Open Agenda

Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission

Tuesday 20 October 2026
7.00 pm
Ground Floor Meeting Room G01A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

Membership

Councillor Rachael Penny (Chair)
Councillor Hellen Benavides (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Jasmine Ali
Councillor Sam Dalton
Councillor Callum Fowler
Councillor Tori Griffiths
Councillor Felicia Johnston
Martin Brecknell (Co-opted member)
Alie Kallon (Co-opted member)
Mannah Kargbo (Co-opted member)
Claire Williams (Co-opted member)

Reserves

Councillor Colin Boyle
Councillor Ryan Cox
Councillor Selena Gray
Councillor Richard Leeming
Councillor Sunny Lambe
Councillor Patrickson Amechi Obanya
Councillor Jen Thornton

INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Access to information

You have the right to request to inspect copies of minutes and reports on this agenda as well as the background documents used in the preparation of these reports.

Babysitting/Carers allowances

If you are a resident of the borough and have paid someone to look after your children, an elderly dependant or a dependant with disabilities so that you could attend this meeting, you may claim an allowance from the council. Please collect a claim form at the meeting.

Access

The council is committed to making its meetings accessible. For details on building access, translation, provision of signers or any other requirements for this meeting, please contact the person below.

Contact
Amit Alva on email: amit.alva@southwark.gov.uk

Southwark Council

Members of the committee are summoned to attend this meeting
Althea Loderick
Chief Executive
Date: 12 October 2026



Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission

Tuesday 20 October 2026
7.00 pm
Ground Floor Meeting Room G01A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

Order of Business

Item No.	Title	Page No.
	PART A OPEN BUSINESS	
1.	**APOLOGIES** To receive any apologies for absence.	
2.	**NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT** In special circumstances, an item of business may be added to an agenda within five clear working days of the meeting.	
3.	**DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS.** Members to declare any interests and dispensations in respect of any item of business to be considered at this meeting.	
4.	**MINUTES** To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2026.	1 - 13

Item No.	Title	Page No.

5. PATHWAYS TO WORK FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND SOUTHWARK YOUTH PARLIAMENT 14 - 27

To receive a report from Nick Wolff, Employment and Skills Manager and Suzanne Wright, Head of School Support and Admissions, Children and Adult Services on Pathways to Work for Young People

To also hear from young people from the Southwark Youth Parliament on young peoples' experiences with work and Internships and Apprenticeships.

6. SEND REFORM PLAN 28 - 72

To receive a report from Alasdair Smith, Director of Children's Services and Anna Chiva, Deputy Director Children's Services Learning and Inclusion, Children Services on the SEND Reform Plan.

7. WORK PROGRAMME 2026-27 73 - 79

To consider the work programme for the 2026-27 year.

DISCUSSION OF ANY OTHER OPEN ITEMS AS NOTIFIED AT THE START OF THE MEETING.

Date: 12 October 2026

Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission held on Thursday 23 July 2026 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G01A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Rachael Penny (Chair)
Councillor Hellen Benavides (Vice- Chair)
Councillor Jasmine Ali
Councillor John Batteson
Councillor Callum Fowler
Councillor Tori Griffiths
Councillor Felicia Johnston
Alie Kallon (Co-opted member)
Mannah Kargbo (Co-opted member)

OFFICER SUPPORT: Amit Alva, Scrutiny Officer

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Co-opted members Martin Brecknell and Claire Williams.

2. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

There were no items of business which the Chair deemed urgent.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS.

Councillor Jasmine Ali declared that she used to be the lead member for Children, this with regards to the item on the outcome of the Ofsted inspection of local authority children's services, this was her previous role in the council.

There were no other interests or dispensations.

4. MINUTES

The commission noted the minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2026.

5. GENERAL UPDATE ON BERMONDSEY BLUE - BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID)

The commission received an update from Ben Davies on the work of the Bermondsey Blue Business Improvement District and the challenges facing businesses in the area.

Business Improvement District update

The commission heard about work undertaken during the summer in partnership with the council, including a festival intended to provide activities for children and support families during the school holidays. The Business Improvement District had contributed £10,000 and the council approximately £9,500. It was intended that the festival would be repeated the following year.

An affordable co-working space was being developed in a railway arch. The proposed model would enable early-stage businesses to occupy affordable space for approximately two to three years before moving on as they developed. The intention was to create opportunities for entrepreneurs, particularly those working in sectors where initial costs could be prohibitive.

The commission heard that spending in the area had fallen by approximately 8% to 10%, while footfall had not reduced to the same extent. It was explained that the spending information was derived from indexed card-payment data rather than the individual takings of businesses. Increased business rates were identified as a particular pressure on small businesses.

Retail crime

The commission heard that retail crime was a significant concern, but that many businesses had stopped reporting incidents because they found the process burdensome or believed that reporting would not result in effective action.

The recorded figures were not considered to reflect the actual prevalence of retail theft. The Business Improvement District had therefore developed a simpler reporting mechanism and hoped to gather more accurate evidence to present to the police and the borough commander.

The Business Improvement District had also offered the proposed co-working

space to the local police team when officers required a base in the Bermondsey area.

Following discussions with the safer neighbourhood team, work was taking place to convert the police reporting form into a shorter digital process using staged questions, check boxes and drop-down options. The intention was to make reporting less burdensome for local businesses.

Schools and employment pathways

The Business Improvement District was working with local schools and funding opportunities for children from disadvantaged backgrounds to participate in outdoor activities.

The commission heard that Big Local Works had been commissioned to arrange visits by pupils to businesses in the area. The visits would provide young people with an understanding of different workplaces and organisations. It was recognised that businesses would require support to work effectively with schools and that schools were well placed to advise on the needs and suitability of individual pupils.

Local schools had also been invited to participate in the Business Improvement District board. Greater involvement by schools could help children and young people influence local events and contribute to shaping the area.

Examples were given of involving pupils and community groups in the design and delivery of activities, including lantern-making and puppet events. This approach encouraged children, families and other residents to participate in the resulting public events.

Members suggested that the council could help broker relationships between schools and businesses. Possible approaches included identifying talent champions within schools and supporting direct contact between teachers, headteachers and local employers. The possibility of businesses making a contribution to participating schools when a placement resulted in sustained employment was also discussed.

High street and local development

The commission discussed the difference between the areas to the north and south of the railway line. New routes through railway arches and nearby developments had the potential to increase movement towards the Blue and bring additional spending into the area.

The redevelopment of part of the former Biscuit Factory had reduced the number

of people working and spending locally during the construction period. It was hoped that improved routes and future development would help address this.

Brotherhood Games was cited as a positive example of support for a local entrepreneur. An initial rent-free period had reportedly helped the business become established and it now employed nearly 25 people.
The commission heard that the number of betting shops had declined, although concerns remained about their concentration in a relatively deprived neighbourhood.

Members also discussed fast-food outlets near schools and whether they should be considered alongside betting shops when assessing the composition of the high street. The need to encourage healthier choices was recognised, although this had to be balanced against the difficult trading environment faced by the high street.

Vacant premises and commercial lettings

Concerns were raised about commercial premises which did not open to the public or kept solid shutters closed. It was suggested that blank shutters reduced natural surveillance and adversely affected the appearance and atmosphere of the high street. The Business Improvement District representative explained that similar concerns had been raised with the council over several years.

Members discussed the role of the council's property portfolio in supporting the local economy, increasing footfall and attracting businesses which could benefit the wider area.

The commission heard that businesses and residents did not have sufficient visibility of the commercial lettings process. Prospective occupiers could experience difficulty obtaining information about vacant premises and, on occasion, did not receive a response after expressing an interest.
Greater transparency was requested concerning:

- the role and remuneration of the council's letting agents;
- the criteria used to select tenants;
- the handling of expressions of interest and offers;
- the balance between rental income and wider social or economic value;
- the availability and status of empty units; and
- the use of auction-based lettings where premises remained vacant.

The commission heard that established local business owners could provide valuable insight into the types of businesses likely to succeed in the area. Some businesses might also require support with shopfronts and marketing.

Business Improvement District capacity and partnership working

The Business Improvement District representative explained that the organisation's annual budget was approximately £100,000 to £120,000, excluding external funding. This was substantially smaller than the budgets of some other Business Improvement Districts, limiting the number of projects that could be delivered. The organisation therefore needed to focus on fewer priorities and deliver them effectively.

The commission heard that the Bermondsey Blue Business Improvement District worked closely with established Business Improvement Districts elsewhere in Southwark. New or emerging districts could benefit from:

- initial financial assistance;
- advice about the Business Improvement District model;
- help modelling potential levy income; and
- practical support during the establishment process.

The Business Improvement District considered that it had been consulted effectively on the Bermondsey town centre plan. Further work was, however, required to engage the wider business community, including businesses based in the Biscuit Factory.

Summary

The Chair identified the principal matters arising from the evidence as:

- improving transparency in commercial lettings;
- improving communication with businesses seeking premises;
- making better use of local business knowledge;
- supporting new Business Improvement Districts;
- strengthening links between schools and businesses; and
- improving information available to residents and businesses about vacant commercial properties.

6. OUTCOME OF OFSTED INSPECTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY CHILDREN'S SERVICES (ILACS)

The commission received a presentation from Helen Woolgar, Deputy Director of Children's Social Care, and Oyeyinka Olaniran, Head of Quality Assurance and Workforce Development for Children's Services.

Ofsted had undertaken a week-long inspection in March 2026 and published its report in May 2026. Children's services had retained a judgement of "good" across the inspected areas.

Strengths

The commission heard that the inspection identified the following strengths:

- strong political and corporate leadership;
- stable leadership within children's services;
- a skilled, stable and motivated workforce;
- strong support for children in care and care leavers;
- effective family early-help services;
- parent advocates and supporting families through child-protection processes;
- family group conferencing and family-based decision-making;
- the contribution of Speaker Box;
- strong corporate parenting arrangements; and
- innovation and a clear understanding of the service's strengths and development needs.

The commission was informed that care leavers were supported up to the age of 25. Parent advocates with direct experience of children's social care supported parents involved in areas of child-protection. Speaker Box and care-experienced young people contributed to the design and development of services.

Areas for improvement

The three principal areas identified for improvement were:

- oversight of children subject to police-protection powers;
- responses to children in care who went missing; and
- the quality and consistency of recorded management oversight and supervision.

Further areas for development included embedding life-story work, improving consideration of early-permanence arrangements and refreshing the published care-leaver offer.

Police protection

Practice guidance had been amended to require review strategy meetings and closer monitoring of child safety arrangements.

Six-weekly joint meetings between the local authority and the police had been introduced to review police-protection cases. The performance dashboard had also been updated to include specific reporting on police protection.

Missing Children in Care

A cross-service missing improvement steering group and a weekly missing children panel had been established. Training for key workers and carers was planned, alongside an evaluation of return-home interviews and the resources available to undertake them. Officers identified children going missing as the area currently presenting the greatest challenge.

The commission heard that some young people continued to return to locations or relationships where they were at risk of exploitation. The service had considered national research, worked with specialist organisations and provided mentors to some children who had experienced exploitation. Speaker Box had also highlighted the importance of distinguishing between children who were genuinely missing and older teenagers whose whereabouts were known but were late returning home or staying with friends.

Care-experienced young inspectors had been trained to visit children's homes and supported accommodation. Consideration was also being given to training care leavers to undertake return-home interviews. The weekly panel, training, return-home interviews and improved performance information were expected to support a more consistent response. Progress would be reviewed in September 2026 and March 2027.

Management oversight and quality assurance

Monthly reporting arrangements were being strengthened to improve oversight of supervision and practice quality. The audit framework had been redesigned and the number of audit cycles increased from two to four each year. The service would continue to hold practice-learning weeks focused on priority themes affecting children and families.

Members asked how the impact of the improvement programme on staff would be monitored. Officers explained that implementation would be phased and that staff feedback had already informed proposed changes to the audit tool.
Feedback would continue to be gathered through heads of service, service

managers, team managers and audit and learning officers based within service areas.

Life-story work

The council had initially established a dedicated life-story worker post. Although this produced effective work with individual children, it had not provided sufficient coverage across the service.

The approach had therefore been expanded to include:

- a revised life-story work policy;
- materials and training for the wider workforce;
- a network of life-story champions;
- weekly support sessions;
- involvement of social workers and personal advisers;
- a workflow to monitor completion; and
- consideration of life-story work during case audits and performance meetings.

Early help and the service front door

Members asked about delays experienced by a small cohort of families in accessing early-help services.

The commission heard that the council was combining two previous routes into services to establish one front door. Housing officers were expected to form part of the new arrangements, alongside a multidisciplinary rapid-response team which would provide quicker support to families. The changes were being implemented and their impact could not yet be reported. It was noted that the new front-door arrangements did not appear in the current improvement plan because consultation on the structural changes had only recently concluded. Officers agreed to consider how the changes could be incorporated into the improvement plan and linked more explicitly to the inspection findings.

Reform, workforce and financial pressures

Members asked how the council would protect the strengths identified by Ofsted during a period of financial pressure and service reform.

The commission heard that frontline practitioners, parents and young people had

participated in the design of the reforms. Pilot work had tested social workers working alongside practitioners with different professional qualifications. The model was intended to reduce the number of changes of worker experienced by families. Officers also reported progress towards an almost fully permanent social-work workforce.

Children and young people's participation

The commission heard that children and young people contributed to:

- recruitment interviews;
- Speaker Box;
- corporate parenting;
- service design;
- direct-work tools;
- feedback gathered through audits; and
- the design and development of the council's children's home.

The council's children's home had been inspected in December 2025 and was judged outstanding.

Older children entering care

Members enquired about the proportion of older children entering care and the preventative work available.

The commission heard about Adolescent Sure Start, the adolescent hub, the Turnaround project and the Keeping Families Together team. Family group conferences, parenting programmes, a fathers' programme and clinical support were also available.

Officers explained that adolescence could bring additional challenges, including exploitation, extra-familial harm, a breakdown in family relationships and difficulties associated with additional needs. Although the overall number of children in care had declined, adolescents continued to represent a significant proportion of children entering care. Similar patterns had been identified by other London boroughs.

The commission also heard about lifelong-links work intended to preserve children's connections with family members, siblings and other important people where they could no longer live at home.

Future Ofsted framework

The commission discussed anticipated changes to the Ofsted framework.
Officers explained that there would no longer be an overarching effectiveness judgement, although individual areas would continue to be assessed using different terminology. The experience and progress of care leavers would remain central.

The commission also heard that an authority with children placed in unregulated provision would be restricted in the judgement it could achieve. At the time of the meeting, Southwark had no children in unregulated provision.

Corporate Parenting Committee

Members expressed concern about the cancellation of a recent Corporate Parenting Committee meeting and the length of time before the next scheduled meeting.

Officers understood that the meeting had been postponed, with a meeting expected in October and an additional meeting anticipated in December. The Chair requested that the position be checked, as members understood that a replacement meeting might take place before October.

Actions

- Officers to consider incorporating the redesigned early-help front door and rapid-response arrangements into the children's services improvement plan.
- The arrangements for a replacement Corporate Parenting Committee meeting to be checked.
- The commission to consider progress against the children's services improvement plan following the September 2026 review and again in relation to the March 2027 review.

The commission thanked the officers for their presentation and noted the clear opportunities for scrutiny to monitor progress during the year.

7. WORK PROGRAMME DISCUSSION 2026-27

The commission discussed potential work plan items for its 2026-27 work programme.

Local Economy

Suggested topics included:

- East Street Market;
- the Youth Guarantee;
- employment support for young people not in education, employment or training (NEET);
- support for young people with special educational needs and disabilities;
- apprenticeships, internships and work experience; Youth Parliament
- Southwark Works;
- support for people experiencing complex barriers to employment;
- thriving high streets and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs')
- support for small businesses;
- vacant commercial properties;
- the council's commercial property portfolio;
- railway arches;
- Business Improvement Districts;
- London Living Hours;
- Community Infrastructure Levy;
- the Elephant and Castle town centre; and
- interviews with relevant cabinet members.

Members considered that work on youth employment should be broader than work experience and should include apprenticeships, internships and other routes into employment.

Further consideration of commercial property was supported, including vacant premises, transparency in lettings, auction-based lettings and the contribution of council-owned premises to thriving high streets. It was noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would need to consider the allocation of this subject.

The Elephant and Castle town centre was suggested as a possible topic, with a focus on supporting independent businesses, involving the existing community and monitoring the effects of development.

Members also suggested inviting the Youth Parliament to contribute young people's views to the commission's work.

The commission emphasised that its programme should focus on matters where recommendations could influence council policy or practice. Policies and programmes set out by central government might not represent the most effective use of the commission's time.

Education and Children's services

Suggested topics included:

- SEND reform;
- falling school rolls and pupil-place planning;
- the impact of possible secondary-school closures;
- the future use of former school buildings;
- transitions from adolescent to adult mental-health services;
- children's mental health;
- the annual Southwark Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP) report;
- children in care and care leavers;
- corporate parenting; and
- follow-up of the Ofsted improvement plan.

Members supported scrutiny of SEND reform and suggested that evidence gathering could take place in a school or a special school. This could form part of a wider approach involving site visits and scrutiny activity outside the usual council meeting venue.

The commission discussed falling school rolls and the importance of monitoring pupil-place planning following school closures. Members also wished to consider how former school buildings could be retained for educational or community use.

A focused review of children in care and care leavers was proposed. Members noted that the September 2026 and March 2027 review points would provide opportunities to follow up the children's services improvement plan.

Scrutiny Review Process and Recommendations

Members asked whether recommendations could be made during the municipal

year rather than waiting for a final annual report.

The commission was advised that recommendations should be based on sufficiently gathered evidence from all stakeholders. Further work on Business Improvement Districts, for example, could include evidence from council officers, other Business Improvement Districts and individual business owners. A scrutiny review report could be produced once sufficient evidence had been gathered and did not have to be deferred until the end of the year. Members emphasised the need to determine the scope, intended output and timetable for each review at an early stage.

Actions

- The Scrutiny Officer to develop the work programme proposals in consultation with the Chair, commission members and relevant council officers.
- Consideration to be given to inviting the relevant cabinet members for interview.
- Local-economy evidence gathering to include council officers, Business Improvement District representatives and local business owners where appropriate.
- The Youth Parliament to be considered as a contributor to relevant reviews.
- Outstanding cabinet responses to recommendations from the previous municipal year to be identified and brought back where appropriate.
- The commission to determine the proposed number, scope and timetable of its review reports at an early stage.

Meeting ended at 9.20 pm

CHAIR:

DATED:

Agenda Item 5

Meeting Name:	Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission
Date:	20 October 2026
Report title:	Pathways to work for young people
Ward(s) or groups affected:	All
Classification:	Open
Reason for lateness (if applicable):	N/A
From:	Nick Wolff, Head of Employment and Skills, Local Economy Suzanne Wright, Head of School Support and Admissions, Learning and Inclusion

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. The Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission has requested information on work the council is currently engaged in to develop pathways to work for young people.

2. Young people's successful transition into employment has profound implications for individual wellbeing, social mobility and economic prosperity. The ability to access education, training and employment opportunities influences long-term health outcomes, financial independence and wider life chances.

3. Southwark is a borough characterised by significant opportunity and ambition. The borough benefits from a diverse economy, strong educational institutions and extensive employment opportunities. Nevertheless, not all young people are able to access these opportunities equally. Some groups continue to experience disproportionate barriers to participation and remain at greater risk of unemployment, economic inactivity and long-term disengagement.

4. Efforts to support young people into education, training and employment are shared across a number of service areas and organisations, reflecting the cross-cutting nature of this priority in service delivery for young people and their support networks while at school and college and in the post-18 transition.

    - **Schools and colleges** provide statutory careers guidance, transition support and post-16 progression advice.

- **The Southwark Education Business Alliance** plays a significant role in connecting education providers with employers through work-related learning, careers events and workplace experiences.
- **The council's Post-16 Participation Team** undertakes participation tracking and supports young people who are not in education, employment or training.
- Additional specialist support is available through **SEND services, the Virtual School, Youth Justice Service and Care Leavers Service**.
- **Southwark Works**, including **Connect to Work**, provides targeted employment support for young people aged 16-24 who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET.
- **The Southwark Skills Partnership** is convened by the council to bring together skills providers, addressing gaps in provision and working strategically to open up career pathways in Southwark's growth sectors
- The wider **voluntary and community sector** further strengthens this landscape through mentoring, employability programmes, confidence-building interventions and specialist support for young people facing multiple barriers.

5. This report provides an overview of key areas of activity by the council and opportunities currently being developed for further improving support for young people to access good and sustainable employment opportunities and career pathways.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Policy and legislative context

6. Local authorities have a statutory responsibility to encourage, enable and assist young people to participate in education and training. This includes duties to track participation, identify those who are not participating and provide support to facilitate engagement in suitable education, employment or training opportunities.

7. The participation age legislation, the Education Act 1996, the Education and Skills Act 2008 and the Children and Families Act 2014 collectively establish a framework that requires local authorities to promote participation and improve outcomes for young people. These responsibilities are particularly significant for young people with Education, Health and Care Plans, where duties extend beyond the age of 18 and continue up to age 25 where appropriate.

8. National policy increasingly emphasises employability, technical education, apprenticeships, local skills planning and employer engagement. The Government's focus on productivity and addressing economic inactivity has further increased expectations on local authorities and their partners to support successful transitions into employment.

9. The DWP is increasingly focused on providing support for young people to gain employment under the banner of the national Youth Guarantee. The range of enhanced support for young people and employers is significant but can be complex to understand. The council is working with local DWP partners to promote the newly created financial incentives including wage subsidies and grants for employers for employing an eligible young person and integrating these offers into employer engagement strategies within our existing employment programmes.

10. The Milburn Review commissioned by the Government released an interim report in May 2026 setting out the national scale of the challenge facing young people entering the workforce today. The report sets out the worsening circumstances for young people seeking work. It highlights the systemic, interconnected challenges that are driving an increase in the NEET rate, related to changes in the job market as well as failures in the health, education and welfare systems. It also diagnoses a key failure of a lack of integration across these systems and absence of an overarching approach that works towards preventing young people from being NEET. The final report is due in Autumn 2026 and is expected to include a series of recommendations for the Government which, if fully implemented, can be expected to have a positive and potentially significant impact on the way in which employment-focused youth services are funded and delivered in Southwark.

Local support systems

Southwark Works

11. Southwark Works is the council's flagship employment support programme. It has operated since 2004 to support residents who face barriers to entering, sustaining or progressing in meaningful, good-quality employment, while also helping local employers recruit Southwark residents.

12. Support is available through Southwark Works for young people aged 18 and above with specific barriers to employment, including:

- Substance misuse
- Learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD)
- Homelessness or at risk of homelessness
- Involvement with the criminal justice system
- Ex-offenders
- Parents or unpaid carers
- Mental health

13. Southwark Works services also work alongside SEND services, the Youth Justice Service and Care Leavers Service to provide specialist support for vulnerable young people aged 16-24 who are:

- Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Young People who are NEET or at risk of NEET
- Young People who are involved with the criminal justice system

14. Between September 2023 and March 2026, Southwark Works engaged 1,056 young people (16-24), just over a fifth of the total number of residents that engaged with the Southwark Works programme in that period. Of these, 210 were supported into employment and 225 into accredited training programmes.

15. The council is committed to continued delivery of Southwark Works. Following a recent review, the service is entering a recommissioning period, which will result in an updated delivery model focused on continuing what is working well while enabling better integration of services. Informed by in-house delivery of Connect to Work and potential for further direct delivery of devolved DWP programmes, the revised model will aim to bring together elements of the service which would benefit from closer integration with other council services, such as support for NEET young people, alongside commissioned, community-based provision.

Connect to Work and WorkWell

16. Since October 2025 Southwark Works has expanded to include the Connect to Work programme within its offer. Connect to Work is a national DWP-funded programme profiled to support over 2,000 people in Southwark up to 2030. It aims to address the links between disability, long-term health conditions and unemployment. Intensive support is available to anyone aged 18 and over with a disability, long-term health condition or other significant barrier to work. The delivery model is designed to close the integration gap between health and employment support systems, with the council's in-house employment specialists working with primary and secondary health services, including mental health services which are experiencing increased demand from young people.

17. Southwark's capacity to provider employment support for young people with health conditions will be further enhanced from November 2026 with the implementation of the WorkWell programme locally with funding in place up to March 2029. Delivered by the council alongside Connect to Work and as part of the Soutwhark Works offer, WorkWell will provider early intervention, support and onward referrals for anyone aged 18 and over, in or out of work, where their health is limiting their capacity to secure or retain employment.

Get Britain Working Trailblazer

18. Southwark Works provision for care-experienced young people and young people with SEND has been further enhanced through Southwark's participation in the DWP-funded Get Britain Working Trailblazer programme. The Trailblazer funds employment advisers within the Care Leavers Service and additional commissioned support for young people

with SEND. The Trailblazer project also aims to open up work placements and career pathways for participating young people within the council and partnering employers.

Southwark Skills Partnership

19. Chaired by the Executive Member for Inclusive Economy, Equalities and Democracy, the Southwark Skills Partnership has a core membership of skills and employment providers, large employers, business groups and relevant council services. It also draws upon the knowledge and expertise of a wider network of stakeholders. Partners working with young people are well represented and include secondary, FE, and HE providers in Southwark, and officers from the EBA and SEND service.

20. The work of the partnership is guided by the principle that an accessible, equitable, and excellent skills system is crucial to creating pathways to work for Southwark residents of all ages and abilities, while also meeting employers demands for a skilled workforce

21. The partners co-produced the Southwark Skills Delivery Plan with nine themes that align with broader council ambitions, including a focus on key sectors of our economy. There are six sector-focused themes:
    - Life sciences
    - Digital
    - Green
    - Health and social care
    - Creative and cultural
    - Hospitality and experience economy

22. And three cross-cutting themes:
    - Apprenticeships
    - Careers information, advice and guidance
    - Essential skills

23. As well as the sector focused themes, the cross-cutting themes are focused on supporting young people and other underrepresented groups such as young people who are NEET, or at risk of NEET, young people with SEND, and care experienced young people.

24. Some examples of programmes developed under the Southwark Skills Partnership include:

    - Life Sciences paid work experience and internships, via SC1 London.
    - Advanced digital skills training and employability programme based in Peckham, targeting young people aged 18–30 from Black and ethnic minority backgrounds, via Institute of Coding, the UAL Creative Computing Institute and UK Black Tech.
    - A green jobs virtual work experience programme and green sectors showcase for residents aged 16+ that offered participants an

immersive journey into sustainable careers, via LSBU.

- Healthcare Sector-based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs) via Southwark College and Guys and St Thomas NHS Trust.
- Hospitality Skills Hub to support residents into hospitality roles and meet employer demand for skilled talent.
- Southwark Construction Skills Centre and expansion of green skills capacity in FE provision
- Coordination and promotion of creative and cultural skills provision across, addressing barriers that often limit access to the creative and cultural sector.

25. The plan responds to recent London-wide skills policy developments including the Mayor's Inclusive Talent Strategy, Sector Regional Partnerships, and Sector Talent Boards. For Southwark, the London wide focus on supporting people into growth sectors provides an opportunity to align local activity with London-wide employer demand while retaining a place-based focus on young people, underrepresented residents and communities that do not always benefit from sector growth.

Apprenticeships

26. Apprenticeships are a cross-cutting theme in the Skills Delivery Plan. Changes to the way that apprenticeships are funded in recent years have shifted the nature of apprenticeships from the traditional concept of an entry-level opportunity for young people with the result that many apprenticeships are now occupied by older workers. Nonetheless, apprenticeships, particularly degree apprenticeships, remain a popular entry route into work for young people and can be highly competitive.

27. The council's efforts in this area work focus on supporting local employers to create apprenticeships and supporting people facing disadvantage in the labour market to access them. Delivery is driven through partners such as London South Bank University (LSBU) and Southwark Works, alongside Section 106 and Social Value commitments, and the council's own apprenticeship recruitment.

28. The government has announced funding for a new local apprenticeship service for each mayoral strategic authority, matching young people with smaller employers, due to commence in spring 2027. The council will be engaging with the GLA to ensure that London-wide activity is well integrated with local networks, to avoid duplication and ensure Southwark's employers and young people are positioned to benefit.

Paid internships

29. Southwark Council's Paid Internship Programme, which commenced in 2019, aimed to improve the social mobility and career prospects of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds by widening access to high-quality, fairly paid internships that build employability skills and provide a platform for successful careers.

30. From 2022 to 2026, the paid internship programme created 269 internships and graduate jobs for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, exceeding the four-year target of 250.

31. Delivery was mainly through three routes: University (118), Schools (113) and Council placements (29). A further nine internships were generated through business support programmes, Thriving High Street Fund projects and social value commitments.

32. The programme demonstrated that the council and partners are well placed to create meaningful paid routes into employment. The council's internal internship scheme remains ongoing, and paid internships will continue to be encouraged through social value commitments and other skills partnership activity, such as the SC1 London life sciences employment and skills programme.

Education Business Alliance (EBA)

31. Whilst Southwark Works primarily supports residents 18 and over, the Education Business Alliance (EBA) provides support to under 18s, connecting and developing partnerships between schools and local businesses. The service aims to raise aspirations, develop employability skills and prepare young people for the world of work through a number of different activities.

32. Some examples of the projects that EBA delivers are:
    - Employability skills training through bespoke workshops, school assemblies, visits from or to businesses, career workshops and industry insight sessions
    - Work experience opportunities and careers fairs
    - Reading volunteers, from local businesses, in primary schools
    - Coaching and mentoring to support career planning
    - Young Enterprise schemes and Borough Market trading experiences
    - Southwark Scholarship scheme

33. In the last academic year, EBA supported over 1,700 young people through its work and engaged with over 550 employers. Through the latest Scholarship Scheme, six young people were offered the opportunity to attend university and alumni from previous years are offering mentoring to young people in Southwark.

Post-16 Service

34. The Southwark Post-16 Service plays a key role in enabling the council to fulfil it's statutory duties under the Education and Skills Act 2008 to promote participation in education, employment and training for young people aged 16 and 17. The service is responsible for tracking the education, employment and training (EET) destinations of young people resident in the borough, identifying those who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) or who are at risk of disengagement, and providing targeted information, advice and guidance to help them access suitable post-16 pathways.

35. The services engages directly with young people and families, partnership working with schools, colleges, training providers and other agencies, and the collection and reporting of participation data to the Department for Education. The service also undertakes proactive interventions, including outreach and home visits where appropriate, to ensure that young people whose destinations are unknown receive support and are reconnected with learning or employment opportunities.

36. The Post-16 Service contributes to the council's wider safeguarding responsibilities by identifying vulnerable young people to support their participation in education, training, apprenticeships or employment, while ensuring the council has robust intelligence on the destinations and outcomes of its young residents.

Sub-regional networks

37. The challenges facing Southwark's young people in the labour market are not unique, with marked similarities in relation to other boroughs within the central London economy. In response, Central London Forward, the sub-regional partnership of which Southwark is a member, has approached the Milburn Review team at DWP to form a NEET Taskforce for central London.

38. The taskforce is in the early stages of becoming established. The intention is that partners from across 12 central London local authorities will share data, insights and join up employer engagement towards two general objectives:
    a) Early identification and prevention
    b) Positive destinations

Challenges in the Southwark system

39. While Southwark benefits from a substantial range of services and programmes aimed at supporting young people's participation and progression, there remain challenges in the way that the system operates collectively. These are set out in the paragraphs below. The issues identified are currently being considered in business planning across council services concerned with supporting young people towards education, training and employment.

Fragmented support systems

40. Numerous organisations, including council services, schools, colleges, training providers and voluntary sector partners, provide valuable support. However, these services often operate independently, with separate referral pathways, monitoring arrangements and intervention models. It is not uncommon for multiple organisations to be working with the same young person simultaneously without a shared tracking system or clearly accountable lead overseeing their journey.

41. As a result, despite the strength of local provision, young people can still fall between services, experience duplication of support or, in some cases, remain unknown to any provider altogether. Furthermore, young people often move between services without a clear understanding of available support, while agencies frequently operate with separate referral routes, databases and intervention models.

Early identification and prevention

42. The risk of a young person becoming NEET is often identifiable long before they reach the age of 16. Disengagement is rarely a sudden event. Instead, it is typically preceded by a combination of factors such as poor attendance, low attainment, exclusion, special educational needs, mental health difficulties and wider social vulnerabilities. These indicators are frequently known to services at an early stage, yet interventions often occur only once a young person has already disengaged from education or training. As a result, the challenge is not a lack of awareness of risk, but a failure across the system to act early enough to prevent disengagement.

43. There is an opportunity for greater use of predictive data, attendance information and vulnerability indicators which could enable earlier identification of risk, through the use of a tool called Risk of NEET Indicator (RONI). Such an approach would allow professionals to intervene before young people disengage from education and training.

44. The scale of youth disengagement may be greater than official participation data suggests. While significant effort is devoted to tracking young people after they leave compulsory education, there remain concerns about so-called "hidden NEETs" who are not known to services and who can fall outside existing monitoring arrangements. This creates challenges both for understanding the true extent of need and for ensuring that young people receive appropriate support at the right time.

45. A further challenge relates to understanding outcomes for young people beyond the age of 18. While local authorities have statutory duties to track participation for younger age groups, visibility of young people's journeys can reduce as they move into adulthood and engage with a wider range of education, training and employment providers. This can make it more difficult to identify those who become disengaged, under-employed or are

not progressing as expected. Strengthening data sharing, partnership working and sustained follow-up arrangements will be important in developing a fuller understanding of long-term outcomes and ensuring that young people continue to receive appropriate support where needed.

46. Interventions often occur once disengagement has already taken place. While services are effective in supporting young people after they become NEET, there is scope to strengthen preventative approaches.

Transitions and system gaps

47. A recurring theme from published reports is the vulnerability of young people during periods of transition. Evidence consistently identifies transitions as the point at which participation is most likely to break down. This includes movement from school into post-16 education, from further education into employment and from short-term support programmes into sustained work. Participation can decline sharply when statutory responsibilities cease or where there is no single organisation maintaining oversight of a young person's progress. This lack of joined oversight can be exacerbated by the challenges of tracking destination data over time for young people once they move past the age where this is a statutory responsibility.

48. The transition from Year 11 into post-16 education emerges repeatedly as a critical period during which young people can become lost to the system. While many secure destinations on leaving school, a significant challenge lies in ensuring those destinations are sustained.

49. There are also difficulties during transitions between further education courses, apprenticeships and employment. Similar risks arise when young people leave specialist services or approach adulthood.

50. The evidence suggests that current arrangements focus primarily on achieving destinations rather than ensuring sustained participation. Tracking arrangements frequently conclude once a placement is secured, despite the fact that many young people require ongoing support to maintain engagement.

51. A greater emphasis on tracking sustained outcomes is essential if the borough is to improve long-term participation rates.

Supporting vulnerable young people

52. There is a significant body of evidence regarding the experiences of vulnerable young people and the specific challenges many encounter when seeking employment or training opportunities.

53. Mental health and special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are increasingly significant drivers of disengagement. A substantial proportion of young people who become NEET have a diagnosed health condition,

mental health need or additional learning need. Mental health difficulties, in particular, were frequently identified as a primary factor underpinning disengagement from education, training and employment. Many employability and participation programmes are not yet fully trauma-informed and health and employment support systems often continue to operate separately. Consequently, some young people require significant therapeutic, emotional or practical support before they are able to engage successfully in employment-related activity.

54. Young people with SEND frequently face barriers relating to travel, confidence, independence and employer understanding of reasonable adjustments. Care-experienced young people often require additional support networks as they move into adulthood. Young people experiencing mental health difficulties may struggle to sustain participation even when opportunities are available.

55. Access to meaningful work placements and supported employment opportunities is particularly important for young people with SEND. Workplace experiences can help develop confidence, independence and work-readiness, while providing employers with greater confidence in recruiting young people with additional needs. However, navigating support systems can be complex for both young people and employers, and work experience placements provide an ideal opportunity for experience and training in accessing and asking for work place supports on both the young person and employer side. This includes understanding available support through schemes such as Access to Work and implementing reasonable adjustments that enable young people to participate and succeed. Continued partnership working between education providers, employment services and employers, including disability confident schemes and specialised recruitment, will be important in increasing the availability of inclusive opportunities and supporting successful transitions into employment.

56. Although specialist services provide highly valued support, there is a need for better coordination between education, employment, health and social care services. Many vulnerable young people require personalised pathways rather than standardised programmes. Programmes such as Connect to Work and the Trailblazer for care experienced young people show that successful outcomes are often achieved where support is sustained, holistic and relationship-based.

<u>Careers education, access to information and exposure to employers</u>

57. The quality of careers education is often identified as an important determinant of future outcomes.

58. While schools are meeting statutory requirements, there is variation in young people's understanding of available pathways. Many continue to perceive university as the primary route to success, despite the growing significance of apprenticeships, technical qualifications and vocational

pathways.

59. Furthermore, while schools and colleges play a vital role in supporting attainment and qualifications, many young people continue to face difficulties navigating the labour market after leaving education. Careers guidance, work experience opportunities and exposure to employers are not experienced consistently by all young people. Those who are already vulnerable or at risk of disengagement are often the least likely to be aware of and able access high-quality careers support and meaningful workplace experiences, despite being the young people who may benefit most from them.

60. Changes within the labour market have further complicated young people's transition into work. There has been a significant decline in entry-level employment opportunities and apprenticeships in some sectors, reducing the number of accessible routes into sustainable employment. At the same time, employers increasingly seek higher levels of experience, confidence and work-readiness from applicants, creating additional barriers for young people attempting to enter the labour market for the first time.

61. Employers highlight the importance of meaningful workplace encounters and sustained engagement during secondary education. Young people who have opportunities to engage directly with employers are more likely to understand labour market opportunities and make informed decisions.

62. Southwark benefits from strong employer engagement activity, but there are opportunities to strengthen coordination and ensure consistency across schools, colleges and council services supporting young people.

Future work - opportunities to strengthen pathways into employment for young people in Southwark

63. Southwark has many of the building blocks required to support young people into education, employment and training. The borough benefits from committed partners, a broad range of services and a strong strategic focus on improving outcomes for children and young people. However, there are opportunities to develop a more coherent pathway model that enables young people to progress successfully from education into sustained employment.

64. Business planning currently taking place across the council, including the recommissioning of Southwark Works services from July 2027, is being framed in relation to the key issues identified in this paper and national policy developments including through the Milburn Review.

65. A future youth employment support system in Southwark will aim to address the challenges outlined above across the following broad themes:

- **Early Intervention and prevention:** Moving the system from reacting to disengagement towards preventing it.

- **Targeted support:** More tailored interventions focused on those groups known to be at greatest risk of disengagement and removing practical barriers to participation.

- **Strengthened careers education and guidance:** A more targeted application of the Gatsby Benchmarks addressing disadvantages accessing exposure to employers such as work experience. Introducing more personalised pathways planning for young people across the full range of academic, technical, vocational and employment options.

- **System leadership:** Bringing partners together around a shared vision for youth participation and employability with shared tracking arrangements and greater collective accountability for outcomes.

- **Provision and delivery:** Increasing the availability and visibility of pathways, stronger links with employers and more integrated and flexible support for young people facing barriers to participation.

- **Active response:** Responding quickly and flexibly when young people begin to disengage and more structured re-engagement pathways that enable young people to reconnect quickly with education, training or employment.

66. As service plans develop, engagement with young people including through the Southwark Youth Parliament will be integral to shaping how future services look, feel and are promoted to young people in Southwark.

APPENDICES

No.	Title
N/A	N/A

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Danny Edward, Assistant Director of Economy Anna Chiva, Deputy Director, Learning and Inclusion
Report Author	Nick Wolff, Head of Employment and Skills, Local Economy Suzanne Wright, Head of School Support and Admissions, Learning and Inclusion
Version	Final
Dated	12 October 2026
Key Decision?	No

CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	**Comments Sought**	**Comments Included**
Director of Law and Governance	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No	No
Executive Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team / Scrutiny Team		12/10/26

Agenda Item 6

Meeting Name:	**Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission**
Date:	20 October 2026
Report title:	Southwark Local SEND Reform Plan
Ward(s) or groups affected:	All wards
Classification:	Open
From:	Anna Chiva, Deputy Director of Children's Services Learning and Inclusion

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. This report presents Southwark's Local SEND Reform Plan (Appendix A) to the Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission for consideration. The Local SEND Reform Plan has been developed jointly by the council, health partners, education providers and parent carer representatives in response to national SEND reform requirements.

2. Given the significance of SEND services to children, young people and families, and the scale of the proposed reforms, the Commission requested an opportunity to review the plan and consider its ambitions, priorities and proposed approach to delivery. The report therefore provides a summary of the plan and highlights the key areas of reform proposed over the next three years.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. The current statutory framework for supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is set out principally in Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014, the Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014, and the SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years. These reforms introduced Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), strengthened joint commissioning responsibilities across education, health and care, and established the requirement for local authorities to publish a Local Offer of available support.

4. Nationally, demand for SEND support has continued to increase significantly over the last decade, with rising numbers of children requiring additional support and increasing pressures on local authority high needs budgets.

5. In response, the Department for Education published the SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan, *Right Support, Right Place, Right Time*, in March 2023, setting out a programme of national reform intended to improve inclusion, strengthen partnership working, improve outcomes for children and young people, increase parental confidence, and place the SEND system on a more sustainable financial footing.

6. As part of the next phase of these reforms, in March 2026 the Department for Education commissioned local authorities and integrated care boards to develop Local SEND Reform Plans. Local authorities were asked to act as system leaders and conveners, bringing together partners from education, health and care alongside children, young people and families, to identify how reform would be implemented at local level.

7. Southwark's Local SEND Reform Plan was developed jointly by the council, the South East London Integrated Care Board, schools and education providers, and parent carer representatives. The plan was submitted to the Department for Education in June 2026 following sign-off by the required local authority and health partners.

8. The plan sets out a three-year programme of transformation focused on increasing inclusion within mainstream settings, improving access to specialist support, strengthening partnership arrangements, improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND, and supporting the long-term sustainability of the local SEND system. It aligns SEND reform activity with wider programmes across Southwark, including Best Start in Life, Family Hubs, Families First, neighbourhood working arrangements, education partnership developments and the High Needs Capital Plan.

9. On 2 October 2026, the Department for Education confirmed a positive outcome following review of the Southwark Local SEND Reform Plan. Local partners will continue to work together to refine implementation arrangements and monitor delivery ahead of the next formal progress review in January 2027.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Local context

10. The national reform programme provides the framework for change; however, the detail of Southwark's Local SEND Reform Plan has been shaped by local need, demand and system challenges.

11. In developing the plan, partners identified a number of factors influencing SEND services locally, including:

    - increasing demand and complexity of need
    - pressure on schools, statutory assessment processes and specialist provision
    - sufficiency challenges, particularly within secondary and post-16 provision
    - the need to strengthen confidence in earlier intervention and support outside formal statutory processes
    - the importance of improving coordination across education, health and care services

- workforce recruitment, retention and development challenges
- financial pressure on the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Block, which funds this area

12. In practice, these challenges can be seen in a number of ways. Partners identified particular concerns regarding the availability of local secondary and post-16 specialist provision, difficulties experienced by some families and schools in navigating support arrangements, variation in access to services and support pathways, and recruitment and workforce pressures affecting capacity across parts of the system. There was also a shared view that families and schools should have greater confidence that support can be accessed on the basis of need and at an earlier stage, rather than only following diagnosis or statutory escalation.

Principles underpinning the Local Send Reform Plan

13. The Local SEND Reform Plan is underpinned by a shared ambition that children and young people with SEND should be valued, achieve well in education, participate fully in their communities and have access to the support and opportunities they need to thrive.

14. A central premise of the plan is that improved outcomes cannot be achieved through reliance on statutory assessment processes, Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and specialist placements alone. While specialist provision remains essential for some children and young people, the plan proposes a stronger graduated approach in which needs are identified earlier, support is available more readily within universal services and mainstream settings, and targeted interventions are accessible before difficulties escalate.

15. The plan therefore places particular emphasis on inclusion, early intervention and building the capacity of mainstream services to meet a wider range of needs, whilst ensuring access to specialist provision where this is required.

Overview of the Reform Plan

16. The Local SEND Reform Plan sets out how local partners intend to respond to the opportunities and challenges described above. While the plan contains a broad programme of activity, its overall focus is on shifting the local SEND system towards earlier intervention, greater inclusion and improved coordination across education, health and care services.

17. The plan identifies a number of significant changes in the way support is organised and delivered. These are intended to strengthen provision available to children and young people within their local communities, improve access to help at an earlier stage and ensure that specialist support is targeted where it is most needed.

18. The table below summarises the principal shifts described within the reform plan and provides a high-level overview of the direction of travel envisaged over the three-year implementation period.

Shift	What it means	What success should look like
Late to earlier intervention	Earlier identification, stronger ordinarily available provision and quicker access to advice through Family Hubs and Experts at Hand.	Fewer needs escalating before support begins; better transitions; improved confidence among families and schools.
Distant and specialist to local and inclusive	More inclusion bases, stronger mainstream practice, special-school outreach and local pathways.	More children supported successfully close to home; fewer placements made because local capacity is unavailable.
Fragmented to shared delivery	Joint commissioning, clearer access routes, partnership accountability and co-production.	A support offer that schools and families understand; less duplication; shared ownership across education, health and care.
Reactive to evidence-led improvement	Shared dashboards, agreed measures, regular review and targeted corrective action.	Decisions based on need, reach, quality, equity, outcomes and value for money, not activity alone.

First-year priorities

19. Following approval of the plan by the Department for Education, the first year of implementation is focused on moving from planning to delivery. This includes continuing to co-produce key elements of the programme with children, young people, families and partners, while establishing the foundations required for successful implementation. Priority areas include the development of the Experts at Hand model, expansion of inclusive provision and local sufficiency, strengthening ordinarily available provision, improving preparation for adulthood pathways, and embedding the governance, co-production and performance arrangements needed to support delivery and monitor progress.

20. While the overall programme spans three years, the first year will be particularly important in establishing delivery arrangements, testing new approaches and agreeing the measures through which progress will be monitored.

Increasing access to specialist expertise - Experts at Hand

21. Experts at Hand is central to the reform plan and its delivery. Its purpose is to make specialist expertise easier to access, strengthen capability in mainstream settings and support schools before needs escalate. A universal, targeted and specialist offer is being developed with clear pathways, operating protocols and response standards.

22. Initial priorities include transition, autism and communication and interaction, and social, emotional and mental health. The model is being developed with schools and partners through roundtables and test-and-learn activity. The current work also includes specialist-school outreach, leadership support, inclusion bases, educational psychology, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and other targeted expertise.

23. Success will not be judged by the number of posts created. The key tests are whether schools can access timely support, whether the offer reaches those with the greatest need, and whether children experience better attendance, inclusion, stability and progress.

Increasing local provision and sufficiency

24. A significant element of the plan focuses on increasing the capacity of the local provision so that more children and young people can have their needs met within Southwark and closer to home. Particular attention is given to secondary and post-16 provision, where pressures on capacity have contributed to increased reliance on independent and non-maintained specialist placements.

25. The plan proposes a substantial expansion of inclusion bases across early years, primary and secondary mainstream school provision, with the greatest change required in secondary settings. Inclusion bases are specialist provisions located within mainstream schools, enabling children and young people with more complex needs to access targeted support while maintaining links to mainstream education and their local community. The intention is to provide a wider continuum of local support, reduce pressure on special schools and limit the use of independent and non-maintained placements where local provision can meet need appropriately.

26. Expanding capacity in provision, including investment of capital to support this, must be matched by clear admissions arrangements, service specifications, quality assurance, a skilled workforce and sustainable revenue funding. Creating places is not an outcome in itself. Those places must deliver good education, stable placements, genuine inclusion and stronger preparation for adulthood.

Outcomes and performance

27. The plan includes a range of measures intended to monitor both delivery of the programme and its impact on outcomes for children and young people. These measures will continue to be refined through implementation and partnership governance arrangements.

28. The proposed measures cover a number of themes including improved inclusion within mainstream settings, access to support at an earlier stage, sufficiency of local provision, positive preparation for adulthood outcomes, the experience of children, young people and families, and the long-term sustainability of the local SEND system.

29. As implementation progresses, it will be important that performance reporting focuses not only on levels of activity, such as the number of assessments

completed or specialist places created, but also on whether reforms are improving children's experiences and outcomes.

Measure	Baseline	Three-year ambition	Why it matters
EHCP annual growth rate	5%	Below 4%	Indicates whether earlier support is reducing avoidable escalation while statutory rights remain protected.
Primary pupils with EHCPs in mainstream	79%	85%	Tests whether local mainstream provision is becoming more inclusive.
Secondary pupils with EHCPs in mainstream	55%	65%	Addresses a significant local sufficiency and inclusion challenge.
Independent/non-maintained placements	205	Long-term reduction, with trajectory to be validated	Tests whether Southwark is developing suitable local capacity and reducing high-cost reliance.
EHCPs issued within 20 weeks	45%	65%	Measures statutory timeliness and family experience.
Supported internships	10	30	Measures stronger preparation for adulthood and employment pathways.
Parent, young person and professional satisfaction	Baseline to be established	75% positivity	Provides direct evidence of confidence and lived experience.
Persistent absence for pupils with SEN	23.1%	20%	Links reform to participation and educational outcomes.

Governance and accountability

30. Strategic oversight is through the SEND and Inclusion Strategic Partnership Board. Southwark Schools Forum and its High Needs Sub-Group provide an important route for challenge on expenditure and delivery. Operational delivery is overseen through the SEND and Inclusion Quality and Improvement Board. The Southwark Education Partnership provides a route for school-system engagement. The Director of Children's Services is the Local Area SEND Reform Senior Responsible Owner.

31. Governance has been refreshed to strengthen delivery reporting and accountability for Experts at Hand, sufficiency, joint commissioning, preparation for adulthood and financial impact must now be explicit, with named owners, clear decision rights and timely escalation. Governance must support decisions and corrective action, not add further layers of reporting.

32. Successful delivery will depend on effective partnership working across education, health and care services, sustained workforce capacity, delivery of planned sufficiency developments and the availability of resources to support implementation.

33. The plan also contains an assessment of the principal risks and dependencies associated with delivery, together with proposed mitigations. These include matters relating to workforce capacity, sufficiency of provision, partnership delivery and the financial sustainability of the SEND system. The effective management of these risks will be important to successful implementation over the life of the programme.

Co-production and engagement

34. The plan includes ongoing engagement with schools, providers, families, and children and young people. Success will be measured by whether feedback demonstrably influences decisions and whether engagement reaches those less likely to have their voices heard.

Finance and value for money

35. The reform plan is intended to improve outcomes and place the High Needs system on a more sustainable footing. The Department for Education has confirmed £5.53 million relating to the High Needs position. This is important one-off support, not a permanent improvement in the underlying budget. Inflation, demand growth, workforce costs and uncertainty about future national funding remain significant risks.

36. The plan must demonstrate both improved outcomes and financial impact. Reporting should cover the cost and quality of local provision, the use of independent and non-maintained placements, Experts at Hand funding, delivery against grant conditions, workforce sustainability and whether earlier intervention is reducing avoidable escalation. One-off deficit support must not be presented as a recurring budget improvement.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014	Publicly available legislation	Director of Children' Services
Children and Families Act 2014		
Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014	Publicly available regulation	Director of Children' Services
The Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014		
SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years	Publicly available statutory guidance	Director of Children' Services
SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Southwark Local SEND Reform Plan, June 2026. Presentation Experts and Hand and SEND Reform 260826 Southwark LiiA EAH Session.pptx

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Alasdair Smith. Director of Children's Services
Report Author	Anna Chiva, Deputy Director, Children's Services, Learning and Inclusion
Version	02
Dated	09 Oct 2026
Key Decision?	No

CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	**Comments Sought**	**Comments Included**
Director of Law and Governance	No	No
Strategic Director of Resources	No	No
List other officers here	N/a	N/a
Executive Member	Yes	N/a
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		09 Oct 2026

Annex A: Local SEND Reform Plan

Developing a Local SEND Reform Plan is an important first step for local areas to set out how they will lay the foundation for reform, and design an approach tailored to their local context. A shared plan which focuses on co-designing the local approach as system partners and with children, young people and families will help foster collective responsibility for delivering the reforms.

It is critical that all system partners, including health, education and childcare settings, work together to design and deliver the Local SEND Reform Plan, under the local authority's leadership. It is also crucial that representative family carers e.g. the local Parent Carer Forum, are involved in the development of the plan.

The expectation is that this plan is discussed, agreed, and signed off at your relevant SEND Governance Board. As a minimum, the plan must be formally signed off by the Local Authority Chief Executive (CEO), the Integrated Care Board (ICB) Chief Executive, the Local Authority Director of Children's Service (DCS), the Integrated Care Board NHS Place Director, and the Local Authority Chief Financial Officer (CFO/Section 151 Officer). We encourage other colleagues and partners who have contributed to also review and sign-off the plan, particularly early years, school, college and trust leaders.

Name of Local Authority: London Borough of Southwark

Name of Integrated Care Board: South East London ICB

Local SEND Reform Plan SRO: Alasdair Smith, Director of Children's Services

Signatories

Role	Name	Signature	Email contact	Date
Local Authority Chief Executive (CEO)	Althea Loderick		Althea.loderick@southwark.gov.uk	19 June 2026
Integrated Care Board (ICB) Chief Executive	Andrew Bland		Andrew.bland@selondonics.nhs.uk	18 June 2026
Local Authority Director of Children's Service (DCS)	Alasdair Smith		Alasdair.smith@southwark.gov.uk	18 June 2026
Integrated Care Board NHS Place Director	Darren Summers	PP via email – Rebecca Jarvis (ICB Director of Partnership Delivery and Sustainability (Southwark)	Darren.summers@selondonics.nhs.uk	18 June 2026
Local Authority Chief Financial Officer (CFO/Section 151 Officer)	Clive Palfreyman		Clive.palfreyman@southwark.gov.uk	19 June 2026

Executive Summary

A brief summary of your local system 'change story' – your local context, where you are now, where you want to get to in the next 3 years, how you know you are succeeding and how you will know you have achieved your vision for the next 3 years. Please include a brief qualitative summary. This summary should also include your assessment of current and forecast performance against the headline metrics.

Please structure your 'change story' using the following aims:

- *Build a 0-25 system where children and young people receive support to achieve and thrive through (a) more inclusive settings and (b) stronger local partnerships*
- *Improve capacity and capability of the mainstream and specialist workforce to identify and meet need*
- *Improve confidence of children, families, and stakeholders in reform and readiness of the system*
- *Stabilise finances and improve value for money*

500 words

Southwark's Plan sets a three-year programme to build a more inclusive, earlier and financially sustainable 0-25 SEND system. From a position of strength: mainstream inclusion rates for children with EHCPs above national averages, educational outcomes for children with SEND are strong, special schools are good or outstanding, and partnership arrangements strengthened through recent Safety Valve reform programme. At the same time, demand, complexity and cost are rising. Our special schools are at or over capacity, pressure is increasing across secondary and post-16 provision, and without reform we would become increasingly dependent on specialist and independent placements, with growing pressure on the Dedicated Schools Grant.

Our change story is based on a clear theory of change: if we strengthen inclusion in mainstream settings, improve earlier access to multidisciplinary advice and targeted support through a locality-based Experts at Hand model, and create stronger joint accountability across education, health and care, then more children and young people will have their needs met earlier, locally and effectively, with less escalation to statutory processes and specialist placements. The Local Partnership Maturity Assessment Tool confirms we have strong foundations in governance, co-production and early help, while highlighting the need to develop a more consistent universal offer, stronger shared data, improved post-16 pathways and more consistent access to specialist support.

Over the next three years we will deliver reform through four connected shifts: from late to earlier intervention; from distant and specialist to local and inclusive; from fragmented to shared delivery; and from reactive to evidence-led improvement. This means aligning SEND reform with Family Hubs, Best Start in Life and neighbourhood health; expanding resourced provision across early years, primary and secondary; strengthening mainstream environments and inclusive practice; embedding outreach and multidisciplinary support; and improving governance, co-production, commissioning and use of shared performance data.

By 2029/30, Southwark expect to see movement in both headline and leading indicators. We aim to reduce EHCP growth from 5% to below 4%, increase mainstream inclusion for pupils with EHCPs from 79% to 85% in primary and from 55% to 65% in secondary, and reduce independent and non-maintained placements from 205 to 35. We will expand resourced provision, improve EHCP timeliness from 45% to 65%, raise GLD for children on SEN support from 27% to 35%, increase supported internships from 10 to 30, and reduce the proportion of open EHCPs for 20-25 year olds from 11% to 8%. We also expect stronger confidence in the system through improved survey feedback, better access to specialist advice and lower absence for pupils with SEND. Together, these changes will show movement towards an earlier, more local, fairer, more effective, more shared and more sustainable system. Our investment in inclusive mainstream adaptations, supported by an experts at hand will deliver progressive deescalation of provision that will see the proportion of less complex needs move from special settings to mainstream, and a concurrent shift of more complex needs from INMSS into local special schools. With a progressive deescalation in unit costs and a more sustainable DSG.

Section 1 – Vision and Goals

1. **What the local area partnership is trying to achieve?**

   Please set out your goals for your local system. These should be clear, aligned to the vision set out in the Schools White Paper, small in number and measurable. These goals should include clear reference to:

   - Outcomes for children
   - Confidence of parents, carers and young people in the system
   - Management of finances to secure value for money

250 words

Vision: **Create good lives together:** *a life that is rewarding and enjoyable in which you are valued, achieving in education, included and respected in the community, connected with people who matter to you, and given the support and opportunity you need to thrive and live a fulfilling life.*

Goals:

- **Early & sustainable –** Integrated Family Hubs and Experts at Hand ensures earlier identification and support. Delivering 8% increase in GLD for SEN children. Average age of SEN identification reduced to 5, in particular for ASD and SLCN. Delivering DSG sustainability - halving the high needs expenditure growth rate by 2029.
- **Local –** Rapid inclusion base expansion. Doubling the rate of primaries with provision, and increasing secondaries with provision by 500%.
- **Fair –** Experts at Hand offer ensures more schools can support a greater range of needs effectively. Shifting the ratio of individual support plans to EHCPs from 2:1 to 4:1, reducing the rate of EHCNA requests and appeals.
- **Effective –** 100% of our schools confident accessing the evidence-based support offer, with a 75% positive rate in the quality of support. Education workforce have access to the right evidence-based tools and support to deliver increased inclusion and will self-report increasing confidence supporting children with more complex needs in mainstream. This will deliver a 3.1% reduction in persistent absenteeism for SEN pupils, and a 3% reduction in 20-25 EHCPs through more timely progression to employment.
- **Shared** – To evidence the child and family voice at the centre of our planning and decision making. Our annual resident and partnership survey will show increasing rates of satisfaction with the whole system SEND support offer.

Section 2 – Strategy

2. **Where the local area partnership expects to be in the next 3 years**

A description of what your local system would look like in the next 3 years in line with the national vision set out in the Schools White Paper and set within the context of where you are starting from as a local system.

In particular, as commissioning system partners, you should reflect on and agree what your fully fledged **Experts At Hand Offer** model should be and how this will be deployed via mainstream settings and providers (including those not based in your area – e.g. further education colleges attended by your young people) to build their capacity as well as identify and meet the needs of children and young people earlier and without the need for a statutory assessment for Education, Health and Care.

To help you fully consider the scope and scale of change required, you may find it useful to structure your response using these 4 building blocks of an inclusive system, reflecting on what is working well in your system, what you are most worried about, what needs to change, and how the enablers will help you achieve your 3 year vision.

When summarising where your local area partnership currently is, please include an assessment of where you are in reference to the core minimum requirements above and how you bridge the gap, making reference to and attaching additional documents that provide underlying evidence for your summary.

Strengthening inclusion across education settings– organising places and provision to meet as many needs as possible, as close to home as possible, with all settings and providers moving towards a shared understanding and consistent practices around inclusion.

System leadership, local partnership collaboration and co-production – putting in place the enabling conditions across a local area that ensures planning and provision reflects the local area & is joined up, including strategic co-production with parent carers and children and young people.

Access to specialist support and local placements – improving collaboration between settings and deploying expertise from a range of specialist and expert sources, to support schools and settings to meet the needs of children and young people earlier and locally.

Encouraging inclusive culture & behaviours – using funding and shared accountability towards a system that works for children and families while achieving value for money.

Local blueprint for the next 3 years	Where we are	Where we will be in the next 3 years
Strengthening inclusion across education settings (For full detail including minimum requirements - sufficiency and place planning – see Appendix A)	**What is working well & what we are most worried about** There is a strong and shared narrative across our family of schools about the need to improve inclusion and deliver better outcomes for our children with SEND. There is a strong inclusive foundation both in the local education culture and in practice that gives us a positive opportunity to increasingly strengthen inclusion across all education settings. Inclusion rates for children with EHCPs are higher in our local mainstream settings than national averages, and attainment outcomes for young people with SEND are also better than comparators. We have good recent examples of innovative adaptation and investment in collaborative new solutions to increase specialist provision both in mainstream settings, and co-located with mainstream settings where space is available due to falling rolls. The major concern for the local area is the continued increases in demand and complexity of needs in our children and young people with SEND, and the concurrent pressure on local specialist places. There is a significant current deficit in the availability of local secondary specialist places, and this is anticipated to continue to grow over the next 5 year period. Urgent action is needed to invest in and mobilise a range of new specialist places both through inclusion bases in secondary schools and to supplement this with a limited increase in special school places. Suspension and exclusion rates for children with SEN are better locally then most comparators, though the average length of suspension for our pupils with SEN are longer than comparators. A key area of focus is support for pupils with SEN displaying and facing suspensions persistent disruptive behaviour. A key challenge locally is bettering the rates of absenteeism and persistent abseentism in particular for pupils in our specialist settings.	**What needs to change and where we will be in the next 3 years** In 3-years time we will have seen a rapid expansion of Inclusion Bases across all local education settings from early years through to Post-16, with a particular focus on secondary school settings, delivered in strong partnership with our locally represented multi-academy trusts. There will be clear and shared SLAs across all inclusion bases and an open and transparent collaboration across settings to delivery quality and outcomes for our children and young people. The creation of new inclusion bases will have supported a clear and progressive de-escalation of needs with only those with the most complex needs requiring special school places. More children supported in mainstream settings will release pressure on our special schools and in turn will ultimately lead to only those children and young people with the most acute and multiple specific needs requiring independent or non-maintained placements. The wraparound support offer, increasingly skilled workforce and development of more consistent and quality assured inclusive environments for our pupils with SEN will significantly reduce the incidence of suspension on the basis of persistently disruptive behaviour and increase overall attendance rates.
Access to specialist support and local placements (For full detail including minimum requirements – Experts at Hand – see appendix a)	**What is working well & what we are most worried about** Significant work has been undertaken within the local education system over the last 18-months to foster a new collaborative approach across schools and between schools and the local authority. Seeking to improve collaboration and simplify understanding of and pathways to accessing partnership expertise to support schools. The new Learning Partnership strengthens the schools-voice in decision making and collaborative design of local services and has set responding to SEND as a priority for school to school improvement locally.	**What needs to change and where we will be in the next 3 years** In 3-years time we will have a fully implemented Experts at Hand model (Appendix B) implemented (informed by, and meeting the expectations, of the pending national Guidance). We will be in a position to evidence that all cross-system partners, in particular education settings have a full understanding of the local support offer, how to access it, and show confidence in delivery and the iterative design of the support offer.

	The local area is successfully integrating the range of transformation programmes underway and has increasingly effective governance, oversight and collaborative working on the interconnections between SEND reform, Best Start in Life, Families First and Integrated Neighbourhood Health reform. Whilst in some parts the local area system is well resourced, there is fragmentation in commissioned delivery leading to inefficiencies, duplication and a lack of clarity in how and when to access relevant support both in education settings and the community. At the same time all parts of the local system are delivering in the context of significant local and sub-regional reductions in public sector resources the capacity to shift from high-end to preventative spend is significantly stretched.	The focus of the expert at hands offer will be in driving more inclusion for our key need areas of ASD, SEMH and SLCN.
System leadership, local partnership collaboration and co-production (For full detail including minimum requirements - strengthening effective partnerships and practice – see appendix a)	**What is working well & what we are most worried about** Benefiting from activity delivered through the Safety Valve programme the local area SEND Partnership has been significantly strengthened over the last 18 months. There is clear and increasingly strong local strategic and operational governance across the education, health and care system, with full representation from the Parent Carer Forum. There is a clear named SRO for the SEND Reform programme within the LA. There is an increasingly effective Pathways to Adulthood leadership group, but Post-16 & FE provider participation in operational and partnership discussion is currently limited, this limits the impact and influence over independence pathways for young people. Collaboration and co-production have being strengthened significantly in the last 18-months, with the appointment of a dedicated SEND Participation Officer leading a programme of renewed and deeper embedded engagement with children and young people. The relationship with the Parent Carer Forum goes from strength to strength, with co-chairs being full members of the SEND Partnership Board, and all minor and major decisions on SEND service change and adaptation now featuring proportionate and transparent engagement with the PCF and the wider network of SEND stakeholders. The new Learning Partnership is delivering a renewed approach to whole system collaboration across the education sector. Multi-agency professional are now more routinely engaging in joint development activity and groups with educations settings and parents and carers. There are significant parallel reforms taking place across all areas of the education, health and care systems, with major	**What needs to change and where we will be in the next 3 years** In 3-years time we will have a clearly co-produced and effective universal offer that will significantly impact on the rates of escalation to Education, Health and Care Assessment and Planning. Our universal and early intervention offer, coordinated by Best Start Family Hubs effectively facilitating local area networks, will have evidentially been developed and continuously improved through feedback from parents/carers and education system leaders. Joint commissioning activity will be embedded across the SEND system, with education settings confident in services provided and fully participating in ongoing monitoring and evaluation of commissioned services. Post-16 pathways will be strengthened so that preparation for adulthood, employment and supported internships are a routine part of local SEND planning. Over the next 3 years we will improve access to local specialist and mainstream pathways for young people aged 14-25, including the development of 14-25 specialist capacity, stronger FE engagement in partnership governance and clearer transition routes into adulthood.

	structural changes occurring across the local authority and Integrated Care Boards in particular. Whilst there is effective partnership understanding of linked programmes, these varying demands and levels of uncertainty risk a significant drain on capacity to deliver individual reforms at pace and can lead to duplication and/or confusion in the system:	
Encouraging inclusive culture and behaviours (For full detail including minimum requirements - strengthening effective partnerships and practice – see appendix a)	**What is working well & what we are most worried about** Again, through the Safety Valve programme we have significantly strengthened the local area focus on inclusive culture and behaviours, and the relationship between the professional system and our children, young people and families. There are multiple demands and risk pressures within the local system which have the potential to impact on focused activity to change culture and behaviours and limit approaches to shared accountability	**What needs to change and where we will be in the next 3 years** In 3-years time co-production will be systematic across all our activity both BAU and developmental. Our annual children & young people and parents & carers surveys will evidence significant improvement in child and family perception and experience of the system and the timeliness and impact of the response to their identified needs.
Enablers *E.g.* *Capital – investment strategy across EY, mainstream, FE* *Workforce* *Data/digital systems*	**What is working well & what we are most worried about** Some key areas required to enable delivery of the reform plan are sufficiently advanced to allow for mobilisation at pace under this plan, including the well developed high needs capital investment strategy and the delivery plan for the Best Start in Life which will support developments across the early years sector for SEND reform. The Best Start in Life Family Hub programme is advanced and has a key focus on SEND delivery across the life course focused on earlier and multi-agency intervention, and shared development of the professional and community workforce towards more effective intervention for children, young people and families in particular those with SEND. The workforce across the local area whole 0-25 education system is passionate about inclusion and improving inclusive practice. We have a strong SEND Hub and network of SENCos who come together to collaborate and share learning and practice. However, both the SENCO and broader education workforce acknowledge that the breadth of the knowledge base that promotes inclusion can be improved, and there is a need to build more confidence across the workforce to match the passion for inclusion. Our multi-agency workforce, in particular in schools note a key area for development is building consistency and shared access to evidence-based approaches across borough schools.	**What needs to change and where we will be in the next 3 years** Our primary enabling goal over the next 3-years will be to radically improve the availability and utilisation of multi-agency data and digital systems to more effectively monitor and evaluate the impact of services, identify needs more promptly, and deliver better evidence-based early intervention and commissioning activity. We will improve the systematic access to evidence-based tools and approaches across our workforce, and in particular in schools and their supporting roles. We need to strengthen the formality of network and peer-led improvement activity across schools, including coaching and mentoring, and in-classroom observation and associated tutoring.

	A key area for development remains in the use of multi-agency data and intelligence to inform evidence-led service development and intervention. Whilst the local area is data rich, intelligence and analysis to inform action needs further development Other key significant concerns include the availability of the necessary workforce to deliver improvement in the context of regional competition, and the availability of resources both capital and revenue to sustain improvement.	
Success measures ***Drawing on metrics from the accompanying data template E.g.*** *Improve attendance of pupils in all maintained schools (mainstream and special) with SEN* *Reduce reliance on independent special school places* *Mainstream settings with increased access to Education Psychologists/SaLT/OT* *Reduced NEET rates for SEND YP at age 16*	*Baseline* *(outline the baseline for your success measures reflecting where you are now – these should be drawn from the metrics in the data template)*	*Target Metrics* *(outline the target metrics that will demonstrate you have achieved the vision summarized above – these should be drawn from the metrics in the data temlate)*
Reduce the rate of increase of children with an EHCP	*5%*	*<4%*
Increase the proportion of primary age children with an EHCP in mainstream education	*79%*	85%
Increase the proportion of secondary age children with an EHCP in mainstream education	55%	65%
Reduce the number of children in independent/non maintained special school places	205	35
Increase the number of local resourced provision places in early years settings and maintained nursery:	12	30
Increase the number of local resourced provision places in primary settings: • **ASD** • **SEMH** • **SLCN** • **Sensory Impairment**	147 105 0 22 10	377 227 80 60 10
Increase the number of local resourced provision places in secondary settings	25	390
Reduction in the proportion of open EHCPs for those aged 20 – 25	11%	8%
Increase the rate of EHCPs issued within 20-weeks	45%	65%
Increase the rate of children with SEN (without EHCP) achieving a good level of development	27%	35%
Increase the number of council and partnership supported	10	30

internships		
Overall positivity score on parent carer SEND satisfaction survey	None	75%
Overall positivity score on young person's SEND satisfaction survey	None	75%
Overall positivity score on education professionals SEND satisfaction survey	None	75%
Mainstream schools reporting positive understanding of how to access to specialist health services:		
• **SLT**	None	80%
• **OT**	None	80%
• **MH**	None	80%
Mainstream schools reporting positive understanding of access to experts at hand support	None	100%
Mainstream schools positivity score for support offer from experts at hand	None	80%
Reduction in rates or persistent absenteeism for SEN pupils	23.1%	20%
Reduction in overall absence rates in special schools	14.4%	12%

- **APPENDIX A – LOCAL BLUEPRINT – FULL DETAIL & MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS**
- **APPENDIX B – PROVISIONAL EXPERTS AT HAND MODEL**

3. **What is the local area partnership's strategy for delivering on the above?**

A brief summary of your local system's theory of change or reform strategy. Reflect on the output of your **Local Partnership Maturity Assessment Tool**, particularly your *Local System 'change story.'*

250 words

Our reform strategy is based on a clear theory of change: if we strengthen mainstream inclusion, provide earlier access to multidisciplinary support through a locality-based Experts at Hand model, and create stronger joint accountability across education, health and care, then more children and young people will have their needs met earlier, locally and effectively, with less escalation to statutory processes and specialist placements.

Our Maturity Assessment Tool shows that Southwark has important strengths to build on: improving partnership governance, strong co-production with parent/carers, effective early help through Family Hubs and Best Start in Life, and a clear shared ambition for inclusion. It also highlights the areas that need to mature further: a more consistent universal offer, stronger shared data and performance management, clearer post-16 and preparation for adulthood pathways, and greater consistency in access to specialist advice.

Our strategy focuses on four connected shifts. First, from late to earlier intervention, by aligning SEND reform with Family Hubs, integrated neighbourhood working and transition support so needs are identified and met sooner, enabled by a strong, iterative, co-developed and responsive Expert at Hands offer. Second, from distant and specialist to local and inclusive, by expanding resourced provision, strengthening mainstream practice and using special school outreach and multidisciplinary Experts at Hand to build school confidence. Third, from fragmented to shared delivery, through joint commissioning, clearer governance and embedded co-production. Fourth, from reactive to evidence-led improvement, through a shared dashboard, agreed success measures and routine review of outcomes, inclusion and value for money.

APPENDIX C – THEORY OF CHANGE DOCUMENT

4. **Please upload a completed copy of the Local Partnership Maturity Assessment Tool.**

APPENDIX D – LOCAL MATURITY ASSESSMENT

5. **What is the local area partnership roadmap for the next 3 years?**

Reflecting on the broad timescales and expectation for deliverables set out in the Schools White Paper, key documents and core minimum requirements set out in this document, please provide a high-level roadmap for the next 3 years. Please highlight key milestones and a trajectory to the target metrics identified above, including leading indicators.

In the 2026-27 column, in particular, please reference how you plan to meet the core minimum requirements in your narrative, including details and evidence in supporting documents.

You can insert or upload supporting documents including graphics/visuals that illustrate your data trajectory.

Local roadmap for the next 3 years	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Strengthening inclusion across education settings	• Approve the High Needs Capital Investment Strategy 2026-2030 and publish the inclusion-led sufficiency plan. • Complete statutory consultation on the first wave of new and expanded resourced provision across early years, primary and secondary settings. • Open the first new places and confirm mobilising schools, target cohorts and delivery partners. • Agree and implement service specifications, admissions principles and QA standards for all inclusion bases.	• Open the second wave of resourced provision, with a particular increase in secondary capacity. • Review forecast need and update place plans through two formal six-monthly sufficiency cycles. Evidence begins to show reduced pressure on secondary specialist placements in particular for ASD and SEMH • Extend QA visits to all new inclusion bases and publish an annual summary of quality and outcomes.	• Complete the planned 3-year expansion of local resourced provision across early years, primary and secondary. Increasing local places by 300. • Demonstrate that primary resourced provision has mitigated the need for primary specialist growth, with 0% forecast need for primary special expansion. • Demonstrate that the expansion of secondary inclusion bases and SEMH provision has reduced the gap between forecast and available local secondary specialist capacity.

	• Expand the mainstream adaptations programme using falling rolls and existing estate capacity to improve inclusive environments. • Continue six-monthly sufficiency review and reporting to SEND Partnership Board and Schools Forum. • Mobilise routine MAT sufficiency planning for secondary group to ensure buy-in at system level for development of new provision – focused on Secondary – ASD and SEMH places.	• Complete further estate adaptations in mainstream schools linked to individual inclusion strategies. • Embed the annual MAT and school place-planning forum as a routine route for agreeing future growth. • Evidence a reduction in new independent placements and stronger use of local mainstream pathways.	• Demonstrate a sustained reduction in the number and proportion of secondary-aged pupils requiring independent/non-maintained placements due to lack of suitable local provision. • Confirm that mainstream and resourced provision is the default local response for a greater proportion of need. • Show sustained reduction in dependence on out-of-area and independent/non-maintained placements. Reducing placements to 107 or lower by 2028. • Embed routine capital planning, estate adaptation and QA processes as business as usual. • Use year-end data to reset the next phase of sufficiency planning and inclusion growth.
Access to specialist support and local placements	• Agree and publish the Southwark Experts at Hand model, operating model and access routes for schools, early years and priority post-16 pathways. • Mobilise the multidisciplinary team, aligned to Family Hubs and neighbourhood geographies. • Launch priority pathways for early years transition, primary inclusion support and targeted secondary outreach. • Agree commissioning arrangements for core specialist advice, including SALT, OT, EP and mental health support. • Introduce a single referral and triage route for schools to access	• Iterate Experts at Hand model and coverage • Embed regular multidisciplinary consultation, outreach and review cycles with mainstream settings. • Scale special school outreach and hub-school support as part of the core local offer. • Publish and implement clear thresholds, response standards and outcome measures for targeted specialist support. • Use service data to refine pathways and reduce variation in access across schools and neighbourhoods. • Evidence fewer escalations to independent placements and	• Make Experts at Hand a business-as-usual part of the Southwark SEND system, with routine access across education settings. Demonstrate 100% of mainstream schools understand how to access Experts at Hand and at least 75% report positive impact of support offered. • Show consistent locality-based access to specialist advice, outreach and short-term intervention across all phases. 100% of schools to have accessed some element of support by end of year 3. • Confirm that schools are using local specialist support earlier, before statutory escalation.

	advice, consultation and short-term intervention. • Start tracking reach, response times, supported cases and avoided escalation to EHCNA or specialist placement.	greater use of local support packages.	Evidenced by upto 5% reduction in EHCNA requests annually • Demonstrate improved local placement stability, attendance and reduction in exclusions, and fewer out-of-area placements driven by unmet need. • Embed annual review of pathway effectiveness, value for money and workforce capacity. • Use evaluation evidence to reset the next phase of local specialist support development.
System leadership, local partnership collaboration and co-production	• Confirm SEND Partnership Board governance of EaH delivery, confirm SEND Reform Plan delivery reporting and named accountable leads for each reform building block. • Align SEND reform governance with Best Start in Life, Families First and neighbourhood health programmes. • Agree a joint delivery plan across the local authority, ICB, schools, Parent Carer Forum and wider partners. • Embed the Learning Partnership and High Needs Sub-Group as routine routes for school-system engagement and challenge. • Publish a co-production framework and annual engagement plan with parent carers, children and young people. • Expand partnership membership to strengthen FE/post-16 representation. • Further develop the shared SEND dashboard with agreed KPIs,	• Use the shared dashboard to drive routine joint performance review and corrective action across partners. • Refresh local area SEND Strategy, embedding annual co-produced priority setting and refresh the reform plan based on lived experience and performance data. • Strengthen FE, employment and preparation for adulthood leadership within the partnership structure. • Publish an annual partnership progress report covering outcomes, finance, delivery risks and next steps. • Evidence stronger partner attendance, delivery grip and co-produced decision making.	• Make shared governance, co-production and joint performance management standard practice across the local SEND system. • Show clear evidence that partnership decisions are driven by shared data, delivery impact and family voice. • Embed FE and preparation for adulthood as a routine part of local SEND planning and oversight. • Demonstrate sustained partner ownership of reform priorities beyond programme governance. • Use annual evaluation to refresh governance, delivery focus and accountability for the next phase. • Evidence improved confidence in the local SEND system among partners and families.

	leading indicators and six-monthly review points.		
Encouraging inclusive culture and behaviours	• Agree and communicate a shared Southwark inclusion statement and expectations for inclusive practice across settings. • Roll out the Ordinarily Available Provision toolkit and behaviour/inclusion tools with linked school briefings and training. • Embed supported self-assessment of inclusive practice through SEND school improvement activity. • Launch a programme of school-to-school inclusion learning, including hub school and special school outreach support. • Introduce regular family and young person feedback loops on inclusion, belonging and confidence in support. • Begin tracking school engagement, workforce participation and confidence in inclusive practice.	• Extend inclusion self-assessment and peer review across all mainstream schools and priority early years settings. • Publish examples of effective inclusive practice and use them to support improvement across the system. • Embed inclusion-focused workforce development through leadership networks, SENCO forums and school partnerships. • Use attendance, exclusions, complaints and family feedback to target support where inclusion is weakest. • Strengthen shared accountability for inclusion between schools, trusts and the local partnership. • Evidence improved confidence among schools, parent carers and young people in mainstream inclusion.	• Make inclusive practice review, peer support and family feedback part of routine school improvement and partnership assurance. • Show sustained improvement in schools' confidence to meet a wider range of need in mainstream settings. • Demonstrate stronger inclusion culture through improved attendance, reduced exclusion risk and more positive lived experience. • Embed annual recognition and dissemination of effective inclusive practice across the local system. • Use evaluation evidence to refresh tools, training and support for the next phase of inclusion improvement. • Confirm that inclusion is understood as a shared responsibility across all partners and settings.
Enablers *E.g.* *Capital – investment strategy across EY, mainstream, FE* *Workforce* *Data/digital systems*	• Confirm the capital, workforce and digital delivery plan needed to support the first year of reform. • Complete programme management capacity recruitment and confirm named leads for capital, data, workforce and commissioning workstreams. • Begin recruitment and commissioning for priority	• Complete the main phase of workforce mobilisation for outreach, multidisciplinary support and inclusion leadership. • Implement improved data reporting and shared dashboard functionality across partner governance. • Deliver the second phase of capital and estate works	• Embed capital planning, workforce planning and performance reporting as business-as-usual enablers of the SEND system. • Show stable delivery capacity for inclusion growth, outreach and locality-based specialist support. • Demonstrate that shared data is routinely informing commissioning, sufficiency

	specialist roles needed for Experts at Hand and outreach delivery. • Set the specification for a strengthened SEND data dashboard and improved case/performance reporting. • Establish routine reporting on workforce gaps, capital delivery and data quality risks. • Agree a SEND financial sustainability trajectory, including annual DSG recovery assumptions, demand management milestones, unit cost reductions and indicators for reduced spend on independent/non-maintained placements. • Establish more routine reporting to SEND Partnership Board and Schools Forum on SEND demand, placement mix, DSG pressure and delivery of savings assumptions to increase whole system accountability for DSG delivery.	supporting new provision and mainstream adaptation. • Embed workforce development and retention plans for hard-to-recruit specialist roles. • Use delivery data to refine commissioning, deployment and investment decisions. • Evidence stronger delivery confidence across programme, workforce and digital enablers. • Demonstrate delivery against the agreed DSG/sustainability trajectory, including reduced growth in high-cost placements, and unit cost management . • Strengthened use of finance and activity data to refine commissioning and sufficiency decisions.	planning and performance management. • Confirm that estates, digital and workforce investment are aligned to the next phase of reform. • Use year-end evaluation to reset capital, workforce and digital priorities for 2029/30 onwards. • Evidence improved resilience of the local SEND system to sustain reform gains.
Success measures ***Drawing on metrics from the accompanying data template*** *E.g.* *Improve attendance of pupils in all maintained schools (mainstream and special) with SEN* *Reduce spend on ISS places* *Increase # children and young people supported by Education Psychologists/SALT/OT in maintained provision* *Improve overall effectiveness of provision* *NEET data* *Leading indicators*	• EHCP growth rate reduced from 5% to 4.7%, with lower rates of new EHCNA requests as a leading indicator. • Primary pupils with EHCPs in mainstream increase from 79% to 81%; secondary from 55% to 58%. • Independent/non-maintained placements reduce from 195 to 175. • Resourced provision expands to 30 early years places, 150 primary places and 150 secondary places in total. • 20-week EHCP timeliness improves from 45% to 52%; GLD	• EHCP growth rate reduces further to 4.3%, supported by a stronger ISP:EHCP ratio and fewer new statutory escalations. • Primary pupils with EHCPs in mainstream increase to 83%; secondary to 61%. • Independent/non-maintained placements reduce to 125. • Resourced provision expands to 30 early years places, 260 primary places and 270 secondary places in total. • 20-week EHCP timeliness improves to 58%; GLD for SEN support rises to 31%.	• EHCP growth rate is below 4%, meeting the 3-year target. • Primary pupils with EHCPs in mainstream reach 85%; secondary reach 65%. • Independent/non-maintained placements reduce to 107. • Resourced provision reaches 30 early years places, 390 primary places and 390 secondary places in total. • 20-week EHCP timeliness reaches 65%; GLD for SEN support reaches 35%. • Supported internships reach 30; open EHCPs for 20-25 year olds reduce to 8%.

	for SEN support rises from 27% to 29%. • Parent, young person and education survey positivity scores established and improve to at least 60% in first full year. • Leading indicators: 60% of mainstream schools report understanding how to access Experts at Hand; 55% report sufficient access to SLT, OT and MH support; persistent absence for SEN pupils reduces from 23.1% to 22% and special school absence from 14.4% to 13.8%. • Reduction in spend on independent/non-maintained placements (with annual trajectory)	• Supported internships increase to 20; open EHCPs for 20-25 year olds reduce to 9.5%. • Leading indicators: parent, young person and education survey positivity reaches 68-70%; 80% of mainstream schools report understanding access to Experts at Hand; 70% report sufficient access to SLT, OT and MH support; persistent absence for SEN pupils reduces to 21% and special school absence to 13%. • Reduction in spend on independent/non-maintained placements (with annual trajectory)	• Parent, young person and education survey positivity reaches 75%; 100% of mainstream schools report understanding access to Experts at Hand; 80% report sufficient access to SLT, OT and MH support; school positivity with Experts at Hand reaches 80%; persistent absence for SEN pupils reduces to 20% and special school absence to 12%. • Reduction in spend on independent/non-maintained placements (with annual trajectory) • DSG growth rate reduced to 5%

6. **What will the local area partnership deliver in the first year?**

Please outline the key workstreams, milestones and trajectory your local area partnership will deliver and achieve in 2026-27 as well as how you plan to spend the investment allocation that will help fund this year's delivery. Please share key milestones and anticipated dates, success measures, cost breakdown and category. These should incorporate the core minimum requirements, be mapped to the building blocks above and should reflect a more detailed trajectory to the narrative, milestones and target metrics outlined in the 2026-27 column above.

2026-27 Local delivery plan		**Q2**		**Q3**		**Q4**	
Workstream outline – mapped to building block ***Outcome -*** *what you want to achieve with this workstream* ***Success measures –*** *how you measure progress drawing on metrics from the accompanying data template*	***Responsible lead per workstream*** *– accountable for the delivery of the workstream and the identified outcome.*	***Milestones per workstream*** *What key milestones will enable you achieve your targeted trajectory*	***Target trajectory per workstream*** *Where do you expect your data to be?*	***Milestones per workstream*** *What key milestones will enable you achieve your targeted trajectory*	***Target trajectory per workstream*** *Where do you expect your data to be?*	***Milestones per workstream*** *What key milestones will enable you achieve your targeted trajectory*	***Target trajectory per workstream*** *Where do you expect your data to be?*
Building block - *Strengthening inclusion across education settings* ***Outcome*** *– Deliver increased specialist capacity in mainstream (0-25) and specialist settings, including adapted mainstream environments to improve inclusion* ***Success measure –*** *Increase rate of early years, primary and secondary settings with inclusion bases.*	*Michael Crowe – Assistant Director – Strategy, Transformation & Business Intelligence*	Approve high needs capital investment strategy (July 26) Launch consultations on new inclusion bases and specialist expansion (July 26) Expand the mainstream adaptations programme using falling rolls and existing estate capacity to improve inclusive environments. (July 26)	As is	Statutory decisions on expansion completed (Oct 26) Agree and implement service specifications, admissions principles and QA standards for all inclusion bases. (Oct 26)	100% of planned statutory decisions 100% of planned service specifications in place	New inclusion bases in place (Jan 27)	Resourced provision expands to 30 early years places, 150 primary places and 150 secondary places in total.

Building block - *Access to specialist support and local placements* ***Outcome –*** *Co-produce and implement the experts at hand model* ***Success measure –*** *Experts at hand model fully implemented*	*Catherine Milmine – Assistant Director - SEND*	Finalise co-production of EaH model (July 26) Complete Job Descriptions for EaH Team (July 26) Launch recruitment for EaH Teams (July 26)	100% of EaH posts advertise and/or commissioned	EaH staff recruited and in place (Oct 26) Operating protocol for EaH Team drafted (Oct 26) Referral Pathways Established EaH and BSIL Hub Joint working protocol completed (Oct 26) Therapies recommissioning process complete (Oct 26)	75% of EaH staff in post First 10 schools accessed element of EaH and outreach support	EaH Service fully mobilised (Jan 27) Inclusion Strategy QA Framework developed (Jan 27) First Tranche of individual Inclusion Strategies in place (Feb 27)	100% of EaH staff in post Second tranche of 10 schools accessed element of EaH and outreach support
Building block - *System leadership, local partnership collaboration and co-production* ***Outcome –*** *Programme infrastructure is fully established* ***Success measure –*** *Local Reform Plan governance and oversight infrastructure is fully developed and routinely driving the programme*	*Anna Chiva – Deputy Director – Learning & Inclusion*	Annual Parent Carer Survey Launched (July 26) Annual Children & Young People Survey Launched (July 26) Confirm SEND Partnership Board governance of Ea H delivery, confirm SEND Reform Plan delivery reporting and named accountable leads for each reform building block (July 26). Agree a joint delivery plan across the local authority, ICB, schools, Parent Carer Forum and wider partners. (July 26) Expand partnership membership to	Baseline data established	Publish a co-production framework and annual engagement plan with parent carers, children and young people. (Oct 26) Further develop the shared SEND dashboard with agreed KPIs, leading indicators and six-monthly review points. (Oct 26)	*As is*		*As is*

		strengthen FE/post-16 representation. (July 26)					
Building block - *Encouraging inclusive culture and behaviours* ***Outcome –*** Schools report increasing confidence in supporting inclusion ***Success measure –*** Rate of schools reporting confidence in inclusive practice and capacity to support children with SEND in mainstream settings	*Catherine Milmine – Assistant Director - SEND*	Roll out the Ordinarily Available Provision toolkit and behaviour/inclusion tools with linked school briefings and training. (July 26) Embed supported self-assessment of inclusive practice through SEND school improvement activity. (July 26)	As is	Agree and communicate a shared Southwark inclusion statement and expectations for inclusive practice across settings. (Oct 26) Begin tracking school engagement, workforce participation and confidence in inclusive practice. (Oct 26)	100% of school inclusion strategies complete	Launch a programme of school-to-school inclusion learning, including hub school and special school outreach support. (Jan 27)	Rate of school professional attending training
Projected Investment Spend per quarter *Please specify funding source for each category*							
Programme oversight/additional leadership capacity.		£58,967		£58,967		£58,967	
Workforce				£471,739		£471,739	
Recruitment		£50,000		£25,000		£0	
Workforce training and development		£78,623		£78,623		£78,623	
Data/Digital		£111,302		£111,302		£111,302	
Total Spend		**£298,892**		**£745,631**		**£720,631**	

7. **How will the local area partnership deliver the first-year plan?**

Please set out how you will ensure the required capacity and capability is in place from organisational corporate functions to support implementation of the plan. This could include reference to how you plan to build or bring in project delivery capability to manage delivery against the plan, support prioritisation, and effective use of resources; and how you plan to build the capacity and capability in data and analytics to support effective tracking against the measures in the plan and reporting that informs decision making.

250 words

Deputy Director - Learning & Inclusion is the SRO for Reform, reporting to the DCS, and a strong and recognised system leader.

SRO supported by dedicated programme resource, almost fully recruited, to deliver the Reform Plan. Includes:

- Assistant Director – Strategy, Transformation & Business Intelligence (Children's Services) (in post - BAU)
- Two Senior Service Development Officers – Programme Managers (in post – Grant Funded)
- Service Development Officer – Project Manager (in post – Grant Funded)
- Dedicated SEND Commissioning & Contracts Manager (in recruitment – Grant Funded)
- Dedicated SEND Senior Intelligence & Impact Offer – Data and Analytics (in post - Part Grant Funded)
- Power BI Developer – Supporting modernisation of systems and data integration (in post – Part Grant Funded)

The dedicated programme team is within the overall Children's Services programme function which jointly delivers the Best Start in Life and Families First Programmes. The team uses established project methodologies and reporting approaches to deliver effective decision making, progress oversight and risk management. The team has established relationships and works in close collaboration with additional business as usual resource with the councils Public Health division, to support deeper joint analysis, the Technology and Digital Service, supporting modernisation of systems and digital tools, and the dedicated ICB SEND Commissioning function, supporting SEND delivery and wider connections to the integrated neighbourhood health programme.

All linked teams share and participate in parallel governance forums to ensure synergies and efficiencies. Reporting and programme oversight processes are interconnected and collaborative ensuring leaders across education, health and care are able to effectively scrutinise and drive joint delivery.

8. **Other funding Local Authorities.**

Block Transfers: If you have made a block transfer (Schools Block to High Needs Block) for 26-27, please set out how your plans for this funding align with the activities outlined above.

64/250 words

Under the safety valve agreement there is an existing agreed block transfer of £1.2m which is invested in supporting improvement in the SEND system. This currently funds dedicated SEND School Improvement Advisor support which has worked effectively throughout the Safety Valve period to promote inclusion and develop inclusive practice across the 0-25 education system. This investment continues to be renewed through the Schools Forum.

Capital: We have announced at least £3 billion in high needs capital between 2026-27 and 2029-30 to support children and young people (CYP) with SEND, or those requiring alternative provision (AP). This funding is intended to support place delivery across the full 0-25 age range, including early years and post-16. We expect funding to support the following outcomes:

a. Inclusion at the core of high needs sufficiency strategy, resulting in more children and young people with SEND accessing suitable places in mainstream settings, across all phases of education

b. Every child or young person who needs a place in an inclusion base can access one

c. Fewer children and young people with SEND needing to travel a long way to access a suitable placement

d. Improved suitability of the mainstream estate to support children and young people with SEND, with adaptations to improve inclusivity and accessibility of the physical environment

We also welcome innovative uses of high needs capital to drive inclusion, for example, investment in assistive technology for use in mainstream settings.

Please outline your strategy for how this funding will meet the outcomes above, with reference to the core minimum requirements and other workstreams in this reform plan where appropriate. We would like to see detail around your plans to increase capacity for inclusion bases (formerly known as SEN units, resourced provision and pupil support units – SU/RP/PSUs), such as schools, colleges or early years providers identified, engagement with relevant settings and trusts, and target cohort of needs.

If your plans include increases to places in special schools or specialist post-16 institutions, please include a clear rationale, showing the need that is being met, and why it cannot be met through other types of provision, such as inclusion bases. If you are receiving additional capital funding to replace one or more planned special or AP free schools, please set out how this funding will meet need in your area, and plans for engaging relevant trusts in your sufficiency planning.

455/500 words

Our plan places inclusion at its core. Our strategy is predicated on a rapid expansion of inclusion bases. See **Appendix G – High Needs Capital Investment Strategy and Appendix H – EHCP Forecast**. The strategy will ensure that all children who can access an inclusion base are able to do so. The plan will deliver:

- Increase in primary inclusion provision from 122 to 260 by 2030, including increasing the range of needs accommodated with a focus on SEMH and SLCN.
- A significant expansion of secondary inclusion base places from 25 to 390 by 2030, across all needs types, with a priority focus on ASD
- Secondary specialist provision is significantly oversubscribed with high reliance on INMSS. Projections show increasing complexity of need over the 5-year period. Forecasting significant growth in need for specialist placements. Through expansion of inclusive provision we expect the previous forecasts for special school growth to be mitigated – however with numbers increasing we need to expand secondary local specialist provision at a reduced rate to previous forecasts. Expansion of specialist places for secondary and post-16 pupils, through the creation of a dedicated 14-25 provision, supporting longer planning for adulthood and independence for post-Y9 pupils. Alongside increased inclusion, this will release pressure of forecast demand on our existing special schools, deescalation of needs into mainstream settings. There is currently no dedicated post-16 special provision locally, a significant gap.
- Plans have been co-developed with three local primary academy trusts to mobilise new inclusion bases in the 2026 academic year
- Discussions with secondary academy trusts with a view to opening two new inclusion bases in the 2026-27 and 2027-28 academic years – a roundtable discussion with all secondary trusts scheduled for July to review sufficiency together and agree more expansion of inclusion bases.

Through these planned expansions we will deliver a marked reduction in travel distance and a significant reduction in the number of children placed in independent and non-maintained.

In addition to our investment in substantive places we will also deliver:

- SEND Best Start Family Hub – located in the centre of the borough. Expanding an existing Family Hub into former maintained nursery. Increasing the availability of space for multi-agency and community delivery for all children and young people with SEND and their parents/carers. There is partnership agreement across education, health and care for co-location in the new facility as a community front door for SEND. Includes training and development space for early years and education settings on inclusive practice and bring networks of professionals together.

- As part of renewing our Accessibility Strategy we have consulted with a range of schools on their estates needs and have co-developed and piloted a SEND Adaptations Project, using HNPCA to allow education settings to bid for additional funds to develop inclusive environment projects in settings. Supported by LA Inclusion practitioners, Autism Support Team, and specialist Health professionals to support bids for adaptation. This is no business as usual and will deliver proactive engagement with all settings through our expanded estates team to support adaptation projects across all schools, and into wider early years and post-16 settings. Recent examples of agreed projects include changing places toilets and hoist installation in mainstream settings to support a pupil with complex physical disabilities to remain in mainstream, and the installation of new sensory facilities in two mainstream schools.

9. **System partner and stakeholder engagement, and co-production.**

   Please outline how the local area partnership plans to engage system partners and stakeholders to develop and implement the plan – include planned engagement with schools and early years settings, alternative providers, FE and post-16 providers (including those your young people attend that are not within your local area), Parents and Carers and children and young people with SEND, with reference to the core minimum requirements. Consider changing roles and responsibilities in the context of the Schools White Paper and how you work collaboratively to manage the transition. Please indicate where additional support is required to engage partners or stakeholders - senior officials at the Department for Education will be available to contribute to summer term events with education leaders and parent carer forum leaders.

500 words

Southwark will deliver this plan through structured, ongoing engagement with all parts of the local SEND system, with co-production embedded as a core minimum requirement rather than a separate activity. Schools and trusts will be engaged through the SEND Partnership Board, the Southwark Learning Partnership, headteacher and SENCO networks, and targeted workshops linked to inclusion bases, Experts at Hand and the ordinarily available offer.

Early years engagement will be strengthened through Best Start in Life and Family Hub networks, maintained nursery and PVI forums, and practice development sessions focused on earlier identification and intervention. We will also establish regular engagement with alternative provision and with FE and post-16 providers, including out-of-area colleges attended by Southwark young people, to improve transition planning, preparation for adulthood pathways and shared understanding of the local support offer.

Parents and carers will remain central to decision making through the Parent Carer Forum, whose co-chairs are full members of the SEND Strategic Partnership Board and take primacy on each Board agenda with a standing item to feedback on the Forum's activity in the previous period, and offer consistent voice and challenge to strategic leaders on all areas of the system. The PCF are full members and participants in all service development and commissioning, with early and consistent engagement and co-production increasingly embedded in our delivery. This will continue to shape priorities, service design and review activity.

Children and young people with SEND are engaged through the SEND Participation Officer, targeted listening work, youth participation forums and co-designed feedback mechanisms so that lived experience informs both strategic priorities and service change. There is a well structured programme for children and young people's engagement in system change, elements of which include cross-borough transition events with Lambeth, to understand young people's ambitions for adulthood; regular consultation and workshops with different Key Stage groups to discuss change activity and issues impacting children and young people, youth council with SEND representation; and Young Inspectors supporting system, service and place design.

Engagement activity in 2026/27 will include a structured programme with education leaders and parent carer forum leaders, co-produced workshops on the reform plan and Experts at Hand model, and regular feedback loops to test confidence, understanding and impact. The co-production exercises are focused on strengthening our partnership approaches to joint accountability for outcomes, oversight and delivery of the model, and supporting leaders to understand the shift in roles and responsibilities towards greater shared ownership. Consolidated feedback from all engagement activity and stakeholders is reviewed regularly at the SEND Operational Group and through individual project and reform workstreams to inform service design and continuous improvement. Similarly all findings are reported routinely at the SEND Partnership Board to ensure senior decision makers are guided by the voice and experience of our stakeholders.

10. Risks and Mitigations

What are the key risks that could affect the successful implementation of your Local SEND Reform Plan, and what mitigation strategies are in place to manage these risks? Please include a maximum of 5 risks with impact and likelihood RAG for each risk. See Annex C for suggested risk matrix.

Risk	Impact	Likelihood	RAG	Mitigation	Residual RAG
Lack of available resources to staff an Experts at Hand function due to regional competition for key posts **(Lead – Programme SRO)**	Crisis	>30% - <60%		Early promotion of new roles. Work with existing capacity, in particular special schools, to mobilise high quality resource internal to the local area to staff EaH model – providing funding and support to those settings to backfill on release of substantive staff and expertise. Explore opportunities for collaborative commissioning across sub-regional authorities to build connected functions without duplicating specific resource and specialisms.	
Continued reduction in local resources due to fairer funding review, and ICB changes impact significantly on business-as-usual resource and the move to preventative intervention **(Lead – DCS & ICB Place Lead)**	Critical	>60% - <90%		Increase collaborative system and service design, and integrated commissioning across reform programmes and undertake full and routine review of joint expenditure through partnership governance structures to identify and deliver opportunities for more impactful and efficient joint delivery. Routine reporting on joint funded delivery to Partnership Board and single agency budgetary position and pressure, to ensure oversight and inform stronger more transparent joint planning. Engagement with schools, through new Education Partnership, to establish joint funding approaches across clusters of schools.	
Continued exponential increase in demand and complexity of need for children and young people with SEND exceeds capacity of increased inclusion base provision **(Lead – Asst Dir Transformation)**	Critical	>60% - <90%		Regular forecasting of demand changes to monitor improvements in inclusion and the impact on overall provision, to ensure a flexible, dynamic and shared response to increasing mainstream capacity to accommodate need. Delivery of EaH Model to prevent escalation of needs Routine engagement and co-production of increased inclusion and specialist provision in mainstream secondaries through regular MAT forum.	
Dedicated Schools Grant funding does not keep pace with system costs leading to a lack of capacity within mainstream settings to accommodate	Critical	>60% - <90%		Alignment of funding streams across SEND reform and Best Start in Life to improve early intervention and prevent crisis escalation. Mitigating demand drivers and complexity in the SEND system. Routine partnership reporting, shared across the	

needs, and risk to local authority sustainability, and lack of resource to invest in early intervention – **(Lead – Asst Dir Finance)**				education system on the financial projections and system affordability to cement shared understanding and a collaborative response to demand management	
Failure in engagement with non-LA maintained settings leads to lack of delivery of new inclusion bases across all settings **(Lead – Programme SRO)**	Crisis	>10% - <30%		Continued development of the shared approach to responding to SEND, with open and transparent dialogue with all settings, including MATs. Regular planning discussions with MAT Leaders across the local area, and routine sharing of demand forecasting. Delivering new approach to partnership through the Southwark Learning Partnership	
Delay in mobilisation of Experts at Hand model and associated special school and peer-to-peer outreach impacts on timely delivery of increased inclusion **(Lead – Asst Dir Transformation)**	Critical	>30% - <60%		Mobilisation of pilot activity through existing internal capacity in partnership services and education settings across the borough – with associated backfill. To pilot broad elements of the EaH offer through outreach, peer-to-peer delivery and schools-led support	
Lack of shared data on identification and intervention, in particular in the early years and from 0-2 health services impacts on robust identification of delays in child development leading to continued pressure on early years and reception settings **(Lead – Asst Dir Transformation)**	Moderate	>30% - <60%		Re-commissioning specifications of 0-2 and early years functions to include explicit expectations on information sharing to promote shared identification of children with additional needs to mobilise more effective early intervention approaches and more successful transition into schools. Launch of Single Family View project across Council and ICB to integrate data sets, supported by additional technology and digital capacity from council teams.	
Inconsistent whole system engagement across post-16, FE, employability teams and local business and public sector organisations, leads to a mismatch in pathways to independence and a lack of available opportunities for young people to progress into adulthood **(Lead – Programme SRO)**	Moderate	>30% - <60%		Further strengthen the established employer forum to bring together FE/Post-16 sector with local employers to increase inclusion in the workplace and opportunity for young people with SEND to progress into independence Expansion of the local Trailblazer Care Leavers employability Programme to young people with SEND – delivering a structured employability pathway for SEND young people who are or are at risk of becoming NEET – with shadowing, work experience and ring-fenced apprenticeships	

11. Dependencies

Please detail the key areas of the local area partnership's proposed SEND future state and roadmap that may be impacted by wider reforms nationally and locally and outline how you will manage these. We expect these will include but not be limited to:

- NHS reforms
- Local Government Re-organisation
- Reforms to Children's Social Care
- Best Start in Life, including Family Hubs
- Best Start In Life Strategy
- Curriculum and Assessment Review

500 words

We are confident that our local area partnership is working collaboratively across the NHS Reform, Children's Social Care Reform, Best Start in Life including Family Hubs, and Best Start in Life Strategy programmes, and that this will maximise the opportunity to delivery the SEND reforms with the required impact. With the exception of the NHS reforms, all of the above are under single leadership with a joint programme team working across all areas, and linked governance arrangements. Key strategic leaders of the SEND Partnership Board are also members of the Best Start in Life Partnership Board and Children's Social Care Reform Programmes.

With regard to the NHS reform programme, again local relationships are positively aligning activity to move towards jointly commissioned and integrated neighbourhood delivery of needs-led support. Leaders of the above children's services focussed reform programmes are also members of senior partnership boards with responsibility for decision making on the future of the neighbourhood NHS reforms. NHS Reforms present both a risk and opportunity for Experts at Hand delivery, with the potential for like programmes in development as part of Integrated Neighbourhood delivery activity and new health based MDTs potentially leading to duplication or activity, which is mitigated by close partnership working. There is also significant opportunity through new funding being made available to test functions in Health neighbourhood approaches that can align strongly with SEND reform – in particular recent proposals from the local ICB to invest in a targeted multi-disciplinary team to support emotionally based school non-attendance which can integrate well as additional experts at hand capacity.

The major dependency across all the above reform programmes remains the impact of the Fairer Funding Review locally, which is seeing significantly diminished core resources, at the time the relevant programmes are placing expectations on new delivery. Following the Fairer Funding Review the Council is profiling a need to deliver in the region of £90 – 120m of cost reductions over the next 3-5yrs. This presents a key risk to non-statutory spend on early intervention which has the potential to lessen the whole system preventative capacity to identify and support families to navigate support. Mitigation is being delivered through invest to save approaches and closer working with the voluntary and community sector to build resilience in community support networks and increase whole system prevention efficiently. Similar, large scale reform and parallel structural changes needed to meet cost reduction targets have the potential to place additional strain on partnership workforces, alongside falling pupils rolls leading to uncertainty across the schools workforce. Whilst less impactful overall in terms of delivering the SEND Reform Plan, the linked uncertainties do present a draw on whole system workforce capacity and space to engage fully in developmental activity to meet our shared aims.

Section 3 – Monitoring and Evaluation

12. **How will the local area partnership know delivery is on track?**

Please set out how you will monitor and track progress referencing:

- ***Monitoring tools and processes*** - the specific tools, systems, and data you will use to track delivery milestones and measure the impact on outcomes.

> *Some Local Area Partnerships hold data in a central SEND operational dashboard. This is used by teams on a weekly basis to identify trends in demand or inform conversations with local school or setting leaders.*
>
> *In some Local Area Partnerships, a view of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) is reviewed monthly by a SEND Board to take decisions on prioritisation, resourcing and delivery of services informed by regular data.*

Please set out how you will use data to track demand (e.g., EHCP applications for assessment), Service delivery (e.g., Speech and Language Specialists deployment; places created), Service quality (e.g., parental satisfaction) and outputs (e.g., pupil attendance; pupil exclusions)

- ***Feedback and adaptation mechanisms*** - what feedback loops and stakeholder input you will use to review progress and adjust your approach.

500 words

Monitoring tools and processes: The underlying expectation in our approach to improving data, performance and progress tracking is to move to a live, dynamic and transparent reporting system as possible using Power BI dashboards that are refreshed on a daily basis, and are freely accessible to all system leaders, supported by overview and targeted reports on key successes, off track issues, and 'ones to watch' at relevant governance arrangements. The open approach to multi-agency performance and data allows for seamless challenge and support across the system, with all measures RAG rated against baseline performance, trajectories, progress, and agreed targets. This allows for shared ownership and clear visibility within key governance forums to allow for corrective action where necessary.

- Workstream highlight reports overseen by the SEND Quality Improvement Board, with programme reporting up to the Partnership Board (monthly)
- Programme RAID Log (monthly)
- Key Performance Indicators for measures against each delivery strand and workstream – monitored in Workstream Project Groups and at the SEND Quality Improvement Board (monthly)
- Operational Live Data Power BI Dashboards across relevant services to track immediate performance and improvement activity (Live, weekly, monthly)
- SEND Local Area Partnership Dashboard – tracking all measures, demand, performance and impact – reported at the SEND Partnership Board (bi-monthly)
- Embedded satisfaction surveys in all statutory processes, supplemented by annual full system parent/carer, young people, and workforce surveys (quarterly overview reports)

Feedback and adaptations

- Parent Carer Forum Chairs as full members of the SEND Partnership Board
- Locality Parent Carer Panels aligned to Best Start Family Hubs
- SEND Participation Officers Bi-Monthly Children & Young People's voice and challenge report – reported at Partnership Board with oversight at monthly operational group
- Routine Surveys
- Co-production activity aligned to commissioning programme
- Feedback and escalation procedures through the Southwark Learning Partnership
- Quarterly practitioner forum
- Headteachers monthly forum
- SENCo Network

13. **Reporting to DfE**

Using the attached data template, the local area partnership is required to provide quarterly data returns to DfE against selected key metrics. DfE will, in turn, provide quarterly data reports with visualised analysis and benchmarking that will support your local delivery, monitoring and evaluation. This will include data the department holds on **Attendance**, **Exclusions**, and **Unauthorised absence**.

Please use the attached data template to upload your initial data return to DfE.

Appendix E – Data Template

Section 4 – Governance

14. **How will the local area partnership ensure delivery of plans remain on track?**

Please outline the governance structures in place to oversee delivery. Clearly set out who is responsible for overseeing reform delivery, what each governance group or individual is accountable for, and how these arrangements ensure progress is monitored and decisions are made transparently. Please identify where the named SRO for the Local SEND Reform Plan sits within the governance structure and ensure your response incorporates the core minimum requirements.

Governance Mechanism *This may be a governance group, or an individual (e.g. SRO).*	**Purpose/ Responsibilities** *What is the function of this governance mechanism? What are they accountable for overseeing? What information is reported to this governance mechanism?*	**Membership** *Who does this governance mechanism comprise of? [should include health and PCF representation] What stakeholders are represented at this governance mechanism? Please indicate who chairs this. (Include n/a if an individual).*	**Cadence** *How regularly does this governance mechanism meet?*	**Decision Rights** *What decisions can this governance mechanism make?*	**Escalation Route** *Where can this governance mechanism escalate issues or decision to?*
SEND Strategic Partnership Board	The purpose of the Special Educational Needs & Disabilities and Inclusion Strategic Partnership Board is to oversee the effectiveness of, and drive improvement in, the integrated multi-agency approach to improving outcomes for children with special educational needs and disabilities and their parents and carers; delivering an inclusive and equitable SEND system and reducing the need for high cost provision that does not secure the best possible outcomes for our children and use of shared resources. Owns the Risk Register and has responsibility for regular review and direction of resource to mitigate and/or address risk through corrective action.	• PCF Co-Chairs • Director of Children's Services (Board Chair) • Lead Member for Children, Young People & Education • Lead Member for Health & Wellbeing • Director of Partnership Delivery and Sustainability (Southwark) • CAMHS Clinical Lead • Director of Integrated Commissioning (ICB) • Deputy Director – Learning & Inclusion (LA) • Assistant Director for SEND (LA) • Assistant Director – Strategy, Transformation & Business Intelligence • Strategic Family Hub Lead – Early Years Sector Rep • Lead SEND Commissioner • Assistant Director – Integrated Commissioning • Executive Headteacher – Secondary Special & Schools Forum High Needs Sub-Group Chair • Director of Public Health • Headteacher – Secondary Mainstream Rep • Head of Nursing • Head of Therapies	2-monthly	partnership and advisory	Through linked single agency decision making structures within the ICB and LA, via strategic leader board members.

		• Head of Speech and Language Services • Designated Clinical Officer • Headteacher – Special Primary Rep • Assistant Director – Learning and All Age Disabilities • Principal School Improvement Advisor – SEND • Headteacher – Primary mainstream rep • SENDIASS Manager • SEND Participation Officer • Deputy S151 Officer • Post-167 Representative – to be confirmed by Sept 2026			
SEND Quality & Improvement Board	The SEND & Inclusion Quality and Improvement Board is responsible and accountable for the delivery of transformation activity that aims to improve partnership SEND services for children and young people while ensuring services are sustainable for the future and meeting the conditions of the Safety Valve Agreement. Responsibility for development and escalation of risks and delivery of mitigations and/or corrective action where necessary.	• Deputy Director – Learning & Inclusion (Board Co-Chair) • Assistant Director for Integrated Commissioning (Board Co-Chair) • Deputy S151 Officer • Assistant Director for SEND • Director of Partnership Delivery and Sustainability (Southwark) • Designated Clinical Officer • Assistant Director for Mental Health, Learning Disabilities & All Age Disabilities • Assistant Director for Early Help & Youth Justice • Assistant Director for Safeguarding & Corporate Parenting • Head of Service for SEND • Senior School Improvement Advisor for SEND • Head of Start Well Commissioning • Head of Performance & Systems • Assistant Director – Strategy, Transformation & Business Intelligence • Senior Performance & Intelligence Analyst SEND • Post-16 Representative – to be confirmed by Sept 2026 • SEND Participation Officer Senior Quality Assurance Officer – SEND	2-monthly	Operational service decisions within the remit and delegated authority of the officers present	Through linked single agency decision making structures within the ICB and LA, via strategic leader board members, and escalation to the Partnership Board

Local Area SEND Reform SRO	Accountable for the overall system response and outcomes for children and young people	Director of Children's Services	N/a	N/a	N/a
Local Authority SEND Programme SRO	Accountable for strategic and operational delivery of the local authority SEND reform programme – including management of the DSG	Deputy Director – Learning & Inclusion	N/a	N/a	N/a
ICB SEND Programme SRO	Accountable for strategic and operational delivery of the ICB SEND system	Director of Partnership Delivery and Sustainability (Southwark)	N/a	N/a	N/a
Southwark Integrated Governance and Assurance Committee	A formal sub-committee of Partnership Southwark, the Local Care Partnership. Provides oversight and assurance around ICB delegated functions, performance and budget. This includes SEND Performance	• Partnership Southwark Co-Chair • Strategic Director of Integrated Health & Care/ Place Executive Lead • Director of Integrated Commissioning • Director of Partnership Delivery and Sustainability • Head of Quality • Associate Director of Finance Partnership Southwark Care and Clinical Professional Lead Chair	2 monthly	Provides assurance to the Place Executive lead and Partnership Southwark Strategic Board	Partnership Southwark Strategic Board

If you have a diagram to show the relationship between these governance mechanisms, please upload this here.

APPENDIX F – LOCAL AREA SEND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Section 5 – Central Government Support

15. **How can we help you?**

Please outline any practical support you need from central government to implement your plan effectively.

This may include:

- Access to specialist expertise or advisory support
- Help with workforce development or recruitment challenges
- Tools or templates to support data collection, reporting, or evaluation
- Facilitation of peer learning or regional collaboration
- Support with system-level coordination across education, health, and care

- Guidance on navigating regulatory or policy barriers

132/250 words

Timely provision of key guidance required to inform the plan and allow the local area to meet expectations required in delivery. This is essential to prevent inefficiency in local design activity that may or may not align with pending guidance. This can also lead to disaffection and difficulty in managing key stakeholder relationships in particular with education settings and the local community of parents/carers, children and young people, when activity is launched and co-design sessions are potentially preemptive and may lead to expectations from local groups on delivery which then does not align with national guidance.

Greater recognition of mobilisation periods required to deliver substantial reform planning and change activity.

Reform to statutory guidance on prescribed changes to school arrangements to more effectively streamline processes for delivery, in particular for inclusion bases.

Annex B - Supporting Documents

Document	Link
The Schools White Paper	Every Child Achieving and Thriving
SEND Consultation Document	SEND reform: putting children and young people first.
LA and Schools Budget 2026-27	Schools Operational Guide 2026-27
Local Partnership Maturity Assessment Guidance and Tool	Included in commission pack
Local SEND Reform Plan – Data template	Included in commission pack
Local SEND Reform Plan Quality Assessment Framework	Included in commission pack
Local Inclusion Partnership Grant 2026-27	To be published Spring 2026
Experts at Hand Guidance	To be published Spring 2026
High Needs Capital Allocations 2026-27	To be published Spring 2026
Guidance on Inclusion bases	To be published Spring 2026

Annex C – Risk Matrix

IMPACT DESCRIPTION	IMPACT LEVEL	PROBABILITY/LIKELIHOOD				
		< 10%	>10% - <30%	>30% - <60%	>60% - <90%	>90%
		Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Possible	Likely	Very Likely
Cannot deliver Reform Plan; Failure of mission critical activity.	**Crisis**					
Significant impact to objectives; Significant and sustained disruption to activity.	**Critical**					
Delivery targets are compromised; Project delay / budget overrun.	**Moderate**					
Limited impact on delivery targets; Deviations from project resource, timescale or targets.	**Marginal**					
Minimal impact on delivery targets; Minimal impacts to project / programme efficiency.	**Negligible**					

Agenda Item 7

Meeting Name:	Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission
Date:	20 October 2026
Report title:	Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2026-2027
Ward(s) or groups affected:	N/a
Classification:	Open
Reason for lateness (if applicable):	No
From:	Scrutiny Officer

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the education and local economy scrutiny commission note the work programme as at 20 October 2026 attached as Appendix 1.

2. That the education and local economy scrutiny commission consider the work programme items allocation to specific meeting dates of the commission.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. The general terms of reference of the scrutiny commissions are set out in the council's constitution (overview and scrutiny procedure rules - paragraph 5). The constitution states that:

   Within their terms of reference, all scrutiny committees/commissions will:

   a) review and scrutinise decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any of the council's functions

   b) review and scrutinise the decisions made by and performance of the executive and council officers both in relation to individual decisions and over time in areas covered by its terms of reference

   c) review and scrutinise the performance of the council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and/or particular service areas

   d) question members of the executive and officers about their decisions and performance, whether generally in comparison with service plans and targets over a period of time, or in relation to particular decisions, initiatives or projects and about their views on issues and proposals affecting the area

e) assist council assembly and the executive in the development of its budget and policy framework by in-depth analysis of policy issues

f) make reports and recommendations to the executive and or council assembly arising from the outcome of the scrutiny process

g) consider any matter affecting the area or its inhabitants

h) liaise with other external organisations operating in the area, whether national, regional or local, to ensure that the interests of local people are enhanced by collaborative working

i) review and scrutinise the performance of other public bodies in the area and invite reports from them by requesting them to address the scrutiny committee and local people about their activities and performance

j) conduct research and consultation on the analysis of policy issues and possible options

k) question and gather evidence from any other person (with their consent)

l) consider and implement mechanisms to encourage and enhance community participation in the scrutiny process and in the development of policy options

m) conclude inquiries promptly and normally within six months

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

4. Set out in Appendix 1 (Work Programme) are the issues the education and local economy scrutiny commission is due to consider in 2026-27
.

5. The work programme is a standing item on the education and local economy scrutiny commission agenda and enables the commission to consider, monitor and plan issues for consideration at each meeting.

6. The commission has within its remit the executive portfolio elements listed below:

Education and Care (Councillor Rebecca Corn)

Portfolio

- **early years and childcare** – including children and family centres, early years education, childminders and nurseries
- **schools** – including school standards, places and admissions; special education needs; free healthy school and nursery meals and fruit; healthy schools and Southwark's Let's Go Zero schools network
- **special educational needs & disabilities (SEND)** – including service

provision and reform
- **further, higher and adult education** – including English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), adult literacy and numeracy; and scholarships
- **children's social care** – including children in care and care leavers, fostering and adoption, support for children with disabilities and their families; and child safeguarding
- **children's mental health** – including mental wellbeing support in schools; the council's Nest open access mental health service for children and families; and improving access to Child and Adolescent Mental Health services
- **family support** – including parenting programs, the council's sure-start for teenagers service and support for families who are providing unpaid care for a child with a disability or health condition, including respite care

Inclusive Economy, Equalities and Democracy
(Councillor Rachel Bentley)

Portfolio

- **increasing employment** – support to find a job or start a new carer; careers advice and work experience; paid internships; supporting young people into employment, education and training
- **vocational skills** – including apprenticeships, vocational training and skills centres
- **businesses support** – for local businesses, cooperatives, social enterprises and entrepreneurs; increasing procurement from local businesses; and relationships with local business groups and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)
- **high streets** – including town centre action plans, Thriving Highstreets Fund, markets
- **living wage** – promoting the London Living Wage employers
- **workers' rights** – promoting good employment practices and equality and diversity at work and trade union membership
- **Youth Parliament -** increasing the voice and influence of young people through the Southwark Youth Parliament and will act as a champion for young people in our borough

Community Safety and Engagement (Councillor David Watson)

Portfolio

- Management of youth services, and the Positive Futures Fund

7. The work programme is a standing item on the Housing Scrutiny Commission agenda and enables the Commission to consider, monitor and plan issues for consideration at each meeting.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission agenda and minutes	Southwark Council Website	Amit Alva Amit.alva@southwark.gov.uk
Link: Browse meetings - Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission - Southwark Council		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Work Programme 2026-27

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Amit Alva, Scrutiny Officer
Report Author	Amit Alva, Scrutiny Officer
Version	Final
Dated	12 October 2026
Key Decision?	No
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER	

Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Director of Law and Governance	No	No
Strategic Director of Resources	No	No
Executive Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Scrutiny Team		12 October 2026

Appendix 1

Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission Work Programme – 2026/27

Meeting	Agenda items	Comment
23 July 2026	General update on Bermondsey Blue - Business Improvement District (BID)	The commission received a general update from Ben Davies on Bermondsey Blue, Business Improvement District.
	Outcome of Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS)	The commission received a report from Helen Woolgar, Deputy Director, Children's Services on the Outcome of Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS)

20 October 2026	Pathways to Work for Young People Southwark Youth Parliament	To receive a report from Nick Wolff, Employment and Skills Manager and Suzanne Wright, Head of School Support and Admissions, Children and Adult Services on Pathways to Work for Young People To also hear from young people from the Southwark Youth Parliament on young peoples' experiences with work and Internships and Apprenticeships.
	SEND Reform Plan	To receive a report from Alasdair Smith, Director of Children's Services and Anna Chiva, Deputy Director Children's Services Learning and Inclusion, Children Services on the SEND Reform Plan.
Upcoming Meetings **9 December 2026** **2 February 2027** **2 March 2027**	**Agenda items yet to be scheduled** **Education workstream** • Government SEND Reform and Support for Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (Ref 6) (page 20) • Annual Review of the Southwark Safeguarding Children Partnership • Ofsted follow up - progress on areas identified for improvement	

	Local Economy workstream Employment and Skills • Employment Opportunities for Young People, including work experience, apprenticeships and internships for young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) and those with SEND • Involving the Youth Parliament with regards to the borough priorities • Review of the Southwark Works Initiative, including support for people facing barriers to employment and young people **Business engagement and support** • Thriving High Streets • Supporting Businesses in Southwark • East Street Market – Update • Elephant and Castle Town Centre Development, including support for independent businesses and community benefit • Tackling long-term vacant commercial units and exploring measures used elsewhere to bring premises back into use	

Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2026-27

AGENDA DISTRIBUTION LIST (OPEN)

NOTE: Original held by Scrutiny Team; all amendments/queries to Amit Alva Tel: 020 7525 0496

Name	No of copies	Name	No of copies
Electronic Copy **Members:** Councillor Rachael Penny (Chair) Councillor Hellen Benavides (Vice-Chair) Councillor Jasmine Ali Councillor Sam Dalton Councillor Callum Fowler Councillor Tori Griffiths Councillor Felicia Johnston **Education Representatives** Martin Brecknell Alie Kallon Mannah Kargbo Claire Williams **Reserves Members** Councillor Colin Boyle Councillor Ryan Cox Councillor Selena Gray Councillor Richard Leeming Councillor Sunny Lambe Councillor Patrickson Amechi Obanya Councillor Jen Thornton		Joseph Brown – Senior Cabinet Officer Caitlin Richardson - Liberal Democrat Group Office Sarauniya Shehu- Cabinet Office Manager Liam Reid- Cabinet Advisor **Dated: October 2026**	