lyons; Paul Fermer; Vic Kurzeja	Progress update to be provided
18-Nov-25	School Catering Services and Corporate Cleaning Services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Council should outline the specific measures it has taken to ensure that rural schools are protected and that all schools will receive high quality catering services. 2. That the Council should set out the specific steps it will take to ensure that the rights and interests of existing staff members will be protected, and that trade unions will be consulted and engaged throughout the process. 	Lorna Baxter; Vic Kurzeja	Progress update to be provided
18-Nov-25	Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Report	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Council should deploy a sustained, smart educational campaign to support parents and carers, particularly regarding online threats and should consider how best to do this. 	Lisa Lyons	Progress update to be provided

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