

SEND Reforms February 2026 – Wigan Parent Carer Forum



Introduction

On Monday 23rd February 2026, the government released it's schools white paper, “ [Every child achieving and thriving](#)” This paper sets out proposals to reform the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system in England

What does this mean?

It's important to understand that the “White Paper” is not a change in law; it is a document that sets out the government's ideas and proposal for change.

There will be a 12 week consultation period where anyone can send their feedback on the “White Paper” to influence what happens next. This includes parents and carers, schools, professionals, us at Wigan Parent Carer Forum, other charities and anyone who is invested in supporting children and young people with SEND.

Following the consultation period, the government will review the feedback and may revise their proposals.

Only after consultation would any proposed changes move into draft legislation. That legislation would need to go through Parliament.

During this time, **existing SEND law remains unchanged.**

What if I'm told plans in place to support my child have changed?

If you are told that support has changed because of the white paper, this is not correct.

What does the White Paper include?

It outlines wide-ranging plans to improve schooling overall, alongside generational reforms to the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system.

The proposals set out a new tiered approach and new Individual Support Plans (ISPs) in mainstream settings; this will be backed by funding and new expectations for inclusion.

Remember though that this is only a consultation document at this stage, below are some of the key points relating directly to SEND reform:

New: Individual Support Plans (ISPs)

- Every pupil identified with SEND (whether they have an EHCP or not) will be entitled to an **Individual Support Plan**.

- ISPs will be set out specifically to include need, support, outcomes, and how progress will be measured.

New: Tiered Model of Support

The Paper describes a **tiered structure** for SEND support with three sections:

Universal support

- This is the support that **every school must provide for all pupils** in mainstream education. Including those with emerging or lower-level additional needs.
- The Universal offer should be delivered through inclusive teaching and reasonable adjustments in the classroom.
- Schools are expected to identify needs early and adapt teaching.
- All children and young people will get the right help at the earliest opportunity to prevent needs from escalating.

Targeted support – adjustments and interventions in mainstream settings

- This is for pupils whose needs cannot be fully met by universal classroom support.
- There will be short-term or structured interventions within mainstream schools.
- These will usually be recorded in a new digital Individual Support Plan (ISP).

Targeted-plus support –

- For children needing more specialist input from professionals.
- Delivered through education and health specialists (e.g., speech and language therapists or educational psychologists).
- Also recorded in an Individual Support Plan.

Within this tier there will also be:

Specialist support – Only children with the most complex needs will access these.

- For children with the most complex needs.
- Support may include specialist provision packages and an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- May involve specialist schools or highly specialised support in mainstream settings.

Note: Children and Young People may move between tiers as their needs change rather than progressing through a fixed escalation process.

How long does the White Paper propose that these changes will take?

Previous reforms have implemented changes immediately this paper doesn't and these are the proposed timescales:

- **2026–27** – policy development and consultation
- **2028–29** – phased implementation for ISPs and mainstream reforms
- **2029–30** – reforms come fully into effect (for most settings)
- **2030+** – potential transition of existing EHCPs into the new structure based on transitions in education phase (e.g., primary → secondary)

What does this mean for EHCP's?

The White Paper does **not take away** EHCPs, but:

- EHCPs will be reserved for children with the most complex needs mentioned above.
- EHCPs will become digitised and linked to Specialist Provision Packages
- Some children currently with EHCPs may transition in phases from 2029/30 onwards

How long is the Consultation?

The **consultation process** is open until **18 May 2026**, and any potential changes would only be following this date

Further Reading (with links)

We have put links below for you to be able to access the Government's documents about the White Paper. Click on the headings for more information and links to the Department for Education information.

Links:

[Every child achieving and thriving - the full paper](#)

[White paper easy read version](#)

[Guidance documents](#)

To share your views the consultation document is attached below:

[SEND Reform: Putting Children and Young People First](#)

You can take part online following the link below:

[Consultation - Share your views](#)

Or via email SENDreform.CONULTATION@education.gov.uk