

SCRUTINY REPORT

MEETING: Children and Young People Scrutiny

DATE: 15th September 2026

SUBJECT: SEND Sufficiency Update

REPORT FROM: Nick Bell Secondary inclusion Lead - Schools

CONTACT OFFICER: Nick Bell Secondary inclusion Lead - Schools

1.0 BACKGROUND

Introduction

SEND Sufficiency is a central aspect of the wider SEND Reform Agenda, ensuring that local areas have the capacity, provision, and resources needed to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. Within the context of SEND Reform, sufficiency focusses on providing the right support, in the right place, at the right time, reducing reliance on specialist placement and improving inclusion with mainstream settings wherever appropriate.

Bury's Draft SEND Sufficiency Strategy Priorities are designed to support the aims of the SEND Reform Plan by strengthening local provision, enhancing early intervention and improving outcomes for children and families through creating a more inclusive, equitable, and financially sustainable SEND system.

The Draft SEND Sufficiency Strategy reflects the priorities of the Department for Education's SEND and Alternative Provision Reforms and should be considered alongside the Bury Education and Inclusion Strategy, Bury Local Area Partnership SEND Strategy and the Alternative Provision Strategy.

2.0 ISSUES

Bury's context

Bury has a higher prevalence of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) than seen nationally and across the Northwest. While the overall rate of EHCP growth is stabilising as a result of work delivered through the SEND Improvement activity, demand for specialist provision, particularly for pupils with autism (ASC), social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) and speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) continues to place pressure on the local system. In addition, there has been a marked increase in the number of children and young people educated outside mainstream and maintained provision, including those placed in independent non-maintained settings and EOTAS, particularly at secondary and post-16 phases.

Summary of Current Provision

Bury currently provides a broad and developing range of education and training provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) across mainstream, specialist and alternative settings. Strengths within the local system include

comparatively high levels of mainstream inclusion, recent expansion of resourced provision and SEN units at primary phase, and increased specialist capacity within local special schools.

In response to increasing demand, Bury has invested significantly in expanding local SEND capacity. Over the past three years, the Local Authority has:

- Developed 130 places across primary resourced provisions and SEN units.
- Expanded specialist school capacity at Millwood and Elms Bank.
- Opened Brookhaven School in 2023, providing dedicated specialist autism provision.
- Planned further expansion of specialist places through the opening of Willow Grove, a new secondary SEMH free school, expected to provide an additional 65 places from 2028.

Despite these developments, current provision is uneven across phases and types. Demand continues to exceed supply for children and young people with autism (ASC) and social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH), particularly at Secondary and Post 16.

Key gaps include:

- Secondary phase capacity, particularly for pupils with autism (ASC) and social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH), where progression routes from primary provision are not consistently available.
- Post-16 pathways for young people with more complex needs, resulting in increased reliance on alternative provision, EOTAS and independent settings.
- Timely access to targeted and specialist provision, leading to escalation of need and increased placement instability.
- Coherent step-up and step-down pathways, reducing the ability to reintegrate children and young people back into mainstream settings where appropriate.

Future Demand

Forecasting indicates that overall demand for SEND provision in Bury will continue to rise over the period 2026–2030, albeit at a slower rate than experienced in recent years. The profile of demand is expected to continue to be shaped by:

- Ongoing growth in ASC and SEMH as primary areas of need.
- Increasing complexity of need, particularly at secondary and post-16 phase.
- Continued pressure on alternative provision and Section 19 arrangements without sufficient local pathways.

This is likely to lead to the continued growth in the use of independent non-maintained provision and out of borough placements, increased reliance on alternative provision and EOTAS, placement instability and financial pressure on the High Needs system

SEND Sufficiency Priorities 2026-2030

Bury's SEND Sufficiency Priorities recognise that sufficiency cannot be addressed solely through expanding specialist places and reflect the aims of the SEND Reform Plan in prioritising the development of enhanced mainstream provision in order to ensure that wherever possible young people's needs are met in their local provision, through early identification and intervention, targeted support and clear coherent pathways.

Four priority areas have been identified to support the strategic aims which are:

Priority one

Reducing demand for Specialist and Alternative Provision, through early identification, intervention and targeted support.

This work is focussed on:

- Continuing the work already in place, to embed Ordinarily Available Inclusive practice across all education settings
- Further strengthening the graduated approach and early identification process through the development of the mainstream inclusion framework, supported by clear pathways for specialist advice and targeted support through a single point of access which will be launched at the Inclusion conference at the end of September.
- Developing workforce capacity and confidence within mainstream settings through the established communities of practice model, enhanced by the development of “Experts at Hand” and deployment of expertise from local specialist settings and our Alternative Provision Academy (Ashgrove).

Priority two

Developing a coherent and sustainable continuum of provision across mainstream, mainstream specialist units and special schools.

This work is focussed on:

- Ensuring balanced and coherent pathways across phases, ensuring young people can have their needs met within Bury through an inclusive continuum of provision that offers the right support, in the right place at the right time.
- Supporting the development of mainstream inclusion bases in line with SEND Reform guidance.
- Development of future mainstream specialist units, particularly regarding the secondary phase and with a focus on SEMH and Autism.
- Creating additional Secondary Specialist SEMH provision through the planned opening of Willow Grove SEMH Free School.

Priority three

Ensure sufficient and high-quality alternative provision to meet Section 19 duties and reduce long-term reliance on EOTAS (Educated otherwise than at school)

In line with the Bury Alternative Provision Strategy and proposed DFE Reforms of non-school Alternative Provision this work is focussed on:

- Developing the preventative and outreach offer from our Alternative Provision Academy (Ashgrove) to reduce permanent exclusion through providing specialist advice and support and time limited placements, including high-quality vocational provision. There is not currently pre-16 vocational provision available in Bury apart from, Bury Colleges Year 11 programme.
- The development of a graduated Alternative Provision model comprising targeted support in mainstream schools, time-limited intervention and transitional placements. The Bury Alternative Provision Directory will be re-commissioned this year to this end.
- Increasing the availability of high-quality registered provision to meet statutory duties under Section 19 for those young people who are not able to access school due to exclusion, illness or otherwise.
- Continuing to ensure that non-school alternative provision within Bury, meet the voluntary non-school Alternative provision standards.
- Increasing the availability of time limited and transitional placements to support mainstream inclusion and reintegration.
- Reducing long-term reliance on EOTAS and unregistered provision through developing appropriate support and placements with our special schools, Alternative Provision Academy and registered alternative providers.

Priority four

Strengthening Post 16 Sufficiency and preparation for adulthood through local pathways into education, training and employment.

This work is focused on:

- Working with colleges, training providers and partners to expand and strengthen the range of post 16 pathways available for young people with SEND.
- Improving access to local specialist provision, supported internships, apprenticeships, functional skills and reengagement programmes.
- Reducing reliance on Alternative Provision and EOTAS at Post 16 through the development of flexible, inclusive and personalised local education and training pathways. Almost half of Bury's EOTAS cohort is post 16, highlighting the need for strengthened local provision.

3.0 CONCLUSION

Bury has made significant progress in expanding local SEND provision and strengthening inclusive practice across the borough. However, increasing demand, particularly for children and young people with Autism (ASC), Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, and those requiring post-16 support, continues to present challenges. The SEND Sufficiency Priorities for 2026-2030 provide a clear strategic framework to address these pressures through earlier intervention, enhanced mainstream inclusion, a more coherent continuum of provision, strengthened alternative provision pathways, and improved preparation for adulthood. By delivering these priorities in partnership with schools, families, health services and providers, Bury will be better positioned to meet future demand, improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND, and create a more sustainable and inclusive system.

List of Background Papers:-

Contact Details:-

[Report Author]

Executive Director sign off Date: _____

JET Meeting Date: _____