

# Cabinet



Date of meeting:	09 February 2026
Title of Report:	<b>Outcome of Area SEND Monitoring Inspection of the Plymouth Local Area Partnership</b>
Lead Member:	Councillor Sally Cresswell (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Apprenticeships)
Lead Strategic Director:	David Haley (Director for Childrens Services)
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Your Reference:	SEND Monitoring Inspection
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

## Purpose of Report

This report updates Cabinet on the outcome of the Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) Area SEND Monitoring Inspection undertaken between 01 and 03 December 2025. It summarises the progress made by the Plymouth Local Area SEND Partnership in addressing the five Areas for Priority Action identified during the full Area SEND Inspection in June 2023, and it sets out the actions required to ensure that improvement continues at pace and is sustained in the long term.

## Recommendations and Reasons

- I. That Cabinet notes the progress made by Plymouth Local Area Partnership and endorses the actions required to sustain improvements.

*Reason: To ensure Cabinet have oversight of improvements for children with SEND in our local area.*

## Alternative options considered and rejected

To not endorse the actions required to sustain improvements. The improvements recommended will ensure the achievement of continuous improvement to enable the Council to meet its statutory requirements.

## Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

Outcomes for Children and young people with SEND are linked to several priorities in the Plymouth Corporate Plan, particularly the ambition to make Plymouth “*a fairer, greener city where everyone does their bit... a great place to grow up and grow old*”. Their needs align with the Plan’s focus on fairness, tackling inequality, and improving access to healthcare, as well as its emphasis on stronger, safer communities and supporting families facing cost-of-living pressures. Ensuring children with SEND can access inclusive education, timely health support and appropriate local provision is therefore central to delivering the Corporate Plan’s wider vision for a fair, healthy and supportive city.

**Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:**

Provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities is funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and specifically the High Needs Block. It is also funded through National Health Service England (NHSE) to Integrated Care Boards (ICB's). The anticipated publication of the SEND White Paper should detail changes that will seek to tackle the national problem of DSG deficits managed by 66% of Local Authorities. Whilst the Government has currently agreed to extend the statutory override, the cost of borrowing falls to the revenue budget of the Local Authority. In terms of improvements the partnership has made as found by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) there is an emphasis on early intervention and prevention to avoid later and more costly intervention for children. Therefore, continuous improvement will help to alleviate pressures, alongside a comprehensive SEND sufficiency strategy and national drivers towards inclusion in mainstream settings, which is planned to be supported by a £3bn capital grant to be shared across all Local Authorities.

**Financial Risks**

There are risks that without comprehensive reform of the SEND system, the measures already put in place to enhance mainstream inclusion will not be adequate to address the deficit in the DSG. Ongoing improvements are reliant on continued investment to fulfil Local Authority statutory duties such as administration of Education, Health and Care Plans and on vital early intervention and prevention services such as Family Hubs, to ensure children's needs are identified and met at the earliest possible opportunity. Such activity gives confidence that children's needs can be met and can avoid the requests for education health and care plans from across the partnership.

**Legal Implications**

The Council must continue to meet its statutory duties under the Children and Families Act 2014, including identifying needs, delivering timely EHC assessments and plans, and securing provision, with failure posing risks of legal challenge and regulatory scrutiny. The Ofsted/CQC Monitoring Inspection assesses compliance with these duties, including joint responsibilities with the Integrated Care Board, and insufficient progress could have triggered further Government intervention. Regard must be given to the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010 ensuring that decisions on funding and service design reflect the duties placed on the Council. In addition, statutory requirements relating to the Dedicated Schools Grant, including deficit management, create further legal considerations, with effective early intervention and sufficiency planning helping to reduce compliance risks.

**Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:**

None

**Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:**

*\* When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.*

Evidence produced by organisations such as Unicef shows that families with children with SEND are disproportionately affected by child poverty because disability significantly raises household costs, limits parental employment opportunities, and increases reliance on public services that may be harder to access when living on a low income. UK data shows that households containing a disabled person face higher poverty rates than those without. Therefore, improvements in meeting children's needs are helpful in exacerbating some of the negative consequences of child poverty.

**Appendices**

\*Add rows as required to box below

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Briefing report title							

**Background papers:**

\*Add rows as required to box below

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**Sign off:**

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Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Amanda Davis (Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills)											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes Date agreed: 06/02/2026											
Cabinet Member approval: Councillor Cresswell approved via email. Date approved: 05/02/2026											