Local Area Partnership SEND Update

Find out about changes, improvements and SEND Reform in the world of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in Oxfordshire.

Autumn 2026



Oxfordshire's SEND Reform Plan - approved

Children and young people with SEND across Oxfordshire will benefit from improved access to specialist support following government approval of the county's SEND Reform Plan.

Oxfordshire's Local Area Partnership SEND Reform Plan has been approved by government, securing commitment to improve support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The plan includes the recruitment of more educational psychologists and therapists through a new 'experts at hand' offer, the creation of inclusion support bases in mainstream schools, and greater support through locality-based teams.



The reforms will be supported by £4.9 million of government funding over the next three years. Oxfordshire will also receive a High Needs Stability Grant, helping to reduce the dedicated schools grant deficit and support the long-term sustainability of SEND services.

The plan has been developed and will be delivered through Oxfordshire's Local Area Partnership, including the council, NHS partners and the Oxfordshire Parent Carer Forum.

SEND reform plan to support children and young people approved for Oxfordshire

Experts at Hand Recruitment - 90% complete

Workforce mobilisation is progressing across Educational Psychology (EP), Occupational Therapy (OT) and Speech and Language Therapy (SALT). 30 out of 34 identified posts have now been recruited (OT and SALT posts at bands 7, 5 and 4 have been recruited) while EP and assistant roles have been advertised. Staff who were recruited in August are about to start work.

Adverts are live and applications have been received for Specialist Advisory Teachers, Advisory Support Workers, Best Start Inclusion Practitioners and Assistant EPs. An EP role is also being advertised, and adverts for Specialist SENDCOs, Team Leads/Area Managers, Early Years SEND Teachers and Support Workers, and a Specialist EP are due to go live.

For clinical staffing, the Year 1 Plan provides for 20 SALT and 14 OT FTE with only 4 posts left to recruit to. Planning for Year 2 workforce expansion is already underway. Experts at Hand | Jobs



Speech and language support for over 100 Oxfordshire schools

Eighty additional primary schools across Oxfordshire will, for the first time take part in a GL Assessments WellComm speech and language programme, ensuring support is available early, when it is needed most.

The Oxfordshire 'Out Loud' WellComm programme is a £90,000 investment by Oxfordshire County Council, through its new SEND reform budget for the academic year 2026-27. It is set to benefit all pupils, not just those who have special educational needs and disabilities.

In addition to the Wellcomm investment, Oxford Health has delivered a major waiting list recovery programme within its speech and language therapy service. Between September 2024 and August 2026, the number of children and young people waiting reduced from 2,890 to 1,214. Over the same period, the number waiting more than a year reduced from 1,408 to 149, representing an almost 90 per cent reduction in long waits.



Speech and language support for over 100 Oxfordshire schools

Reviewing medication intervention for sleep difficulties

Accessing support, including medication intervention for sleep difficulties has recently been reviewed within the NHS for Oxfordshire and across the Thames Valley for children and adolescents with neurodevelopmental conditions.

There is already fantastic sleep support available to families from services such as the health vising/school nurse team via the Chat Health text service and from the charity Cerebra: Sleep Tips

Joint guidance on the use of melatonin in this group of children has been produced for use in all areas within the Thames Valley. The guidance reinforces the importance of non-pharmacological interventions as the preferred first-line approach for sleep difficulties, but where these have been trialled and found to be insufficient, melatonin may be considered. For further information about the Thames Valley formulary position of melatonin and the associated guidance see: Melatonin Guidance

Need more information on SEND Reform?

For information on SEND Reform, including a leaflet and slides, please go to: SEND Reform Oxfordshire | Oxfordshire Schools

Hello from James Reeley new Head of Service for CAMHS services

My professional background is as a Mental Health Nurse and I have worked with children, families and adults in a variety of settings throughout my career. It's been my privilege to work in Learning Disability Services, CAMHS services and also in some specialist roles in broader mental health services.

My most recent previous role I oversaw the management and leadership of CAMHS and All Age Eating Disorder Services in The Black Country in the Midlands. As the named contact and lead for SEND for the CAMHS services, I fostered regular positive relationships with colleagues in the SEND system, and I used to manage our engagement in inspections and system wide developments.

The SEND reforms offer us an opportunity to strengthen needs led approaches and family experiences rather than have our understanding of children's needs gatekept by labels.

I am keen to build warm and positive relationships and I look forwards to meeting you all.



Best Start Family Hubs Update

There has been good progress in developing Oxfordshire's Family Hubs, with the first hub now open at Cuddesdon Corner. Following Cabinet approval of the strategic direction in July, plans are progressing for four Family Hubs in Didcot, Witney, Banbury and Wantage/Grove.

As the programme develops, we are working with partners to ensure the Family Hubs offer is inclusive and meets the needs of children and young people with additional needs and SEND, and their families. In line with Department for Education requirements, this includes developing a clear additional needs offer and recruiting five Best Start Inclusion Practitioner (BSIP) roles to help strengthen this area of work.

Partners can keep up to date by signing up to the Family Hubs newsletter, while information about the developing Family Hubs offer and support available to families will be published through the Family Information Service (FIS).

Best Start in Life Plan | Oxfordshire County Council

Making a Difference for Young People

47 Supported Internships underway

47 young people are now undertaking supported internships (13% improvement on 2025) which support young people with SEND into sustained, paid employment. This includes 4 young people who are starting a pilot project at Horton Hospital which is more intense aims to ensure that young people are more 'work ready'.

SEND Preparing for Adulthood - Employment

The Reverse Recruitment Fair - Thursday 26th November 2026, 11:00-5:00pm at The Kassam Stadium, Oxfordshire.

The event is to help young people with SEND, their families/carers and the professionals who support them to better understand the opportunities, pathways and support available as young people prepare for adulthood and employment.

Our young people will benefit from having different services, employers and areas of expertise in the room, so they can ask questions, explore options and make connections in a supportive and accessible environment.

Find out more about opportunities for Young People with SEND here.

Making a Difference in Early Years - remarkable everyday

This snapshot summarises complex and long term work undertaken by a team of people. With thanks to the OCC Early Years Team for sharing.



'A' was referred to the Early Years SEND Team at two years of age, for support due to his delayed speech, differences with social interactions and social communication, sensory processing differences, attention and concentration difficulties and delayed play and self-care skills.

At the age of four, he received diagnoses of Autism, Avoidant and Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID), Sensory Processing difficulties and severe speech and language delay as part of Global Developmental Delay. His mother who neither spoke nor read English, had to give up full time work to look after him. The family lived in a one bedroom property.

The Early Years team mobilised the Team Around the Family who together arranged parent autism advice, speech therapy, a charity grant application for a disabled buggy, community paediatric and community dental appointments, health visitor and local community support service. Over a series of visits, and challenges 'A''s communication is improving, he has a special school place and the Team Around the Family continue to support. 'A''s mother said:

'...your help and advice has so been so helpful to us. When you come to see me and Ali it is really good for us and in terms of my mental health it means everything as it is working out for us.'

Please contact SEND.PMO@oxfordshire.gov.uk if you have questions or good news to share.

Oxfordshire

SEND local offer website

Support and services for children and young people with additional needs from 0-25.

The SEND Local Offer is a great resource for all things SEND in Oxfordshire.

Find out what we are doing to make it everyone's 'go to' for SEND resources.