Tameside Metropolitan Borough

Children at the heart of Tameside

Tameside SEND Sufficiency Strategy 2025–2028

'Children and Families at the Heart of What We Do'

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Foreword

In Tameside, we are committed to ensuring that every child and young person with SEND can access the right support in their local community. This SEND Sufficiency Strategy builds on the progress we've already made—including the opening of new resource bases in September 2025, the expansion of specialist provision at Cromwell and Thomas Ashton and the launch of existing school Hawthorns, into a new purpose-built specialist site, in September 2024.

We know that too many families have had to look outside their locality—or even outside the borough—for appropriate provision. That's why this strategy focuses on inclusive education, local access, and sufficient places with specialism in SEND across all key stages and areas of Tameside. Our goal is simple: children and young people should have their needs met in their local school, close to home, and within a system that works for them.

This strategy is a key part of our wider improvement journey. It reflects our commitment to listening, planning, and making sure our provision matches the needs of our communities—now and in the future. It has been shaped through co-production with families, schools, and partners, and we are grateful to the parents and carers who have shared their experiences and insights. We have listened—and this strategy is a direct response to what they've told us.

Councillor Leanne Feeley
Executive Member for Children and Families, Tameside MBC

Jill Colbert OBE
Director of Children's Services, Tameside MBC

Introduction

The SEND Sufficiency Strategy is a cornerstone of our commitment to ensuring that all children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Tameside receive the support they need to thrive. This strategy sets out our vision, priorities, and plans for creating an inclusive, accessible, and sustainable framework for SEND provision.

Vision for SEND Provision in Tameside

Our vision is to create a borough where SEND provision is:

- **Inclusive:** Every child and young person feel valued and supported in their education and community.
- **Accessible:** Barriers are removed so that support is available when and where it's needed—including early identification and intervention to ensure the best start in life.
- **Sustainable:** A robust, efficient system that adapts to changing needs over time, supports lifelong learning, and is aligned with both our SEND Strategy and the Tameside Corporate Plan.

This vision underpins our SEND Sufficiency Strategy and reflects our commitment to building a system that works for children, young people, and families—now and in the future. It is fully aligned with the Tameside Corporate Plan, which sets out five key priorities:

Best Start in Life – We are prioritising early identification and intervention, ensuring children with SEND receive the support they need from the earliest stages of development.

Opportunity to Learn and Earn – Our strategy promotes inclusive education and lifelong learning, enabling children and young people with SEND to achieve their full potential.

Safe, Green & Supportive Communities – We are investing in local provision so that children can thrive in their own communities, close to home.

Healthy and Active Lives – We are working with partners to improve outcomes in health, wellbeing, and emotional resilience for children and young people with SEND.

This strategy outlines how Tameside will meet the current and future needs of children and young people with SEND. It provides a clear roadmap for improving the quality, accessibility, and sufficiency of provision across the borough—ensuring that every child and young person can thrive in their local school and community.

It is designed to:

- Identify current and projected SEND needs.
- Address gaps in provision and enhance existing services.
- Support collaboration with families, schools, and health services to co-produce effective solutions.
- Align with the Greater Manchester Ordinarily Available Provision framework.
- Embed the principles of the Tameside Co-production Strategy and the SEND Strategy 2025-2028.
- Demonstrate our commitment to continuous review, evaluation, and improvement.

Our Commitment

We are committed to supporting every child and young person with SEND to access the right support, in the right place, at the right time. At the heart of this is a partnership with families, who are central to every decision we make. We aim to empower children, young people, and their families by working together to ensure their voices are heard and acted upon.

Context and Legal Framework

This strategy aligns with:

- The Children and Families Act 2014
- SEND Code of Practice 2015
- Preparing for Adulthood pathways
- Tameside SEND Strategy 2025–2028
- Joint Local Area SEND Inspection Priority Actions
- JSNA
- Tameside Corporate Plan 2024-2028

It supports the Council's duty under Section 27 of the Children and Families Act to keep provision under review and secure suitable education and training for young people with SEND.

Strategic Context

Tameside receives government funding (called the Dedicated Schools Grant or DSG) to support education, including children with SEND. But the number of children needing support has grown faster than the funding, leading to a shortfall. By March 2026, this deficit is expected to reach £46.4 million.

Despite growing need and investment, Tameside has fewer specialist school places for a larger number of Children and Young People with EHCP's than many neighbouring authorities. This has led to:

- Increased use of out-of-borough and independent placements.
- A high number of EHCPs, often issued prematurely without a robust graduated response.
- Low EHCP discontinuation rates and over-reliance on specialist provision.

A data-driven approach to SEND sufficiency planning

As part of our local authority's Priority Action Plan and our work under the Department for Education's Inclusion Support Fund (ISF), we are committed to embedding a data-driven approach at the heart of our SEND sufficiency planning.

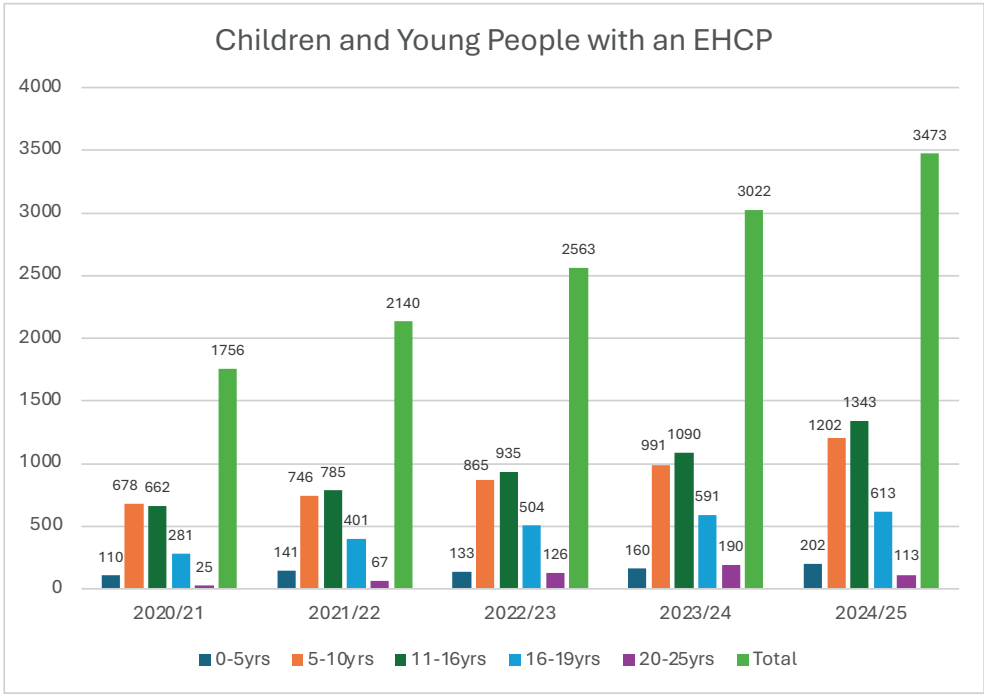
We recognise that high-quality, accessible, and timely data is essential to understanding current and future needs, ensuring equitable access to provision, and driving improvement across the system. Our approach includes:

- **Strategic Use of Data:** We are strengthening our capacity to use data intelligently to inform planning, commissioning, and decision-making. This includes aligning sufficiency planning with detailed analysis of EHCP trends, SEN Support data, and placement patterns across phases and settings.
- **Phase Continuity and Forecasting:** We are using cohort progression data to ensure that the needs currently met in primary special schools are anticipated and planned for in secondary and post-16 phases. This includes modelling future demand for specialist and inclusive provision, based on local trends and national benchmarks.
- **Improving Data Quality:** A key strand of our ISF work is focused on improving the accuracy, consistency, and completeness of SEND data across education, health, and care. We are working with schools and partners to ensure that data reflects the lived experience of children and young people and can be used meaningfully to inform planning.
- **Access to Supportive Data:** We are developing tools and dashboards to improve access to data for strategic leaders, operational teams, and settings. This will support more responsive and evidence-informed decision-making at all levels of the system.
- **Future-Proofing Provision:** Our sufficiency strategy is not only reactive to current pressures but also forward-looking. We are using demographic projections, local intelligence, and national policy developments to shape a sustainable and inclusive SEND system that meets the needs of children and young people now and in the future.

Key Challenges:

1. Growth in Need

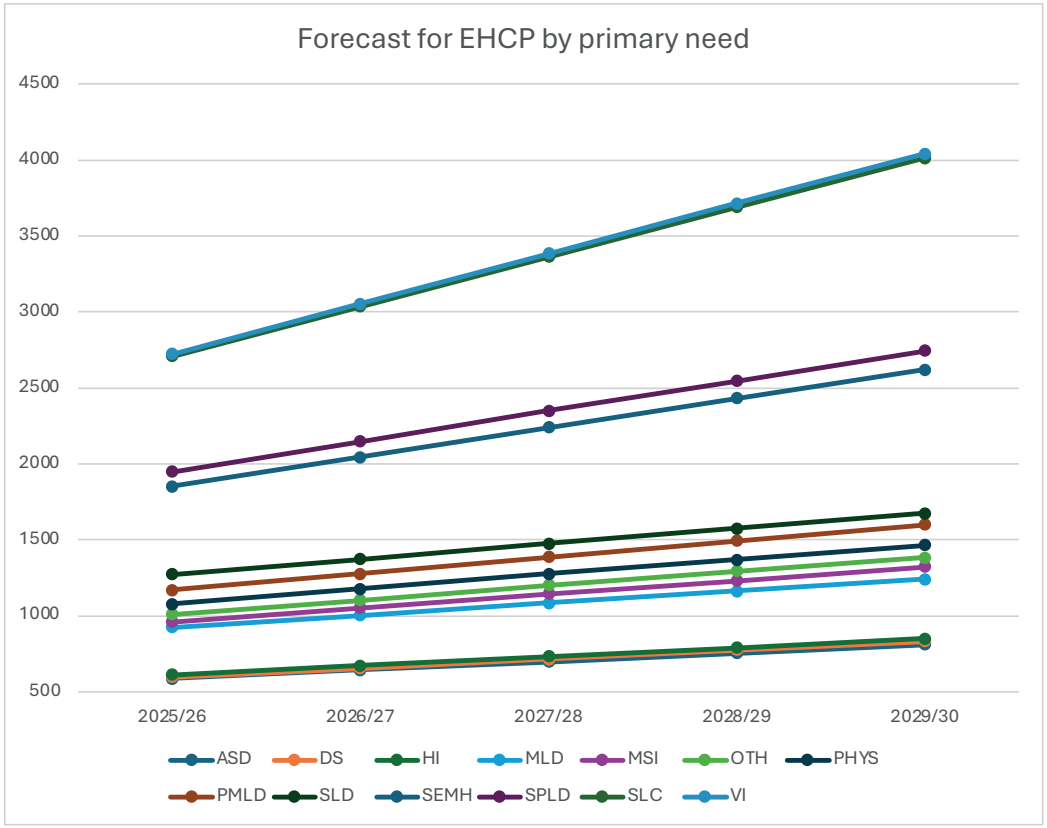
- There are significant increases in the number of children with Speech Language and communication needs (SLCN), Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC), and social, emotional and mental health (SEMH).
- In Tameside, almost 60% of children under the age of 10 have an EHCP for speech, language and communication needs compared to 35% nationally. This shows that we have a high level of need locally, and it's vital that we strengthen early support and specialist services to help every child communicate and learn.
- Pupils with autism are underrepresented in mainstream schools in Tameside compared to the national picture, where 12.6% of pupils with autism are educated in primary schools compared to 2.8% in Tameside. 27.7% of children with an EHCP attend Local Authority special schools compared to 25% nationally. This highlights the urgent need to strengthen inclusive practice and build confidence in mainstream settings to meet a broader range of needs.
- Currently, too many children and young people with SEMH needs are placed in costly independent settings, often outside the borough, because there is not enough suitable local provision. We recognise this is not ideal for families, and our strategy is focused on developing more local, high-quality options so that children can have their needs met closer to home.
- In most areas, children with moderate learning difficulties are supported in mainstream schools, often with extra help or in specialist resource bases. Only a minority need specialist school places. We aim to strengthen mainstream provision so more children can have their needs met locally, with specialist schools reserved for those with the most complex needs.



The bar graph illustrates a clear and consistent upward trend in the population of children and young people aged 0–25 across Tameside over five years, rising from 1,756 in 2020/21 to 3,473 in 2024/25—a near doubling of the cohort. This growth is particularly pronounced in the 5–10 and 11–16 age groups, which together represent the largest share of the population and show the steepest increases year-on-year.

The data highlights a significant shift in demand for educational and SEND services, particularly within the primary and secondary phases. The 11–16 age group has grown from 662 in 2020/21 to 1,343 in 2024/25—more than doubling in size. Similarly, the 5–10 age group has increased by over 500 individuals during the same period.

However, while national projections indicate a declining birth rate before 2030—which may result in surplus capacity in primary schools in the longer term—current local data does not yet show a corresponding decline in EHCP numbers in early years and Key Stage 1. This suggests that, despite anticipated demographic shifts, demand for SEND provision in the youngest cohorts remains high and should be factored into future planning. Importantly, any additional capacity that emerges in mainstream schools presents an opportunity to provide more personalised and targeted support for SEND learners.



	ASD	DS	HI	MLD	MSI	OTH	PHYS	PMLD	SLD	SEMH	SPLD	SLC	VI
2025/26	588	10	15	312	37	49	69	90	103	581	94	761	16
2026/27	644	14	15	333	48	51	72	101	96	672	102	887	19
2027/28	700	18	16	352	60	56	75	112	88	763	109	1014	22
2028/29	755	21	15	372	70	61	78	123	81	855	116	1142	24
2029/30	811	24	15	393	80	63	80	134	75	946	124	1269	26

The forecasted data for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) by primary need from 2025/26 to 2029/30 reveals a clear and sustained increase in demand across most categories, with particularly sharp rises in Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN), autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH).

- SLCN is projected to grow by 67% increase over five years.
- ASD shows a similarly steep trajectory, rising from 588 to 811 cases an increase of 37.93%.
- SEMH needs are forecast to increase from 581 to 946 an increase overall of 62.82%. reflecting the growing complexity of emotional and behavioural needs in the school-aged population.

Nationally, the most common type of need among pupils with an EHCP is ASD (33.6%), followed by SLC (20.7%). The data highlights the need for continued investment in specialist training and therapeutic support within mainstream settings.

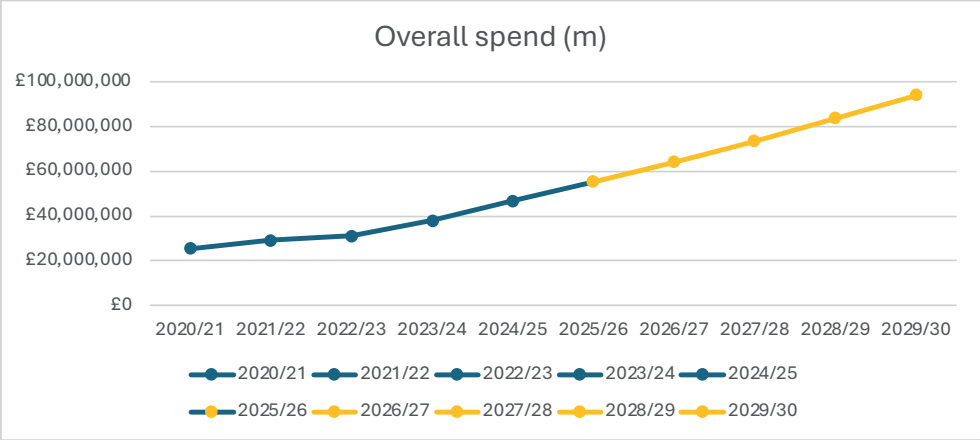
While some categories, such as Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) and Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) show more gradual increases, others, like Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) and Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) appear to decline slightly, which may reflect changes in classification, improved early support, or shifts in commissioning of places for complex learners with SEND.

The forecasted rise in Visual Impairment (VI), Hearing Impairment (HI), and Physical Disabilities (PHYS), though smaller in absolute numbers, still requires attention to ensure accessibility and inclusion are maintained across all settings.

This data reinforces the strategic need to expand resource-based provision, particularly for high-growth areas such as ASD, SEMH, and SLCN. Embedding specialist support within mainstream schools will be critical to meeting the needs of a growing and increasingly complex cohort of EHCP learners.

2. Future Demand and Financial Pressures

Projections show a steady rise in the number of children and young people across Tameside, with total demand expected to grow from just under 4,000 in 2025/26 to over 5,700 by 2029/30. The most significant increases are in the 5–10 and 11–16 age groups, which will continue to drive pressure on education and SEND services.



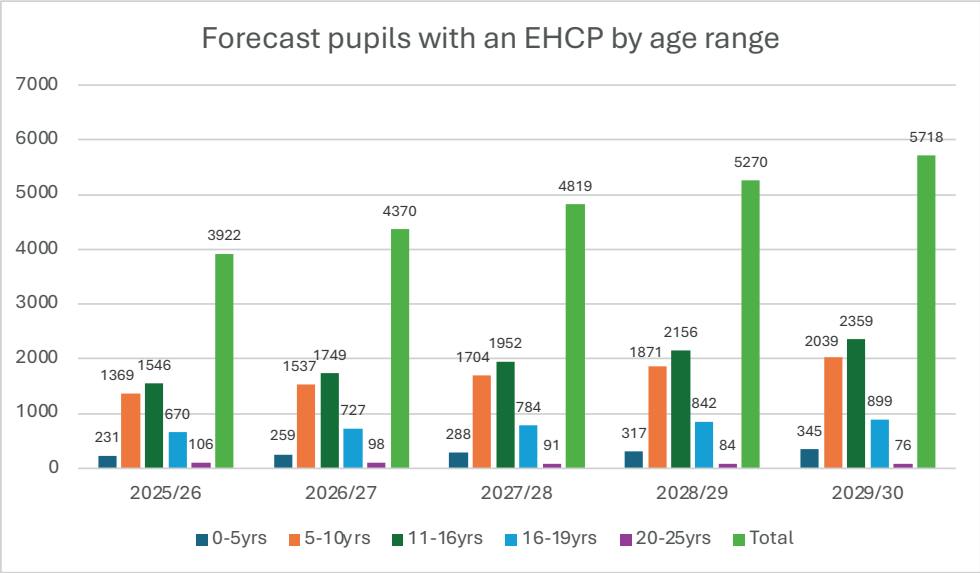
The graph illustrates a clear upward trajectory in overall spending from 2020/21 through to 2029/30, highlighting the increasing financial commitment required to support SEND provision over the coming years. Between 2020/21 and 2024/25, spending rises steadily from approximately £20 million to £40 million, reflecting incremental growth in demand and service delivery; these figures do not take into account any changes to the SEND system at a national level.

From 2025/26 onwards, the projected spend accelerates significantly, suggesting a substantial expansion in the volume and/or complexity of need, and underscores the importance of strategic planning.

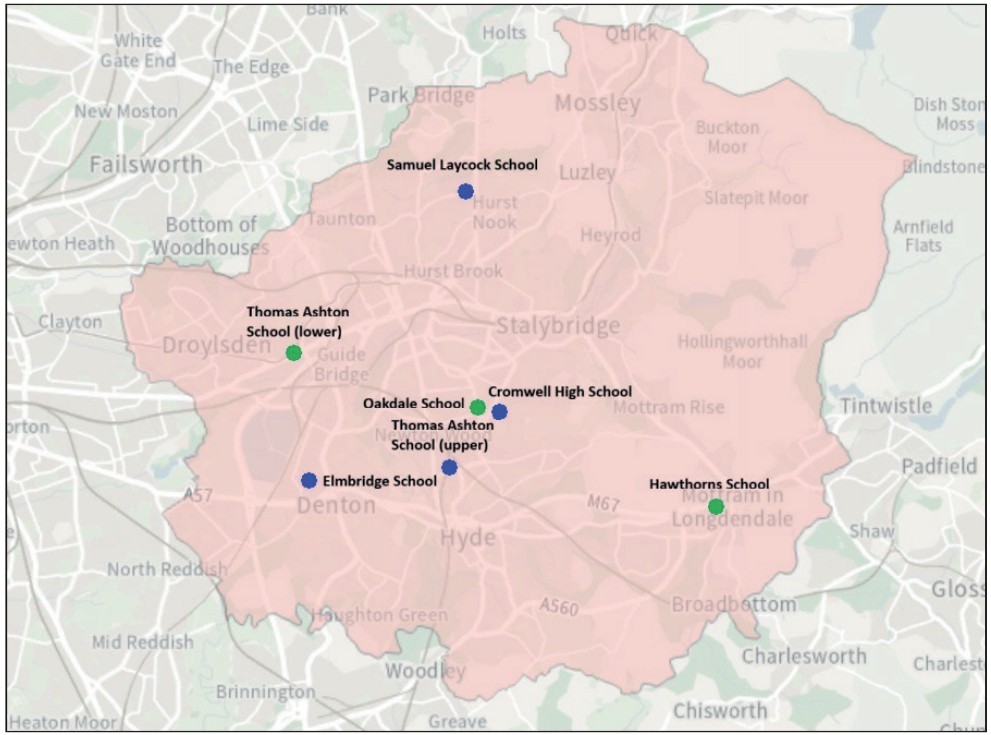
Key Financial Risk Points:

- Rising EHCP numbers: Continued growth in statutory plans, especially in early years and KS1, will increase costs for assessment, provision, and review.
- Specialist placements: Increased demand may lead to more out-of-area or independent placements, which are significantly more expensive.
- Workforce pressures: Recruiting and retaining specialist staff (e.g. EPs, therapists, SENCOs) may require additional investment.
- Transport costs: As demand grows, so does the cost of home-to-school transport, particularly for pupils with complex needs.
- Funding lag: Pupil-led funding may not keep pace with rapid increases in demand, creating shortfalls in school and LA budgets.
- Pressure on mainstream schools: Without adequate support, schools may struggle to meet needs inclusively, leading to escalation in EHCP requests and tribunal risk.

Increase in Demand for EHCP's in each age group and future projections



Tameside Special Schools



Current Specialist and Resource Base Capacity

Special Schools	Year groups	Primary need	NOR (Sep 2025)
Oakdale School	Rec – Year 6	SLD/PMLD/ASC	158
Hawthorns School	Rec – Year 6	MLD/ASC/SLCN	246
Samuel Laycock School	Year 7 – Year 11	MLD/ASC/SLCN	250
Thomas Ashton School	Year 3 – Year 11	SEMH	103
Cromwell High School	Year 7 – Year 11	SLD/PMLD/ASC	114
Elmbridge College	Year 10 – Year 11	SEMH	55
Total			**924**

Resource Provisions	Phases	Primary need if allocated	Capacity
Oakfield Primary School	KS1/KS2	MLD	24*
Hyde High School (LA run HI Resource)	KS3/KS4	HI	8
Russell Scott Primary School	KS2	All needs	5
Corrie Primary School	KS1/KS2	All needs	20
Dane Bank Primary School	KS1/KS2	All needs	10
Greenside Primary School	KS1/KS2	All needs	22
Rosehill Methodist Primary Academy	KS1/KS2	All needs	15
St James CofE Primary School	KS1/KS2	All needs	10
Silver Springs Primary School	Early years and KS1	SLCN/ASC	26*
Greenfield Primary School	KS1/KS2	SLCN/ASC	24*
Endeavour Primary School	KS1	SLCN/ASC	12*
St Mary's RC Primary School (Denton)	Early years and KS1	SLCN/ASC	8*
Manor Green Primary School	KS1	SLCN/ASC	12*
St George's CE Primary School (Mossley)	KS1	SLCN/ASC	12*
Copley Academy	KS3	SLCN/ASC	12*

*Additional places created for 2025/26

The increase in resource-based places strengthens the capacity of mainstream settings to effectively support learners with EHCPs who present with high levels of need, enabling more inclusive provision within these environments.

Tameside has over 500 more EHCPs than a neighbouring local authority, yet 580 fewer specialist places. This disparity highlights a significant reliance on out-of-borough placements and independent non-maintained specialist provisions to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.

EHCP by setting	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Special School	48.8%	47.8%	45.9%	44.4%	41.6%	40.1%
Primary	30.6%	31.1%	30.6%	30.6%	33.1%	34%
Secondary	16.1%	15.9%	19.1%	20.2%	20.2%	20.7%
AP	2.2%	2.9%	2.9%	2.6%	2.2%	2%
Independent	2.1%	2%	1.3%	2%	2.7%	3%

Nationally, 43.6% of school age pupils were educated in mainstream settings in 2024/5; Tameside educates a smaller percentage of its school-aged children and young people with an EHCP in a mainstream setting. Special schools in Tameside accommodated 40.1% of school-age pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan within Tameside compared to 30.4% nationally.

We are committed to ensuring that young people with SEND in Tameside have access to high-quality, aspirational post-16 pathways that promote independence, employment, and meaningful participation in their communities. Our vision is rooted in the principles of inclusion, co-production, and long-term outcomes.

However, we face several challenges in meeting the needs of our growing post-16 SEND population. Local provision is not keeping pace with demand, particularly for young people with complex needs. As a result, we are increasingly reliant on out-of-borough placements, which can limit opportunities for community inclusion and continuity of support.

Mainstream colleges are working hard to be inclusive, but many face barriers in terms of capacity, specialist staffing, and curriculum design. There are also significant gaps in SEMH and therapeutic support, especially for young people with trauma histories or mental health needs. Transition planning is inconsistent, and employment pathways remain limited—particularly for those requiring higher levels of support.

Current Picture of SEND at Post 16

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
NEET	176	180	192	203	217	226
College/ sixth from	380	389	413	438	463	488
Special	94	96	102	108	115	121
Workbased	38	38	41	44	46	49
Independent	22	23	24	25	26	28
Mainstream school	4	4	4	4	4	5
Other	45	46	49	53	55	58
Total	**759**	**776**	**825**	**875**	**926**	**975**

Between 2025/26 and 2029/30, many young people aged 16–25 with EHCPs are expected to transition into college or sixth form, consistently representing around 50% of the cohort. However, a significant proportion—over 23%—are forecast to be Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), highlighting the need for strengthened post-16 pathways and targeted support.

Specialist provision remains a key destination for around 12%, while smaller numbers move into work-based learning, independent settings, or mainstream schools. Cromwell High School currently provides Tameside's only specialist sixth form provision for learners with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), severe learning difficulties (SLD), and complex autism spectrum conditions (ASC). Demand for places is projected to increase significantly over the next four years, with a 16% rise in pupil numbers between 2026/27 and 2029/30. This includes a 67% increase in learners with Complex ASC, an 80% increase in those with SLD, and a 120% increase in learners with PMLD compared to current numbers.

	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Complex ASC	18	25	28	29	30
SLD	15	15	20	25	27
PMLD	5	6	10	11	11
Total no in Sixth form (Y12-14)	38	49	58	65	68
Net Increase in pupil no		11 29%	9 18%	7 12%	3 5%
		16% increase over 4 years from 26-27 to Sept 2030			

This growth reflects both demographic trends and improved identification of need, and it presents a clear imperative for strategic planning to ensure that provision remains high-quality, inclusive, and sustainable.

Aged 19 to 25, the data shows that many continue in college or sixth form, although the proportion gradually declines as individuals transition into adulthood. A significant number are not in education, employment or training (NEET), which highlights the issue of disengagement during this phase.

A smaller number move into work-based learning, independent living settings, or specialist provision, reflecting the diverse pathways and support needs of this age group. These trends underline the importance of robust transition planning, multi-agency collaboration, and tailored post-19 pathways that promote sustained engagement to promote pathways to employment and independence.

Strengthening the local offer and ensuring continuity of support from multiple agencies beyond school age are essential to improving outcomes for this cohort.

- The most common primary needs are:
  - » Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
  - » Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH)
- There is high demand for:
  - » Bespoke learning pathways
  - » Localised provision that enables young people to remain in their communities

Tameside College- Universal SEND provision- Low needs EHCP/High Needs EHCP/ vocational pathways							
Cromwell	Tameside Aspirations and Springboard	Out of Borough Maintained specialist post 16 provision eg Newbridge	Employability Opportunities Eg Internships	Out-of-borough Maintained College eg Manchester College Oldham College	Independent/ Non-Maintained Specialist Provision	Skills and training providers	EOTAC
PMLD/SLD	MLD/PMLD SEMH	MLD/SLD	All SEND needs	Universal SEND provision- Low needs EHCP/High Needs EHCP vocational pathways	All SEND needs	All SEND needs	Needs that cannot be met in a college setting
Identified gaps in Post 16 provision in the borough- SEMH, particularly nurture, small group setting, ASC with a SENSORY Presentation, SLD capacity, Y14 + Complex Needs.							

- Local options are not keeping pace with demand, especially for young people with complex needs.
- Tameside has an increased reliance on out-of-borough placements due to limited specialist provision, which is challenging the designated schools grant but also wider council spending. It is also preventing greater investment in our SEND provision at SEND support and in mainstream schools.
- Mainstream colleges face challenges in:
  - » Capacity and resourcing
  - » Access to specialist staff
  - » Designing inclusive and flexible curriculam

Addressing these issues will require collaborative planning with local colleges, investment in workforce development, and a commitment to co-producing curriculum solutions with young people and families. Focused follow-up work will ensure that mainstream colleges are better equipped to support all learners, particularly those with more complex needs.

- Significant gaps in SEMH and therapeutic support, particularly for young people with trauma or mental health needs, who need greater joint commissioning of these services.
- Inconsistent transition planning across settings.
- Limited employment pathways for young people with higher support needs.
- Align post-16 education with the council's broader plans for homes, employment, and education. Tameside can therefore ensure that young people with SEND are fully included in the borough's future growth and opportunities.

Recent Progress in Overall Sufficiency

We have already taken important steps to address sufficiency:

- **New resource bases** opened in September 2025. Over 100 places have been created within early years and KS1 in phase 1 of the resource base expansion.
- **Expansion of Cromwell** to increase specialist capacity and maintain in-borough capacity for SLD/PMLD and complex ASC in the Secondary/Post 16 phase.
- **Development of the existing Hawthorns School**, a new primary phase specialist site for this school, in September 2024.

This strategy builds on that momentum to ensure sufficiency across all key stages and localities.

SEND Sufficiency Strategy: Strategic Objectives and Priority Actions

To meet the growing and evolving needs of children and young people with SEND in Tameside, this strategy outlines five strategic objectives, each supported by targeted priority actions and outcomes. These are informed by local data, lived experience, and national best practice, and reflect our commitment to inclusion, co-production, and long-term sustainability.

We recognise that, even with the growth in specialist places developed through this strategy, it will not be possible to meet every individual preference for a specialist setting. Funding is finite, and our priority is to meet needs locally wherever possible. This strategy is designed to ensure the right balance of provision, so that while not everyone will get exactly what they want, we are committed to creating a system where every child and young person gets what they need.

Priority Action 1: Improve Local Provision

We are committed to strengthening local SEND provision so that children and young people (CYP) can access the right support, in the right place, at the right time. We recognise the importance of ensuring that provision is not only high quality but also geographically accessible. While some CYP may need to travel short distances to access more specialist provision, our ambition is to minimise this wherever possible by expanding and enhancing in-borough placements and support services.

Through our resource-based programme, we are working to ensure that all areas of the borough have access to appropriate provision. This includes mapping current provision, identifying geographical gaps, and planning strategically to ensure equitable access across Tameside.

A key strand of this work is the development of a Tameside Graduated Response, which will equip schools and settings with the training, tools, and resources needed to meet a broader range of needs within mainstream environments. This will reduce reliance on specialist placements and support inclusive practice across the borough.

Strategic Actions:

Develop Multi-Agency Provision: Establish bespoke, multi-agency arrangements for a small number of Children and Young People (CYP) with highly complex needs, including nursing support for pupils with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) and integrated multi-agency engagement for CYP with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs.

Strengthen Strategic Oversight: Ensure the Strategic Local Area Inclusion Board (SLAIB) monitors future demand and oversees quality assurance of current provision to secure positive outcomes for CYP.

Build an Alternative Provision (AP) Strategy: Develop a borough-wide AP strategy to support learners who are unable to access typical school provision full-time, including short-term and flexible arrangements. This will allow every child and young person in Tameside, regardless of background, ability, or need, to access education that is safe, respectful, inclusive, and supportive — aligned with the SEND and AP reforms and underpinned by our newly established local principles of inclusion and belonging.

1 local area: 5 key principles of inclusion and belonging

Every Child is Valued, Respected, and Supported

All children and young people, regardless of background, ability, or need, are entitled to feel safe, respected, and supported in their educational journey. Inclusion begins with a culture of dignity and high expectations for all—and extends to families, recognising that strong partnerships create the best outcomes.

We believe that understanding the whole child and their circumstances is essential. This means responding with care rather than judgment, asking why before acting, and working together with families and professionals to find solutions that meet individual needs. It also means having the confidence to challenge barriers and advocate for children when systems fall short, and building trust through open, honest dialogue so that every child and family feels heard.

Inclusion is not just about access—it is about creating a proactive system that supports families early, prevents escalation, and ensures every child feels safe, respected, and able to thrive.

The System adapts to the Child

Inclusive education means adapting the system to meet the needs of the learner, not the other way around. This requires flexibility, creativity, and a commitment to understanding the whole child and their family context. It includes flexible pathways, reasonable adjustments, and personalised support plans that respond to individual circumstances rather than expecting children to fit rigid structures.

A truly inclusive system works in partnership with families and professionals, asking why challenges arise and addressing them early to prevent escalation. It prioritises open dialogue, co-produced solutions, and courageous decisions that remove barriers. By doing so, we create an environment where every child feels safe, respected, and able to thrive—because the system adapts to them, not the other way around.

Early Intervention and Collaborative Planning

Inclusion is proactive. Schools and services must work together to identify needs early, intervene quickly, and co-produce solutions with families and professionals to prevent exclusion and disengagement. This means understanding the whole child and their family context, addressing challenges before they escalate, and ensuring support is tailored and timely.

Early intervention is not just about academic needs—it includes emotional wellbeing, safeguarding, and family circumstances that may impact attendance or behaviour. Collaborative planning ensures that decisions are made transparently, with families actively involved and their voices shaping the support provided. By working together and acting early, we create stability, trust, and better outcomes for every child.

Equity and Fairness in Practice

Inclusion requires a deep commitment to equity—recognising and addressing the disproportionate impact of exclusion on children with SEND, those living in poverty, and those from minority backgrounds. This means going beyond compliance to create a system that actively removes barriers and ensures every child and family feels supported.

Decisions must be transparent, consistent, and rooted in an understanding of the whole child and their circumstances. They should be informed by early intervention, collaborative planning with families and professionals, and a proactive approach to preventing escalation. Equity in practice means listening to families, challenging bias, and ensuring that resources and opportunities are distributed fairly so that all children can thrive.

All actions must align with the Equality Act 2010 and DfE statutory guidance, but our ambition goes further: to build a culture where fairness is lived every day, and where every child—regardless of need or background—has the same chance to succeed.

A Sense of Belonging for All

Inclusion is not just about access—it's about belonging. Every child should feel welcomed, understood, and part of their school community, with their identity and experiences reflected and celebrated. This means creating environments where children feel safe and valued, and where families are engaged as partners in their child's journey.

A sense of belonging grows when schools actively listen to pupils and families, respond to individual needs, and adapt systems to remove barriers. It requires early intervention to prevent isolation, collaborative planning to ensure support is joined-up, and a commitment to equity so that every child—regardless of background or need—can thrive as a full member of their community.

We will develop:

- **Targeted support for mainstream settings** ensuring early identification and intervention to prevent exclusion. Support for inclusion in mainstream settings, driven by strong multi-agency collaboration and governance.
- **Time-limited placements for those in need of more intensive support** offering therapeutic and tailored provision through high-quality alternative settings.
- **Transitional placements for those reintegrating back into mainstream** with structured planning and wraparound support (AP strategy 2025-2028)

Robust Quality Assurance: Implement rigorous quality assurance processes for Specialist Provisions, Alternative Provisions, and Education Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS) packages.

Sensory Support Pathway Development: Deliver universal and tiered sensory support pathways, funded through the DfE's Inclusion Support Fund, to meet sensory needs across settings.

Expand Specialist Placements: Develop new special school placements within Tameside to meet growing demand and reduce reliance on out-of-borough provision.

Enhance Resource Bases in Mainstream Schools: Invest in and expand resource bases to meet needs related to Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN), Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD), and Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH).

Invest in Workforce Development: Provide targeted training and development for specialist staff to ensure high-quality, evidence-informed practice.

Create New Post-16 Pathways: Develop tailored post-16 pathways for learners with complex needs, ensuring continuity of support into adulthood.

Explore Strategic Partnerships: Work with Further Education (FE) colleges and Independent Specialist Providers (ISPs) to develop satellite provision and expand local options.

Target Capital Investment: Capital investment will be strategically directed to areas of greatest and growing demand, informed by robust data and future forecasting. The Local Authority is committed to ensuring that provision is not only sufficient and sustainable, but also accessible, inclusive, and responsive to the evolving needs of children and young people with SEND. This includes supporting the development of new provision where required and enhancing existing settings to ensure they remain fit for purpose.

Expected Outcomes:

- Enhanced resource bases supporting a wider range of needs.
- Improved quality and flexibility of specialist support.
- New post-16 pathways for learners with complex needs.
- Reduced reliance on out-of-borough placements.
- An increase in the number of high-quality specialist provision that meets the needs of children and young people with SEND.

Priority Action 2: Strengthen Inclusive Practices

We will foster inclusive practices across mainstream schools and early years settings, ensuring every child feels valued and supported. This will be underpinned by the GM Ordinarily Available Provision framework and the Tameside Graduated Response.

Strategic Actions:

Deliver high-quality SEND training for mainstream staff: Focus on adaptive teaching approaches and Preparation for Adulthood (PFA) from the earliest years (this links to priority 5).

Promote early identification and intervention strategies: Embed robust screening and assessment processes to ensure timely support.

Develop peer support networks for educators: Facilitate communities of practice and regular forums for sharing best practices.

Commission CPD and inclusion training for post-16 providers: Ensure ongoing professional development tailored to the needs of learners with SEND.

Embed mental health and wellbeing support in post-16 provision: Integrate whole-setting approaches to mental health, including staff training and student support.

Implement targeted intervention for Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN): Consider commissioning ELKLAN training or similar evidence-based programmes.

Reference and build on PINS and Autism in Schools work: Align local strategies with national initiatives and best practice models.

Strengthen outreach team capacity: Expand outreach for both general SEND and specific areas such as SEMH (Social, Emotional and Mental Health). Develop specialist support and intervention pathways for SEMH needs.

Distribute sensory kits to schools and provide training on sensory profiling tools: Link with ISF (Inclusion Support Fund) work to ensure effective use and impact. Use ISF funding to support implementation and establish a task and finish group to embed this approach across schools.

Revisit the Graduated Response: Embed the Greater Manchester Ordinarily Available Provision within our expectations for best practice within mainstream schools. Deliver workshops for partners as part of SLIP (SEND Local Inclusion Partnership) work.

Expected Outcomes:

- Strengthened capacity of mainstream settings.
- Earlier identification and intervention.
- Robust peer support networks.
- Embedded wellbeing strategies in post-16 settings.
- Reduced exclusions, evidence of more inclusive practices and better support for learners with SEMH and other complex needs.

Priority Action 3: Enhance Transition Pathways

We will develop clear, supportive pathways that ensure smooth transitions between education phases and into adulthood. This includes strengthening early identification and integrated Education, Health, and Social Care pathways.

Strategic Actions:

Create consistent, co-produced processes for transition planning across all key stages: Ensure early involvement of young people and families.

Develop and implement multi-agency transition protocols: Establish clear roles, responsibilities, and escalation routes.

Provide families with robust guidance and timelines: Improve accessible information on the Local Offer and provide visual timelines and checklists for key transition points.

Expected Outcomes:

- Clear and consistent transition planning.
- Improved EHCP quality and timeliness.
- Families equipped with transparent guidance.

Priority Action 4: Collaborate with Families and Stakeholders

We will build strong, transparent partnerships with families, schools, and external agencies. Co-production will be central to our approach, placing the voices of children, young people, and their families at the heart of planning and service design.

Strategic Actions:

Establish regular consultation forums: Create termly opportunities for children, young people, and families to shape services and provide feedback.

Embed the Co-Production Charter: Work with all partners to adopt and apply the charter's principles in everyday practice. Use the 4 Cs of co-production to ensure all engagement is Consistent, Clear/ Transparent, Communicative, and Connected.

Provide training and support: Equip staff, schools, and services with the skills and understanding to co-produce effectively.

Focus on 'I' outcomes: Align planning and service delivery with the lived experiences and aspirations of children and young people.

Ensure accessible information: Co-produce and maintain a Local Offer that is easy to navigate, inclusive, and available in multiple formats.

Measure impact: Develop tools to evaluate the effectiveness of co-production, using both data and lived experience to inform improvement. Celebrate good practice and share examples of successful co-production across the system to inspire and build confidence.

Expected Outcomes:

- Increased trust and co-production.
- Ongoing responsiveness through consultation.
- Adopt a consistent approach across all partners.

Priority Action 5: Prepare for Adulthood and Employment

Preparing for adulthood includes meaningful employment opportunities. We will expand supported internships and work-based learning, working closely with employers to improve accessibility and sustainability.

Strategic Actions:

Increase supported internships and employment opportunities: Expand the number and range of supported internships available to young people with SEND, working closely with local employers.

Work with local employers to improve inclusive recruitment: Engage and support employers to adopt inclusive recruitment practices and create more accessible job opportunities.

Develop post-18 employability hubs offering wraparound support: Establish employability hubs for young people aged 18+, providing job coaching, skills development, mental health support, and travel training.

Improve Year 9–11 transition reviews and EHCP preparation: Ensure that Preparing for Adulthood (PfA) outcomes are meaningful, aspirational, and co-owned by all partners during transition reviews and EHCP planning.

Embed Preparing for Adulthood (PfA) from the earliest years: Integrate PfA outcomes into EHCPs from early childhood onwards, embed PfA principles into workforce training across education, health, and care, and ensure PfA is a golden thread through all multi-agency planning and commissioning.

Create bespoke offers and curriculum for young people with complex needs: Develop tailored pathways and establish a multi-agency working group—including education, health, social care, parents, and young people—to co-produce a bespoke post-16 curriculum that supports preparation for adulthood.

Expected Outcomes:

- Growth in supported internships and work-based learning opportunities
- Stronger partnerships with inclusive employers
- Establishment of post-18 employability hubs
- Increased numbers of young people gaining employment
- Young people equipped with the skills needed to progress into adulthood
- Opportunities for young people to complete post-16 qualifications outside of school and college

Priority Action 6: Use Resources Sustainably

We will optimise the use of funding and resources to meet growing demand effectively and equitably, ensuring long-term financial sustainability across the SEND system.

Strategic Actions:

Maximise use of high-needs funding: Ensure all available high-needs funding is allocated efficiently to support children and young people (CYP) with the greatest needs.

Review out-of-borough placements for local expansion opportunities: Assess current out-of-borough placements to identify potential for developing local provision, reducing reliance on external placements.

Review SEND transport allocation for value and need: Evaluate current SEND transport arrangements to ensure they are cost-effective and meet genuine needs.

Integrated dashboard/strengthen data infrastructure (ISF work): Develop and implement an integrated dashboard to improve data collection, analysis, and sharing across services (linked to ISF work).

Annually review the sufficiency plan: Conduct a yearly review of the SEND sufficiency plan to ensure provision meets current and projected needs.

Expected Outcomes:

- More efficient use of high-needs funding.
- Reduced spend on out-of-borough placements and transport.
- Strategic investment aligned to sufficiency needs.
- Increased data-informed decision-making
- Robust monitoring of commissioning of specialist provision

Short-Term Priorities (2025–2026)

Resource Base (RB) Expansion

- Open at least 100 new RB places across phases.
- Ensure 50 additional places per phase (Early Years to KS4).
- Realign existing provision, including the KS3/KS4 RB at Stamford Park Trust.

Post-16 Provision Development

- Commission provision to fill gaps in the current Post-16 SEND offer.
- Work with providers to ensure a core SEND offer is in place across post-16 settings.
- Explore opportunities to establish RBs within post-16 provision.

Specialist Sector Growth

- Support development at Cromwell for learners with complex ASC, SLD, and PMLD.

Alternative Provision (AP) Reform

- Commission a 3-tier AP model to align with DFE guidance with:
  - » Defined stakeholder roles.
  - » Enhanced support for learners with SEMH needs.

Longer-Term Priorities (2026–2028)

Strategic Collaboration

- Work with Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) to ensure the specialist estate is suitable for future learner needs.

Post-19 Pathways

- Fully develop post-19 pathways in collaboration with education, health, and care partners.

Inclusion and Belonging

- Continue to embed inclusive practice and a sense of belonging at all levels.
- Strengthen the graduated response through professional development and system-wide understanding.

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Developing a Detailed Implementation Plan

With short-term actions already underway, the next phase of our Sufficiency Strategy focuses on building a detailed implementation plan that will guide delivery over the medium and long term. This plan will ensure that our strategic priorities are translated into practical, measurable actions that improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND in Tameside.

The implementation plan will be structured around clear workstreams, timelines, and governance arrangements, with a strong emphasis on stakeholder engagement and accountability.

Key Actions to Develop the Implementation Plan

- **Review and consolidate early progress**
  We will assess the impact of short-term actions, identify any emerging challenges, and capture feedback from stakeholders to inform the next phase of planning.
- **Define medium- and long-term objectives**
  Strategic goals will be translated into SMART outcomes, aligned with local priorities and national expectations. These will include targets around sufficiency, inclusion, and improved access to local provision.
- **Establish thematic workstreams**
  The strategy will be delivered through focused workstreams, each with a designated lead and cross-agency working group. Initial workstreams will include:
  - » Commissioning and Market Development
  - » Data and Forecasting
  - » Workforce Development
  - » Coproduction and Engagement
- **Develop a phased delivery timeline**
  A clear timeline will be created, setting out short-, medium-, and long-term actions, key milestones, and dependencies. This will support progress tracking and enable timely reporting to governance boards.
- **Embed governance and oversight**
  Delivery will be overseen through existing SEND governance structures, with regular progress reviews, risk assessments, and escalation routes for issues requiring resolution.
- **Plan for resources and capacity**
  We will identify funding sources, assess workforce capacity, and explore external support where needed to ensure delivery is adequately resourced.

- **Strengthen stakeholder engagement**
  Ongoing engagement with the Parent Carer Forum, schools, health partners, and the wider community will be central to delivery. Mechanisms for co-production and feedback will be embedded throughout.
- **Monitor, evaluate and adapt**
  Key performance indicators will be developed for each workstream. Regular evaluation points will be built into the plan to ensure learning informs future commissioning and strategic planning.

Strategic Partner Roles in Strengthening SEND Sufficiency in Tameside

Creating a responsive and inclusive SEND system in Tameside relies on shared responsibility and coordinated action across all partners. Each stakeholder contributes distinct expertise, playing a crucial role in delivering and sustaining high-quality provision for children and young people aged 0–25. Terms of reference for each partners role in the implementation of this strategy are outlined in Appendix 3.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Governance Framework

A robust framework underpins the delivery of the SEND Sufficiency Strategy, ensuring transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement.

Performance and Impact Monitoring

Progress will be tracked through a set of agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), including:

- Timeliness of EHCPs
- Reduction in waiting times for assessments
- Parent/carer satisfaction
- Attendance and attainment of SEND learners
- Reduction in out-of-borough placements
- Reduction in exclusions of SEND cohort
- Increased attendance of SEND cohort

Data and Insight

Data will be collected through:

- Quarterly service reviews
- EHCP audits
- Focus groups with families and professionals
- Feedback from consultation forums

This intelligence informs strategic decisions and highlights areas for targeted improvement.

A real-time feedback mechanism enables stakeholders to raise concerns, share insights, and suggest improvements. Bi-annual strategy reviews and thematic workshops will ensure the system remains responsive and adaptive to emerging needs.

Governance and Accountability

Governance is led by a multi-agency SEND Strategic Partnership Board, supported by the SEND Local Area Improvement Board (SLAIB). These bodies include representatives from education, health, social care, and the Parent Carer Forum, and are chaired independently to ensure impartial oversight.

Key governance features:

- Regular reporting to elected members and scrutiny panels
- Annual public reports on progress and impact
- Co-production embedded at all levels
- Transparent decision-making and shared accountability

Final Word: Our Commitment to SEND Sufficiency

Tameside is committed to building a SEND system that is inclusive, responsive, and sustainable for every child and young person aged 0–25. This strategy sets out a clear roadmap for addressing sufficiency challenges through targeted investment, collaborative working, and a relentless focus on outcomes. By expanding specialist provision, strengthening inclusive practices, and improving pathways to adulthood, we aim to ensure that all children and young people with SEND can thrive in their local communities.

We recognise that achieving sufficiency is not a one-time effort but an ongoing journey. It requires listening to families, learning from lived experience, and adapting to changing needs. Through co-production, transparency, and shared accountability, we will continue to shape a SEND system that delivers high-quality support, promotes independence, and prepares young people for a fulfilling future

Appendices

Appendix 1: The work of First Planner, including Key statistics on SEND demographics and trends in Tameside.

During the Autumn Term of 2024, Tameside commissioned First Planner to review and analyse its SEND provision thoroughly. This work was pivotal in supporting the development of Tameside's SEND Sufficiency Strategy, which aims to address long-standing challenges related to capacity, financial sustainability, and alignment with local and national benchmarks.

Objectives of the Work

The work carried out by First Planner was focused on the following key objectives:

1. **Assessing Current Provision:** Evaluating the volume and distribution of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) compared to local authorities, identifying inefficiencies and areas of over-reliance on high-cost independent and non-maintained special school (INMSS) placements.

2. **Evaluating Capacity:** Analysing capacity across mainstream and special schools, highlighting inefficiencies such as surplus spaces in mainstream settings and overcrowding in special schools.

3. **Identifying Trends:** Examining the growth in specific SEND categories, such as Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN), Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC), Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH), and Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD).

4. **Developing Strategic Solutions:** Providing evidence-based recommendations to address sufficiency challenges, reduce reliance on independent placements, and optimise local provision.

Summary of Work Completed by First Planner

First Planner undertook the following key activities to support the development of Tameside's SEND Sufficiency Strategy:

1. **Comprehensive Data Analysis:**
   - » Examined EHCP trends, highlighting the high volume of plans issued and the low discontinuation rates, both of which exceed national benchmarks.
   - » Assessed the financial impact of Tameside's over-reliance on INMSS placements, particularly for SEMH and MLD cohorts.

2. **Stakeholder Engagement:**
    - » Facilitated engagement sessions with schools, parents, carers, and local services to develop a shared understanding of the challenges and potential solutions.
    - » Gathered stakeholder feedback to inform the commissioning strategy and ensure alignment with the needs of Tameside's children and young people.
3. **Capacity and Provision Mapping:**
    - » Identified significant surplus capacity in mainstream schools, alongside increased placement in special schools, accommodating many low-severity cases.
    - » Proposed strategies to repurpose existing spaces, such as developing resource bases and SEN units within mainstream settings.
4. **Financial Review:**
    - » Highlighted the high costs associated with INMSS placements and their contribution to Tameside's Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit.
    - » Recalibrating funding bands and tariffs is recommended to ensure alignment with the severity of need and long-term financial sustainability.
5. **Development of a Need and Severity Matrix:**
    - » Designed a robust matrix to guide EHCP assessments, placement decisions, and reviews, ensuring consistent and fair allocation of resources.
6. **Strategic Recommendations:**
    - » Developed 47 options to address sufficiency challenges, including reducing reliance on independent placements, optimising local provision, and addressing financial pressures.
    - » Proposed a targeted review of existing EHCPs to identify pupils who could transition to more cost-effective, inclusive local provision.

Outcomes Achieved

The work undertaken by First Planner provided a solid foundation for Tameside's SEND Sufficiency Strategy. Key outcomes include:

- **A clear strategic roadmap** to align Tameside's SEND provision with national benchmarks by 2031/32.
- **Evidence-based solutions** for addressing capacity challenges and reducing reliance on high-cost INMSS placements.
- **A capital investment framework** to support the development of resource bases and SEN units within existing mainstream schools.
- **Strengthened stakeholder collaboration,** fostering a shared commitment to implementing the strategy.

The work completed by First Planner marks a significant milestone in Tameside's efforts to create a sustainable, inclusive, and efficient SEND system. By addressing these challenges, Tameside is better equipped to meet its children's and young people's needs while safeguarding its financial stability.

Appendix 2: Glossary of Terms for the Tameside SEND Sufficiency Strategy (2025-2028)

This glossary provides definitions for key terms used throughout the strategy, ensuring clarity and understanding for all stakeholders.

- **ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder):** A developmental condition affecting communication, behavior, and social interaction.
- **Co-production:** Collaborative working practice where children, young people, families, and stakeholders contribute to the design and delivery of services.
- **DfE (Department for Education):** A UK government department responsible for education and children's services.
- **DSG (Dedicated Schools Grant):** A government grant provided to local authorities in England to fund schools and education-related services.
- **EHCP (Education, Health, and Care Plan)**: A legally binding document detailing the education, health, and social care support required by a child or young person with SEND.
- **Greater Manchester Ordinarily Available Provision Framework:** A regional guideline ensuring that inclusive education and SEND support practices are consistent across Greater Manchester.
- **INMSS (Independent and Non-Maintained Special Schools):** Schools outside of the local authority's direct control that cater specifically to children with SEND.
- **KPI (Key Performance Indicator):** A measurable value used to evaluate the success of an organisation or activity in meeting objectives.
- **Local Area SEND Priorities:** Specific objectives for improving SEND services and outcomes within Tameside.
- **MLD (Moderate Learning Difficulties):** A type of SEND where individuals experience challenges in academic achievement, often requiring tailored support.
- **SLCN (Speech, Language, and Communication Needs):** A SEND category involving difficulties with speaking, understanding, or using language effectively.
- **SEMH (Social, Emotional, and Mental Health)**: A SEND category covering difficulties in managing emotions and behaviour, affecting a child's learning ability.
- **SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities):** A term encompassing a wide range of learning difficulties or disabilities that require special educational provision.
- **SEND LAP (Local Area Partnership):** A multi-agency partnership in Tameside focused on SEND provision, comprising representatives from the education, health, and social care sectors.
- **Statutory Obligations:** Legal duties that local authorities, schools, and other entities must comply with, such as providing support for children with SEND.
- **Surplus Capacity:** The availability of spaces in mainstream schools that exceed the current demand.
- **Tameside Co-production Strategy:** A local framework emphasising shared decision-making and collaboration with children, young people, and families in service development.

- **Transition Pathways** are processes for supporting children and young people as they move through different educational phases or into adulthood.
- **Graduated Response:** A step-by-step approach to identifying and supporting SEND needs, starting with classroom-based strategies and escalating to more specialised interventions as required.
- **“Delivering Better Value” Programme:** An initiative by the Department for Education aimed at improving financial and operational efficiency in SEND services.

Appendix 3: TOR for partnership roles in SEND sufficiency

Local Authority
The Local Authority leads on strategic planning and system-wide coordination. It ensures compliance with statutory duties, oversees the development and promotion of the Local Offer, and drives sufficiency through integrated commissioning and capital investment. By facilitating multi-agency collaboration through service hubs and monitoring performance, the LA identifies gaps, informs improvement, and promotes equitable access to support.

Education Settings
Early years providers, schools, and colleges are at the heart of inclusive education. They deliver high-quality teaching, implement targeted interventions, and co-produce and review Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in partnership with families and professionals. Through regular reporting and participation in peer networks, education settings contribute valuable insights that support system-wide learning and transparency.

Families and Carers
Families are equal and essential partners in the SEND system. Their lived experiences shape strategic planning, service design, and individual support. They actively engage in EHCP reviews, transition planning, and consultation forums, ensuring provision reflects real needs. The Local Offer empowers families to access services and advocate effectively for their children.

Health Services
Health partners provide vital assessments, therapeutic interventions, and clinical expertise. They support the development and implementation of EHCPs, contribute to staff training, and work collaboratively with education settings to embed health support within learning environments. Their involvement is key to delivering holistic, needs-led support.

Voluntary and Community Sector
Voluntary and community organisations offer essential wraparound support, advocacy, and early help. They enhance the reach of services, reduce barriers to access, and enrich the Local Offer through specialist provision and peer-led initiatives, ensuring support is responsive and community-informed.