

CDC digest

Spring 2026

Dear all,

As predicted, it's been a busy start to the year. It began with the final suite on engagement events pre-SEND consultation paper. And then the launch of the paper itself. Along with everyone, we've been trawling through it with a toothcomb and Andrew will cover our initial thoughts in his piece below. However, following our roundtable recommendations, we were delighted that the government had listened to calls for a team wrapped around schools. This should be a key way of getting support to children and young people in a much more timely way.

March is always busy for the CDC teams, as many of our projects have review or finish date at the end of the financial year, so there are always events to deliver and resources to finish. This year, we also needed to deliver events to key stakeholders on the implications of the Consultation Paper for them. Recordings can be found [here](#). We have also been pivoting some events, such as CDC members' meetings and our National Event, so that attendees have had an opportunity to discuss the consultation paper and we can feed that back to the Department for Education (DfE). This ahead of the formal engagement events we're running for DfE – details in our events section below – which start on 20 April.

We also held the Ministerial Stakeholder Group, which enabled key sector representatives to feedback views and concerns to the Minister. One clear concern was the letter from Government Legal Department which had suggested that DfE would not be consulting on all elements of the reforms. The Minister was very clear that this was not the case and that DfE are keen to get views on the full set of proposals contained in the reforms. The Government Legal Department have now issued a letter making clear that government welcomes and will carefully consider, representations on any subject related to the proposed reforms.

We have also had the opportunity to feed into two of the critical reviews going on within government with the potential to impact on the lives of disabled children and young people and those with special educational needs. We have given evidence to the Milburn Review, which is seeking to understand the childhood experiences of those young people who are 'Not in Education, Training or Employment' and investigating why economic inactivity is rising amongst disabled young people and those with health conditions. We have also spoken to the team responsible for the independent review into mental health conditions, ADHD and autism. Also referred to as the 'prevalence review', led by Professor Peter Fonagy, it is examining trends in prevalence, challenges facing services and looking at how to strengthen prevention and early intervention.

We've been thinking about how we can do more to ensure we take our members' voices into the rooms with us when we're given these opportunities. To this end, we are reinstating the CDC Members Advisory Group. We were really heartened by the number of applications received and are confident that the group will ensure that the members meetings are

providing members with what they need and we have a chance to think about how we best represent members views. This is such an important time for the sector and we want to make sure that we're doing our absolute best to communicate the breadth of your views and experiences and enable you to share and learn from each other.



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Policy update: Developments in SEND, disability and children's policy

The Medium Term Planning Framework emphasises neighbourhood health models and integrated multidisciplinary teams, creating opportunities to align health transformation more closely with forthcoming SEND reforms and to strengthen local, community-based support for children and families.

Following its programme of engagement events, the government published the delayed and long-awaited document, SEND Reform: [Putting Children and Young People First Government Consultation](#), as part of the Schools White Paper.

We welcomed much of the ambition of the proposals, including the emphasis on inclusive education settings and the recognition of the importance of the early years. The Expert at Hand model and National Inclusion Standards reflected core CDC messages for making support available in practice.

Alongside this, we are clear that there are elements that need considerable attention and development, and proposals that will need to change if these reforms are to deliver on their stated ambitions. This includes accountability mechanisms for schools, the multi-agency system and the role of the health service, how decisions about school placements are made, and the implications for children in contact with the youth justice system

There must also be a robust assessment of the ongoing resources, both financial and workforce, required to deliver the plan's ambitions following the announced initial transition investment. It will be crucial that this encompasses the health and social care sectors as well as the education system.

We believe that the Government must be far clearer about how these reforms will address the drivers and outcomes of racial disparities experienced by children and young people in the education system and wider society.

Importance of meaningful consultation

As part of our role as Strategic Partner with DfE, CDC held a series of information webinars setting out specific content from the SEND consultation with relevance for different audiences:

- health professionals
- parent carers
- Local Authorities
- those working in education settings
- social care professionals.

Recordings of all the webinars are available [here](#). CDC's initial response to the SEND proposals is available [here](#).

Following the publication of a letter from the Government as part of a legal case in relation to the scope of the consultation, there has been understandable concern that elements of the proposals are fixed and that the Government will not seek or take differing views into account.

We strongly believe this is not the right approach. These are proposals, they are not complete, and should be informed by the knowledge, experience and insight of those across the system, including children and young people, parent carers and professionals.

Georgia Gould, the Minister for School Standards, has made her commitment to this clear and clarified that the Department will carefully consider submissions on any subject related to the proposed reforms.

The Department has also added additional content to the consultation webpage, stating:

"We welcome and will carefully consider comments and representations on all aspects of the consultation paper and subjects related to the proposed reforms, in addition to the specific consultation questions. Further contributions can be made in the text box at Question 39 or in the text box of Question 12 in the Easy Read version.

You can also engage with the consultation by signing up for consultation events and webinars with Ministers covering the full 0 to 25 system."

We expect the Department to treat this commitment with the greatest seriousness and encourage all members to share their views on any element of the proposals, both at the SEND engagement events, details of which are in the events section of this digest, and as part of their own consultation responses.

Funding announcements

The government has set out how some of the funding committed to deliver the SEND reforms will be allocated in 2026/27.

The Mainstream Inclusion Fund has announced how the first £500 million will be distributed, with £400 million for mainstream schools and the remaining £100 million split between early years sector and colleges.

For schools, the allocations recommend their spend the funding across 7 themes of activity to help deliver evidence-informed inclusive practice to children and young people. These are:

- **Ambitious leadership and governance**, embedding inclusion in planning, supported by ongoing assessment of cohort needs, data use and peer review.
- **Evidence-based support with early intervention**, so children and young people with SEND access targeted provision at the right time.
- **High quality teaching and inclusive curriculum**, with staff trained and deployed to meet a diverse range of needs.
- **Accessible and enriching provision beyond the classroom**, supporting personal development, independence and preparation for adulthood.
- **A safe and respectful culture** that fosters belonging and supports attendance and behaviour through skilled staff practice.

- **Strong partnerships with families and wider services** to support children and young people, particularly during transitions.
- **Inclusive and accessible environments**, designed to support learning, reduce distraction and meet sensory and regulatory needs.

DfE is requiring that schools must publish their inclusion strategy statement by 31 December 2026. This must set out how schools will use both their core funding and inclusion funding allocation to identify and meet the needs of their students and make meaningful steps to embed inclusive practice. The Department has committed to publish clear guidance and expectations to produce their inclusion strategy and embed inclusive practice, including providing a template.

High needs capital funding

The Department has also set out the allocations for the high needs provision capital allocation. This is £860 million in 2026/27 that is for Local Authorities to increase the capacity of mainstream schools to meet a wider range of needs.

The Department strongly recommend that Local Authorities use their capital allocations to invest in their mainstream provision from early years through to post-16, with a focus on:

- Creating specialist provision within mainstream schools and settings, including inclusion bases.
- Adaptations and improvements to the mainstream environment.
- Special school expansions (where appropriate).

To assess this funding and additional funding to develop their SEND Inclusion Plans and Expert at Hand Model, local areas will need to develop and submit a SEND reform plan to DfE and NHS England by 19 June 2026.

We expect the transformation allocations and guidance for Local Authorities and integrated to be published soon.

Health and Social Care Select Committee evidence session

The [Health and Social Care Select Committee held a special evidence session](#) on delivering health aspects of education, health and care plans.

Representatives included Anna Bird, Chief Executive at Contact and Chair of the Disabled Children's Partnership, alongside representatives from Royal Colleges and Designated Clinical Officers, who all set out the need for improved NHS involvement in supporting children and young people with special educational needs.

CDC has written to the Committee highlighting the fundamental importance of the health service in delivering an improved SEND system and the need for clear expectations underpinned by duties and accountability.

NHS Neighbourhood Plan published

The Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England published the [Neighbourhood Health Framework](#).

This is the latest in a series of guidance documents setting out more detail on how the NHS will deliver the goals of the 10 Year Plan, building on the [Medium Term Planning Framework](#).

The framework sets out expectations on the Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) and their partners in Local Authorities and health providers, to develop new neighbourhood health services, including the delivery of new neighbourhood health centres and integrated neighbourhood teams, that should join up services and care at the local level.

The guidance identifies children and young people as a high-priority cohort that local systems need to focus on when developing their neighbourhood health plans. It sets out four core objectives that neighbourhood health services should aim to achieve. For children, these include:

- Improving quality and access to care by enhancing paediatric expertise across the pathway, including primary care.
- By March 2029, reducing acute outpatient appointments for children under the age of 16 by 10%.
- Making substantial progress towards reducing community waiting times for children, as part of delivering the Medium Term Planning Framework success measures.

Joining up programmes

The guidance also recommends that ICBs and Local Authorities consider how their neighbourhood health strategy can be aligned with other relevant programmes.

This includes reform to the system of support for children with special educational needs and disabilities. SEND reform is designed to deliver high-quality support to children, as soon as a need is identified. ICBs are already working with Local Authorities, as they set out plans for delivery of SEND reforms in their areas and will be required to jointly establish an integrated 'local experts at hand' offer, to provide early support to children with SEND.

Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school

The government has [published a consultation on new guidance](#) to replace Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions at School.

This is statutory guidance that sets out how schools should support pupils with medical conditions and allergies, in a way that upholds their right to an education and removes barriers related to their medical condition. This includes the entirety of school life, including school trips, clubs, activities and wraparound provision.

The proposed guidance sets out updated requirements on school leadership on a range of elements, including:

- The principles underpinning an inclusive approach.
- The policies that need to be in place to manage medical conditions and medications.
- The role of individual healthcare plans.
- Responsibilities for incident reporting and learning.
- It also sets a range of examples of what constitutes unacceptable practice that governing bodies must make sure they proactively ensure do not take place in their settings.

The proposed guidance also includes a new focus on schools' responsibilities for managing allergies and provides more information about a range of medical conditions that schools will be expected to support.

This consultation does not include the nature of the relationship between schools and the NHS and the function of delegation. The government has committed to issuing non-statutory guidance on this later in the year.

Disabled children's law review

Josh MacAlister, the Minister for Children and Families, provided an initial response to the [Law Commission report on Disabled Children's Social Care](#).

This was an interim update that reaffirmed the government's commitment to creating a simpler, more consistent and more effective framework for disabled children's social care but did not provide specific updates or proposals.

It highlighted the rollout of the 'family help' element of the Families First Partnership, the importance of the SEND reform consultation, and the need for alignment between the SEND system and children's social care.

The letter is available [here](#).

Featured blog

Youth Voice Matters Conference 2026

On Wednesday 18 February, over 110 children and young people travelled to Birmingham to take part in the Youth Voice Matters children and young people's conference. This event, part of the Department for Education (DfE) funded national programme [Making Participation Work](#), is the largest gathering of disabled children and young people and those with special educational needs in England.

Youth Voice Matters provides an opportunity for children and young people to develop their participation skills and to recognise the impact they can have when taking part in strategic participation. The event is co-designed by children and young people from the young SEND advisory group to the DfE, [FLARE](#).

The theme of the 2026 event was Youth Citizenship. During the conference, delegates explored:

- What they have in common with each other and how we can use our shared goals to shout louder.
- How they can work together with other young people across the country, to talk to decision makers.
- How to be strong leaders and work with the decision makers, who can help them create change.
- How to share their skills and power with other young people, so they can be youth citizens too.
- The ways we can keep on working together after Youth Voice Matters, to use our voices and experiences positively for change.

Attendees heard from Minister for School Standards, Georgia Gould. She delivered a keynote speech, met with the members of the FLARE group to discuss the SEND system and took part in some of the workshops on offer.

Activities and workshops on the day focussed on youth citizenship, including:

- A session led by FLARE, where attendees explored how they could work more effectively as a team to have their voices heard and how they could advocate for the other young people in their community, not just for themselves.
- [Haringey Shed](#), an inclusive performing arts organisation for children and young people, delivered an interactive session where young people learned how they can use performing arts, drama, and movement to explore Youth Citizenship.
- The [National Youth Agency](#), the national body for youth work in England, delivered a workshop exploring how young people connect online. Through interactive activities

and discussion, attendees learned ways to express themselves, take part safely, and feel confident using digital spaces to show who they are and what matters to them.

- [VoiceBox](#) is an international content platform by young people for young people. They delivered a session which taught young people how they can express their thoughts and get people to listen what they have to say through creative expression. Workshop attendees thought about what matters to them most and learned how to share their voice through writing, art, poetry, or other creative ways.
- The final workshop was delivered by the Policy Team at the [National Children's Bureau](#) and [Young NCB](#) members. In this workshop, attendees learned about the skills children and young people need to vote and participate in politics. Through interactive activities and scenarios, they practiced these skills and how to use their voices for voting and beyond.

Attendees also had the opportunity to feed into the DfE's work on the SEND reforms. This included sharing their thoughts on how children and young people can provide feedback on their educational experiences and shaping the [Council for Disabled Children's consultation](#), taking place after the publication of the Schools White Paper.

Here are some key statistics from the day:

- 100% of young people who attended the event who completed the feedback form said they had fun at the event.
- 78% of young people who completed the feedback form said they developed the skills they need to share their voice.
- 86% of young people who completed the feedback form said they learned something new.
- 74% of supporters said the young delegates they attended with were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the day.

Here's what the adults who were supporting the children and young people told us:

- 'Our young leaders really grew in confidence throughout the day, it was lovely to see.'
- 'Young people enjoyed the workshops and mixing with other young people and feeling their voice was stronger together.'
- 'All of them agreed it was the best day out ever and loads of fun.'

Comments from the children and young people who joined us on the day:

- 'I love how safe and accepting the place felt as a whole to everyone. I felt really at home.'
- 'It was an amazing experience.'
- 'I loved the creative workshop and expressing my loves and interests with words or drawings.'

- 'I loved learning about different ideas and coming together as a community as young people with SEND and disabilities.'

To stay up to date on future events for both young people and professionals, our work at the Council for Disabled Children and Making Participation Work, please sign up to:

- The [Making Ourselves Heard Forum](#).
- The [Making Ourselves Heard newsletter](#), tick 'participation'.

If you are a young person and would like to find out more about upcoming events and opportunities, you can:

- Follow us on Instagram [@national_childrens_bureau](#).
- Join the [Young National Children's Bureau Network](#) to receive a monthly newsletter.

Events, training and resources

SEND engagement events

CDC and the Department for Education (DfE) are partnering to host a series of online and in-person engagement events as part of the [SEND Reform: Putting Children and Young People First consultation](#).

These events are an important opportunity for anyone with an interest in the consultation to share their views on the proposals – including parents and carers, local authorities, schools, early years and further education settings, and social care and health representatives.

Each event will provide an overview of the consultation areas and the vision for reform, followed by breakout groups to discuss key themes.

Please register for one of the following:

- [Monday 20 April](#) – Leicester
- [Tuesday 21 April](#) – Online
- [Wednesday 22 April](#) – Online
- [Monday 27 April](#) – Online
- [Tuesday 28 April](#) – Bristol
- [Thursday 30 April](#) – Online
- [Friday 1 May](#) – Online
- [Tuesday 5 May](#) – Sevenoaks
- [Wednesday 6 May](#) – Darlington
- [Friday 8 May](#) – Stansted
- [Monday 11 May](#) – Birmingham
- [Tuesday 12 May](#) – Liverpool
- [Wednesday 13 May](#) – London
- [Thursday 14 May](#) – Leeds

Please note registration for these events is on a first come first served basis. Space at events is limited so that conversations can be meaningful and content will be the same at each event. Please only register for one of these events, so that as many people as possible can take part. If you are unable to secure a place, you can still access a range of information about the consultation through a series of [five recorded information webinars](#).

We encourage you to formally respond to all the consultation questions through [submitting a written response to the consultation. You can do that here](#).

The DfE is also hosting online events for the education sector and an online event for parent carers. Find out more about all of the engagement opportunities [here](#).

CDC SEND awards

Join us at the Great Hall, Birmingham University, Edgbaston Campus The Great Hall – University of Birmingham, on 23 April 2026 for an Awards Ceremony celebrating 'What Works in SEND'. We shall be celebrating collaborative systems, innovation and service improvement in SEND across ten categories. The Awards will be followed by an early evening drinks reception.

Find out more about the awards and book your tickets [here](#).

CDC's eLearning

The CDC's eLearning covers a range of SEND-related topics. These are primarily intended for professionals and practitioners but are open to all, including parent carers. These programmes have been developed with input from practitioners, parent carers and leaders. CDC continues to seek and respond to opportunities to support further workforce development.

Browse our courses and start your eLearning [here](#).

SENDIAS and Parent Carer Forum Memorandum of Understanding Template

Created collaboratively by North Somerset SENDIAS service and North Somerset PCF, this template supports a cordial and effective working relationship. It sets out shared principles, working practices, and clearly defines organisation-specific roles and responsibilities.

Download the resource [here](#).

The Case for Governance 2026 Report

This January, the National Governance Association (NGA) celebrated its twentieth anniversary; an occasion that not only recognised two decades of powerful impact but also marked the launch of a significant new report *The case for governance*.

NGA's work highlights the critical role governing boards play in connecting schools and trusts to the communities they serve. Their anniversary report shines a light on the distinctive contribution of more than 230,000 governors and trustees who volunteer their time and expertise to provide strategic leadership and help ensure every pupil receives the best education possible. It's a powerful reminder of the depth of commitment underpinning the education system.

Read more about the case for governance [here](#).

Youth Justice Annual Insights Report Published

A report from the [Youth Justice Board for England and Wales \(YJB\)](#) highlights concerning and ongoing disparities for specific cohorts of young people that are impacted by interactions with the youth justice system. The report also serves as an important roadmap to address these challenges and drive change in the system.

Read more [here](#).

A practical guide to identifying SEND needs in the early years

Dingley's Promise has worked in collaboration with the Department for Education to create [Assessment Guidance](#) for early years educators, using our extensive knowledge of identifying and responding to a wide variety of needs within our centres and using effective strategies to support children in making their next developmental steps.

New report From the Children's Commissioner

The Children's Commissioner has published a [new report](#) entitled 'Children Waiting to Leave Hospital', which looks at how, for a number of children, hospital becomes a place they spend months and sometimes years, of their lives.

The report sets out why children are waiting to be discharged and what their experience of delayed discharge is like. It brings together data on how long children spend in hospital across their childhoods, alongside the voices and experiences of families, health and care professionals working in hospitals, hospices, community nursing teams and care providers. It also sets out the issues facing children whose hospital stays are being prolonged or more frequent because the support they need to be in the community is not in place.

Fight for ordinary

A new report reveals that providing faster access to support and earlier help for children who struggle with talking and understanding words, could create an incredible £8 billion in economic benefits for the UK.

These findings, from a joint report by the Disabled Children's Partnership and the Speech, Language and Communication Alliance, show that better support could be transformative – for our workforce, our economic growth and our children. As the government works towards its ambition to give every child the best start in life, these savings will be vital.

Read the report [here](#).

Share your experience

NHS England and Department of Health and Social Care national call for evidence

NHS England and the Department of Health and Social Care are launching a national call for evidence to improve health services for children and young people in England.

They are developing a Modern Service Framework (MSF) for children and young people (CYP) to deliver a step-change in child health over the next decade, particularly improving quality and performance of CYP health services.

MSFs were announced in the 10 Year Health Plan as a way to support consistent, high quality and high value care in a specific area. The CYP MSF will bring together a focused set of evidence-based interventions that make the greatest difference to effectiveness, safety and experience across children and young people's pathways. It will set out the long-term outcomes they aim to achieve, provide clear standards to support impactful care and highlight where new innovations could accelerate system improvements.

To do this, they need your contributions. Please complete the survey: [CYP Call for Evidence Survey](#) by 17:00 on 24 April.

If you wish to submit more than one intervention, you must complete a separate form for each intervention. If you have any questions or need support, please contact the CYP MSF team at: england.cyp.msf@nhs.net.

National survey – how health, education and social care services are provided for families of children with disability

CDC are working on a national research programme about multi-sector services to disabled children with Newcastle and Exeter Universities. We have helped to develop a national survey about how health, education and social care services are provided for families of children with disability and what a high-quality service might look like. By answering the survey there is a further opportunity for you, and your organisation to be involved in the next stages of the research.

Parent Carers: Please complete [this survey](#) – this will take approximately 20 minutes. The closing date is 6 April.

Professionals: Please complete [this survey](#) – this will take approximately 20 minutes. The closing date is 15 April.

By sharing your experiences and views, you will help build a clearer picture of what NHS and other services families currently receive and what they need – helping NHS professionals, young people and parent carers.

What else we're doing at CDC

Health

Through the CDC Learning and Support Offer, we are currently working with a number of local areas: Bury on developing and embedding a refreshed Co-Production Charter, Tameside on preparing for significant change, Sheffield on refreshing the local SEND JSNA, and Wirral on a communication and partnership working peer review. While all of these pieces of work will provide immediate benefits to the local areas, they will also stand them in good stead as they lay the foundations for SEND reform.

We are also pleased to be starting our first piece of work in our partnership with [IMPOWER](#), supporting Dorset to develop their SEND Reform Plan. Over the next three months, we will be working with local stakeholders and IMPOWER colleagues to co-develop a high quality plan, before moving into a deeper focus on developing the local Experts at Hand model. We look forward to bringing our organisations' expertise together for the benefit of local areas at this time of significant change in the sector.

[You can read about the CDC Learning and Support Offer here](#). If you would like to discuss potential support, please contact rethink@ncb.org.uk

The Research and Improvement for SEND Excellence (RISE) Partnership has delivered training to over 2,000 practitioners from across the country. Looking at topics including 'Navigating Health and SEND', 'Understanding Education Other than at School' and 'Understanding the Social Care Offer for SEND'.

We've also been working with local areas to improve Education, Health and Care Plans processes and co-production, ensuring children and young people, as well as their families, have a better experience overall. As we prepare for the next and final year of the RISE partnership, look out for the upcoming SEND Workforce Survey, to understand what you want to learn more about, whether that's Schools White Paper reforms or other aspects of SEND systems.

What works in SEND

The What Works in SEND (WWiS) programme has continued to build a wealth of evidence of both primary and secondary research. Recent examples of effective practice from the work of local SEND systems that meet our evidence standards include:

- [Enfield's primary to secondary Transition Improvement Programme](#).
- [Bath and North East Somerset's early intervention in the early years](#).

CDC hosted a national webinar on 12 February, exploring learning from the WWiS programme. The WWiS team delivered a series of presentations, sharing insights from the programme's growing evidence base. The session highlighted how the WWiS Effective Practice Evidence Framework is being used to capture and share examples of strong system-level practice, alongside deep dives into Hertfordshire's continuous improvement journey and North Tyneside's Early Years Partnership. Attendees heard key learning from published case

studies and had the opportunity to explore approaches further through dedicated Q and A sessions.

On 18 March, the WWiS team held the final learning event for the Local Area Youth Voice, Engagement and Participation Learning Community. The event brought together eight local authorities to mark the end of six months of shared learning, focused on embedding youth voice in local SEND systems. The learning event offered a focused opportunity to reflect on progress and the practical approaches developed to strengthen youth voice in SEND systems. One of the most impactful moments of the day was hearing directly from the Young People's Panel, whose thoughtful and candid reflections provided a powerful reminder of why meaningful participation matters. Their insights not only grounded the discussions in lived experience but also prompted strong engagement from local authority colleagues, who noted how the perspectives shared would directly shape their next steps.

The final learning event also offered strong opportunities for peer learning as each Local Authority showcased the changes they had been working on. The momentum and commitment across all Local Authorities was clear, with a shared focus on continuing to strengthen meaningful youth voice in local SEND systems.

Find out more about the WWiS programme by visiting our website [here](#).

Reaching Excellence and Ambition for all Children (REACH)

CDC has continued to support Change Programme Partnerships (CPPs) through the REACH consortium. REACH are the DfE's delivery partner for the SEND and Alternative Provision Change Programme, supporting 32 local areas to implement and learn from nationally and locally developed initiatives, whilst also capturing [learning and insights](#) from these initiatives to share with the CPPs, the DfE and other key organisations and individuals outside of the Change Programme.

After much anticipation, we now have a published [Schools White Paper](#) and a [SEND Reform Consultation](#) document, both setting out significant changes to our education system and the way in which disabled children and those who have special educational needs are supported. Many of the proposed changes relate to the work Change Programme local areas have been developing and testing over the last 2.5 years, in particular where the purpose is to strengthen universal and targeted support.

As REACH, our role as the delivery partner to this work comes to an end in March 2026 and we are currently focussed on capturing the learning and examples from Change Programme areas to provide a foundation on which other areas can build as they embark on their own change journeys.

Social Care

The Social Care team has been busy delivering a variety of projects through our Strategic Reform Partner contract with the Department for Education (DfE). This included delivering an online roundtable for parent carers to discuss the five principles of the SEND reform with the Education Minister. Between December 2025 and January 2026, CDC also hosted nine regional engagement events across the country for DfE to listen to and understand the views and experiences of parent carers, teachers and other SEND experts across the system. 748 people attended the 9 events across the country.

Our last CDC Members meeting took place in March 2026. The meeting focused on the SEND Reform consultation and provided an opportunity for Members to hear from DfE on the reforms and to discuss the consultation.

Under the RISE programme, we have published a number of case studies, which are examples of effective practice from the work of local SEND systems that have met the What Works in SEND (WWiS) evidence standards. The team delivered a series of regional online training sessions as part of the RISE contract on Understanding the Social Care Offer in the context of inclusion. This training is designed to contextualise inclusion for social care practitioners and leaders, and support practitioners to understand the legal framework of disabled children and young people's rights and entitlements to accessing social care services.

Following the publication of a series of guides for schools, FE colleges and early years settings on the disability duties in the Equality Act, CDC published a series of webinars for schools and for early years settings. The webinars are designed to support staff in applying the learning from the guides in their own settings and can be accessed [here](#).

We have also been developing more of our traded income work, in particular supporting local authorities in relation to stakeholder engagement and co-production of their short breaks services for disabled children and their families. If you want to find out more, email us at cdc@ncb.org.uk.

Special Educational Consortium

Since the last update, the Special Educational Consortium (SEC) have been joined at our monthly meetings by Prof. Karen Guldberg, Minister Olivia Bailey and Dame Christine Lenehan. These speakers have given members the opportunity to hear from them, as well as pose questions to explore, critique and endorse recent policy direction.

Now the Schools White Paper and SEND Consultation (among others!) have now been published, the team have been rushed off our feet. We will be responding to the consultation and are busy collating member views and trying to reach consensus – which is not always easy with 47 member organisations from across the SEND sector. Our next few meetings will be reserved for discussion around the ongoing consultations.

To find out more about the consortium and our work, please visit the website.

Early Years SEND (EYSEND)

The EYSEND Partnership is a coalition of organisations committed to improving access and inclusion in the early years. CDC are the lead partner in the partnership, also working with ECU, Dingley's Promise, nasen, Contact and Speech and Language UK.

The last quarter has been full of delivery for all partners in the lead up to the final stretch in the current iteration of the programme. Many events have been held across the partnership, including, national seminars, network ALS meetings and successful training sessions.

As part of the EYSEND Partnership, we provide strategic support to local areas with their local inclusion planning. This year, CDC have supported Norfolk, Hull, York, Birmingham, Torbay and Tower Hamlets development, implementation and evaluation of their early years ordinarily available provision.

As I write this, we are busy finalising our National Event, which will be held in person in Birmingham on Thursday 12 March 2026. This event will focus on the Best Start in Life Strategy with speakers from parent carer forums, the DfE and experts in reaching multilingual families. We are expecting over 100 attendees, our largest in person event to date!

You can find out more about training and other events from all six Partners on our training calendar or by signing up to our EYSEND newsletter.

The Information, Advice and Support Services Network (IASSN)

This quarter the IASSN have started running workshops around the country for SENDIAS services. So far, we've been in London and Birmingham and we have York and Manchester to come. These sessions are focused on the White Paper, the work of the IASSN, what support services need from us going forward and also a session run by external trainers focusing on how those working for SENDIAS services are managing the challenge of change.

We know SENDIAS services will be the first port of call for many children, young people and families in this period of change and we hope these sessions will support them to support those that approach them.

Other than this we've been continuing working on our [resources](#) and our [reports](#) and planning a busy period coming up!

Participation

We held our annual [Youth Voice Matters children and young people's conference](#) as part of the [Making Participation Work programme](#), more information on this event can be found earlier in this Digest. As part of the programme, we also delivered our third practitioners' national event, this time exploring the DfE's schools white paper. Participation and engagement professionals explored the proposed changes and discussions focussed on children and young people's voice. Monthly coffee mornings this quarter have focussed on

co-creating resources with children and young people, running hackathon events, and transitional safeguarding. You can find out more about our events [here](#).

The [FLARE group](#) is continuing to support Department for Education with the SEND reforms, discussing different elements of the proposed changes in its advisory group meetings. We are also currently recruiting to the group; more information [here](#).

Following the publication of the schools white paper *Every Child Achieving and Thriving*, the Participation Team have been travelling across England to speak with disabled children and young people and those with special educational needs about their thoughts, experiences and ideas, so they can be included in the consultation and shape the reforms. In addition to this, we have published some accessible guides focussing on the different proposals put forward by the Government. You can find out more [here](#).

Get involved

Applications now open for the IASSN Children and Young People's Steering Group

Applications are now open for the IASSN Children and Young People's Steering Group and your support in helping recruit new members would be really appreciated.

The IASSN Children and Young People's Steering Group is made up of twelve disabled young people and young people with special educational needs, aged 16–25. All members have previously accessed or been involved with, their local SENDIAS service.

You can find out more about the group's purpose, how it works and the benefits of membership [on its website](#).

FLARE group recruitment

FLARE, CDC's young SEND advisory group to DfE, is looking for new members to join the group for one year (May 2026–March 2027).

FLARE stands for Friendship, Learning, Achieve, Reach and Empower. The group represents the views of disabled children and young people and those with SEN all over England. FLARE works together to share its views and experiences to help the DfE and other organisations to understand how disabled children and young people and those with SEN want to receive the support and services they need.

If you or a young person you know is interested in taking part please complete [this form](#) by 17:00 on Wednesday 15 April 2026. If this form is not accessible for you, please email us at participation@ncb.org.uk and we can speak about how you can share your application with us in the way that works for you.

Apply for CDC membership

At CDC we know that we are stronger and have a bigger voice if we are together. The CDC membership is a collection of over 400 voluntary or community organisations that represent the various facets of the SEND and Alternative Provision sector.

Benefits of becoming a CDC member include:

- Access to the CDC members online forum which provides the opportunity for peer-to-peer support on challenges and solutions, best practice, and information and resource sharing.
- Networking opportunities to connect with professionals, policymakers, and other organisations in the field.
- Policy Influencing by actively participating in discussions and initiatives aimed at influencing policies.
- Access to a wealth of resources including a monthly newsletter, quarterly digest and news alerts.
- Direct updates from the Department for Education.
- Invitations to join CDC working groups.

To become a CDC member, your organisation must be:

- A registered charity or Community Interest Company with a special interest in disabled children and young people and those with SEN, and / or a provider of Alternative Provision.
- Based in England.
- Committed to the CDC values and our [policy on inclusion](#).

To apply to become a CDC member please click [here](#).

Welcome to our newest CDC members

[Nerve Tumours UK](#): the leading voice for people living with Neurofibromatosis in the UK. Providing crucial medical and non-medical support, in the form of information, regional patient days, online communities, a network of healthcare professionals, and a national NF helpline, Nerve Tumours UK helps those who are living with NF to live the best life they can.

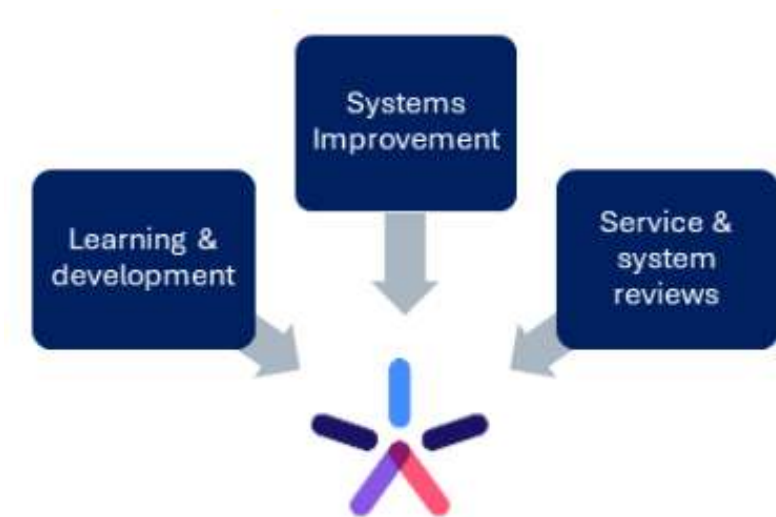
[Autism Voice Limited](#): a parent-driven, not-for-profit organization set up by parents of an autistic child, who struggled to get acceptance and recognition from members of their community in South London. Autism Voice aims to end stigma and discrimination attached to Autism.

CDC's local support offer

Were you aware that CDC teams can help local area leaders and their partners address challenges in local SEND systems?

Our teams bring a wealth of knowledge of SEND and insight into the policy and systems surrounding it. Using our experience of training and facilitation, we can help you to build partnerships, skills and knowledge, and effectively address your local challenges. We take a supportive, non-judgemental approach which combines a welcoming atmosphere, friendly facilitators and a focus on solutions.

Our wide-ranging expertise and flexible approach mean that we will always work with you to identify the most appropriate support for the challenges that you and your partners face. We bring expertise across the SEND system, including multi-agency working, health, social care, participation and much more.



Recent pieces of work have included:

- Training on The Equality Act, Challenging Conversations, Data and Voice in Commissioning and Safeguarding Disabled Children.
- Support to develop strategic outcomes frameworks, co-production charters, SEND strategies and Short Breaks strategies.
- Reviews of a SENDIAS Service and a Keyworking Service.

To find out more about our offer, please visit [our website](#) or talk a member of our team by contacting rethink@ncb.org.uk.

About the Digest

The CDC Digest is a quarterly roundup of all the essential policy, practice and other news involving disabled children and young people, and their families. If you would like to be added to the list to receive this digest, please visit our [website](#) and tick 'CDC Digest'

About CDC

CDC is the umbrella body for the disabled children's sector in England, with links to other UK nations. We are the only national body that brings together the diverse range of organisations that work with and for disabled children to support the development and implementation of policy and practice. Our work impacts on over 800,000 disabled children and their families. CDC hosts Making Ourselves Heard, the IASS Network, the Special Educational Consortium and the Transition Information Network.

Find out more



councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk



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INFORMATION
NETWORK



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OURSELVES
HEARD



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FOR DISABLED
CHILDREN
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United for Disabled Children

CDC brings people and organisations together to drive change in society and deliver a better childhood for disabled children the UK. We interrogate policy, uncover evidence and develop more effective ways of supporting disabled children and their families. Together with National ~~Children's Bureau~~, we are united for a better childhood.

Let's work together: 020 7843 6000 | cdc@ncb.org.uk

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NATIONAL CHILDREN'S BUREAU

National ~~Children's~~ Bureau is registered charity number 258825 and a company limited by guarantee number 00952717. Registered office: 23 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN.