

REPORT TITLE: An update on the anticipated ‘Schools White Paper’ in relation to national reforms to the SEND system

Meeting:	Children’s Scrutiny
Date:	11th December 2025
Cabinet Member (if applicable)	Cllr Viv Kendrick – Children’s Services Cllr Jane Rylah - Education
Key Decision Eligible for Call In	No – This is not a decision
Purpose of Report : This is to provide Scrutiny with an update in relation to the ‘Schools White Paper’ in relation to SEND reforms that was expected to be published in the Autumn of 2025	
<p>Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To note the letter issued by the Secretary of State for Education sent to the Select Committee in response to their report ‘Solving the SEND Crisis’ To agree to a further report at a future panel meeting after the White Paper is published. <p>Reasons for Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A White Paper was expected in the Autumn of this year, however, the Secretary of State for Education in a letter to the Select Committee sent on the 22nd October explained that this was to be postponed to the new year. In line with Scrutiny Panel’s ongoing work plan officers want to provide the detail of what is outlined in the letter and agree to bring a comprehensive update once the White Paper has been published. 	
Resource Implications: Not Applicable	
Date signed off by <u>Executive Director</u> & name	Tom Brailsford – Executive Director for Children and Families – 28 th November 2025
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance?	N/A
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning (Monitoring Officer)?	N/A

Electoral wards affected: ALL

Ward councillors consulted: N/A

Public or private: Public

Has GDPR been considered? Yes

1. Executive Summary

It has been acknowledged that the current system for supporting children and their families with additional needs is complex and is need of reform. National Government outlined their commitment to review and propose change through a White Paper. This was originally anticipated in the Autumn of 2025. The Education Select Committee published a report [Solving the SEND Crisis](#) on 18th September 2025, and on 22nd October 2025, the Secretary of State for Education wrote to the chair of the Select Committee in response explaining:-

'we will bring forward a full Schools White Paper early in the new year, underpinned by our belief that high standards and inclusion are two sides of the same coin.'

This report is to update Scrutiny Panel.

2. Information required to take a decision

The 'Schools White Paper' will be the vehicle for proposals to reform the SEND system and is anticipated now in early 2026. The Secretary of State's letter is attached in full at Appendix 1, of note are the principles that are outlined which will underpin proposed reforms.

'Principles for SEND reform

1. **Early.** *Children should receive the support they need as soon as possible. This will start to break the cycle of needs going unmet and getting worse, instead intervening upstream, earlier in children's lives when this can have most impact.*
2. **Local.** *Children and young people with SEND should be able to learn at a school close to their home, alongside their peers, rather than travelling long distances from their family and community. Special schools should continue to play a vital role supporting those with the most complex needs.*
3. **Fair.** *Every school should be resourced and able to meet common and predictable needs, including as they change over time, without parents having to fight to get support for their children. Where specialist provision is needed for children in mainstream, special or Alternative Provision, we will ensure it is there, with clear legal requirements and safeguards for children and parents.*
4. **Effective.** *Reforms should be grounded in evidence, ensuring all education settings know where to go to find effective practice that has excellent long-term outcomes for children.*
5. **Shared.** *Education, health and care services should work in partnership with one another, local government, families, teachers, experts and representative bodies to deliver better experiences and outcomes for all our children.'*

When considering these principles alongside the aspirations and approaches the Kirklees Local Area Partnership holds and is taking forwards as part of our SEND 'Big Plan' and 'Our Kirklees Futures' Learning Strategy, there appears to be synergy.

Examples of this include;

- Our Cluster Communities and strengths in Early Years support
- The investment in Specialist Outreach teams
- Our investment in securing sufficient learning places by rebuilding and growing 2 of our Special Schools, introducing more Additionally Resourced Provisions and commissioned Alternative Provision.
- Our already strong Local Area Partnership

When the White Paper is published it will be important to continue to work together with our families to consider its implications. We will begin to plan for this as further details emerge.

3. Implications for the Council

3.1 Council Plan

Our SEND Big Plan aligns with our Council Plan, it explains that together we've always tried and will continue to make sure that every child has the best possible start in life and achieve their best. We know that there are always opportunities to improve how we do that - sometimes that's doing more, but often it's about doing things differently.

We're ambitious for children, young people and parents and carers in Kirklees. We're trying to make sure we support children and families at the earliest opportunity; our young people go to school in Kirklees with positive results; there's a consistent and inclusive offer; and whatever our young people are interested in, we want them to excel.

3.2 Financial Implications

N/A

3.3 Legal Implications

N/A

3.4 Climate Change and Air Quality

N/A

3.5 Risk, Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) or Human Resources

N/A

4. Consultation

We have been working across our partnership since the inspection to reflect on the outcome and take feedback as we develop the post inspection plan. We have taken advice and feedback from our assigned DfE Advisor and our assigned NHS England Advisor to ensure that the plan is fit for purpose, as well as ensuring we can take opportunities to fold in activity that will help us to improve.

5. Engagement

We have worked across the partnership to develop the plan and will provide regular updates on progress on a quarterly basis.

We will meet regularly with the Department for Education, NHS England and our Parent Carer forum representatives for challenge and support and we'll give public updates 4 times a year.

Consistency of experience across the partnership – making sure we do the right things at the right time for and with people in Kirklees is key. We'll use the 'measures' in the action plan above to help understand progress and challenges. We'll use the things our children, young people, parents and carers tell us to help change what we do and how we do it.

The work will be overseen by the Health and Wellbeing Board which has senior people from across our partnership. These include Councillors, the Voluntary sector, Police and Health as well as Council Services.

We will report into the Council's chief executive and directors every 6 weeks as well as reporting progress and challenges with our partners including the ICB, Education and our cross-partner Transformation and Commissioning Group. The day-to-day work will be managed by the SEND transformation programme board. We're extremely ambitious for our children, young people and families in Kirklees. The inspectors noticed our passion to make a difference and we're calling on all our partners to use all our joint energy to turn the Big Plan part 3 into reality.

6. Options

6.1 Options considered

N/A

6.2 Reasons for recommended option

N/A

7. Next steps and timelines

We will begin to plan for engagement sessions across the Local Area Partnership so that we may work through the content of the White Paper when it is published in order that we can fully consider together what's outlined and how we can plan next steps together. We will welcome the involvement of the Children's Scrutiny Panel activity to support these sessions.

8. Contact officer

Jo-Anne Sanders – Service Director (Learning and Early Support)

9. Background Papers and History of Decisions

SEND Big Plan - [SEND - The Big Plan! | How we plan for SEND | Kirklees SEND Local Offer](#)

Our Kirklees Futures - [Our Kirklees Futures | Kirklees Council](#)

10. Appendices

The letter from the Secretary of State for Education is attached in full at Appendix A.

11. Service Director responsible

Jo-Anne Sanders – Service Director (Learning and Early Support)