

Weekly update – 8th May 2026

Welcome to this week's update from the Halton SEND Parent Carers Forum newsletter

HSPCF Events and Opportunities

1. Parent Carer Coffee Mornings – 14th and 21st of May

Our May coffee mornings continue next week, giving parent carers more opportunities to come together, connect with others and hear from local professionals.

On 14th May, we are pleased to welcome Ben Holmes, Director of Education, Inclusion and Provision at Halton Borough Council, to the DCBL Stadium. Ben leads on areas including education, inclusion and SEND provision, so this will be a valuable opportunity for parent carers to hear updates and ask questions about local education and SEND services.

This will be followed by Esther Gibson from Woodview Child Development Centre on 21st May at our Bridgewater Park Hub.

As always, these sessions are a lovely chance to come together for a cuppa and a chat, share experiences, ask questions and make sure parent carer voices are heard. Please do feel free to share these dates with other parent carers who may like to come along.

Date: 14th May

Time: 9.30am – 11.30am

Venue: DCBL Stadium Widnes – Ben Holmes



Informing ♥ *Empowering* ♥ *Engaging*

PARENT ADVICE, SUPPORT & CHECK-IN

Come and meet other parents on a similar journey to yourself. Get peer to peer advice and support along with a Coffee.

- ✓ Meet other parent carers
- ✓ Help shape local services
- ✓ Share important information
- ✓ Get support & Advice
- ✓ Discuss important topics

CONTACT US

Focus Group Guest:
Ben Holmes-
Director of
Education, Inclusion
and Provision

Halton SEND PARENT
Carer's Forum
Your voice counts

9:30-11:30am
14 MAY 2026

HSPCF Events and Opportunities

3. Parents Zoom Session – 21st May

Our next Parent Carer Zoom Session, led by Michaela Bridge, is another chance for families to hear the main points from the previous week's coffee morning with Ben Holmes, Director of Education, Inclusion and Provision on the 14th of May.

We know daytime sessions are not always accessible for everyone, so these evening sessions are a great way for parent carers to stay connected, hear updates and ask any questions they may have. If there are any topics parent carers would specifically like to discuss in one of the zoom sessions, please get in touch via the info@haltonsendpcf.org.uk and we can help facilitate.

Please do feel free to share this with other parent carers who may like to join us. It is always really helpful when families take part and services have the opportunity to hear parent carers' lived experiences.

Time: 8pm-9pm

Meeting Id: 834 1793 6320

Passcode: 927643

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83417936320?pwd=OYldJtLqzmGNAzeP0oKUKbC4Iyo3ej.1>



The poster features a central graphic with overlapping speech bubbles in yellow, purple, and teal. Text on the poster includes: 'Halton SEND PARENT Carer's Forum Your voice counts', 'Halton Send Parent Carers Forum', 'ZOOM HBC UPDATE With Michaela Bridge', 'Informing Empowering Engaging', 'THURSDAY 21ST MAY - 20.00-21.00 PM', 'Join us on zoom for a discussion with Michaela Bridge for a Monthly update', 'Meeting ID: 834 1793 6320 Passcode: 927643', 'ZOOM', and 'E-MAIL - FOR INFO contact'. There is also a Facebook icon with 'Click & Like' and a small image of a Zoom meeting grid.



Halton Borough Council Updates

3. Halton Send Reform Plan

Halton Borough Council is continuing work on the local **SEND Reform Plan**, which will help shape how SEND services develop over the coming years in line with the Government's new SEND reforms. The in-person engagement events have now finished, but there is still time for families and professionals to share their views using the online form. Feedback will help shape local arrangements and make sure future services reflect what matters most to children, young people and families in Halton. Slides on the Send Reform plan are included at the end of this newsletter.

[Halton's Engagement Events - Government SEND Reforms: Putting Children & Young People First](#)

4. Consultation now open on increased SEND capacity in Halton

There is still time to respond to Halton Borough Council's consultation on plans to increase local SEND capacity through new inclusion bases in mainstream schools across Halton.

The proposals would create additional specialist provision for children and young people with SEND, including support for speech, language and communication needs, interaction needs, and cognition and learning. The aim is to increase local provision and help make sure more children and young people are able to access the right support closer to home. This is an important opportunity for anyone with an interest in SEND provision in Halton to share their views on how local services should continue to develop.

Anyone can still take part in the consultation by sharing their views online or in writing until **13 May 2026**.

Link: <http://www.halton.gov.uk/RBConsultation>



Halton Borough Council Updates

5. Halton Family Hubs and SEND support

Families may find the Halton Family Hubs a helpful starting point when looking for SEND information, advice and support.

The Family Hubs bring together information about a range of local services for children and young people with SEND, helping families find out more about the support available in Halton. This includes information on short breaks, commissioned services, and other local support that may be helpful to children, young people and their families.

Families can also find information about support for younger children, including groups such as Little Stars, as well as wider help available through the Family Hubs.

If parent carers are unsure where to begin, Family Hub Co-ordinators are also available to help families find information, understand what support may be available, and signpost them to relevant services.

6. Disabled Children's Register

Halton Borough Council is encouraging families to consider completing the Disabled Children's Register. The register helps the local authority build a clearer picture of the number of disabled children and young people in Halton, along with the types of support families may need.

This information can then be used to help plan services, shape future provision, and make sure families are included in relevant updates, opportunities and support.

If this applies to your family, you can complete the register using the link below:

<https://www.haltonfamilyhubs.co.uk/disabled-childrens-register>



Cheshire and Merseyside ICB Updates

Health updates continue to be shared through the Health Co-production Meetings, which the forum attends regularly to help keep parent carers informed of local developments.

7. Mersey Care – Support for Children and Young People

Families may find Mersey Care's Support for Children and Young People webpage helpful, as it brings together a wide range of support, information and signposting for children, young people and their families. The page includes information about support for children and young people with SEND, including details about reasonable adjustments that can be made to help children engage more comfortably with services.

The page also includes details on self-referral, local drop-in sessions where young people, parents and carers can speak to a mental health professional without an appointment, and wider support such as School Health Teams, Mental Health Support Teams in schools, and information for carers.

Families can also find information about Animal Safari Sessions.

[Support for Children and Young People :: Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust](#)

7. ADHD and sleep medication repeat prescriptions

A reminder that repeat ADHD and sleep medication requests for children and young people in Halton must now be made by email only.

Families are asked to email 7–10 days before medication runs out to:
bchft.halton.prescriptions@nhs.net.

Requests can only be processed where up-to-date height, weight and blood pressure measurements are available from the last 3–6 months.

Other Information & Support

10. Contact – support and workshops for families

Families may also find **Contact** helpful. Contact is a national charity for families with disabled children and offers a wide range of information, advice and support for parent carers.

Alongside practical information and emotional support, Contact also runs a range of workshops and events for families. These cover different topics that may be helpful for parent carers, including one focused on toilet training for children with disabilities. Contact also offers wider resources on family life, education, sleep, behaviour and support for carers.

This may be a useful resource for families looking for extra support, practical guidance or workshops linked to their child's needs.

Find out more here:

<https://contact.org.uk/>

1. Research participants – early years transition study

A trainee Educational Psychologist working with Halton Local Authority is looking for parent carers to take part in a research project about enhanced transition to primary school for children with SEND. The research is looking for parent carers of children with SEND who:

- moved from a private nursery to a mainstream primary school in Halton
- experienced an enhanced or supported transition during Summer 2025
- did not have an EHCP at the time of transition.

Taking part would involve a single in-person interview of around one hour, in a location chosen by the participant, with an optional follow-up focus group later in the year. Participation is entirely voluntary.

If this applies to your family and you may be interested in taking part, you can register your interest by emailing: SXD889@student.bham.ac.uk

Deadline to register interest: **15 May 2026.**



Halton Send Carers Forum



haltonsendcarersforum

[Haltonsendcarersforum.org.uk](https://www.haltonparentcarersforum.org.uk)

To keep up to date with events, consultations, and support for parent carers, you can stay connected with us in the following ways:



Website:

www.haltonparentcarersforum.org



Email:

info@haltonparentcarersforum.org

Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/HaltonSENDParentCarersForum>



Closed Facebook group (for parent carers):

Halton SEND Parent Carers Forum – Closed Group



HALTON SEND

Important Information



PARENT CARER ADVICE / SUPPORT

SIGNPOST FOR HALTON



1 Halton Send Parent Carer's Forum



A voice to inform families with children with additional needs of the services in our local area which may be beneficial to your child.

www.haltonsendcarersforum.org.uk

1 Bridgewater



Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. Here you will find information about all of Halton's Health services

www.bridgewater.nhs.uk/halton/

2 ADDvanced Solutions



An open access offer that supports the emotional health and wellbeing of neurodivergent children and young people, their families and the professionals that work with them.

www.addvancedsolutions.co.uk

2 Sendiass



If you need some advice, guidance or support on any issues that are affecting you or your child then we're here to help. We provide impartial and confidential information and support.

www.sendiasshalton.co.uk/

3 Halton Carer's Centre



Halton Carers' Centre is a network partner of the Carers Trust. We work to reach unpaid young & adult carers and develop services for them across the borough.

www.haltoncarers.co.uk

3 Family Hubs



A one stop digital platform for Halton residents to use to find services, events, support groups and advice

www.haltonfamilyhubs.co.uk/



SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH



1 MHST

www.mersecare.nhs.uk

Our Mental Health Support Team provides direct mental health support to 45 schools in Halton. We promote the early detection and prevention of mental health problems, strengthen links with mental health services, providing direct, ongoing support around mental health and wellbeing across the whole school.



2 KOOOTH

www.kooth.com

Kooth is a free digital safe and anonymous platform for support for young people. They have wellbeing activities, journals, discussion boards, tips and a free Chat and messenger option for young people to talk to someone.



3 CAMHS

www.mersecare.nhs.uk

Headz Up Halton drop-in hub
An informal drop-in café where young people up to 18 years, parents and carers can drop by to speak with a mental health professional for assessment, advice and signposting to local services.
Tues- Brookvale / Thursday Warrington Rd

WHATS ON

MAY 2026



Click & Like



Peer to peer support
and advice



Halton SEND PARENT
Carer's Forum
Your voice counts

Halton Send Parent
Carers Forum

Informing ♥ *Empowering* ♥ *Engaging*



PARENT CHECK-IN

- Bridgewater Park Hub 7th May
- Halton stadium 14th May with Ben Holmes
- Bridgewater Park Hub 21st May with Esther Gibson (Woodview)

ZOOM

- Zoom with Michaela Bridge 21st May 8-9pm



NEW HSPCF HUB

We are delighted to be based in our new Hub at Bridgewater Park school. We will host our parent coffee sessions here and going forward there will be opportunities for you to have 1:1 discussions with HSPCF staff here



EVENTS

- Hummingbird 8th May 5-7pm

E-MAIL FOR INFO
Info@haltonsendpcf.org.uk

contact
For families
with disabled children

Have Your Say on SEND Reforms

SEND Engagement Events – Your Voice Matters

We are inviting parents, carers, schools, and professionals to take part in upcoming SEND engagement events to help shape how SEND reforms are implemented locally.

The Government is introducing changes through a national SEND Reform Plan. We want to hear your views, experiences, and priorities so that local arrangements reflect what matters most to our SEND community.

What are the events about?

- Learn about the key proposals in the SEND Reform Plan
- Help shape future SEND provision and support locally, including the Experts at Hand model
- Strengthening Effective Partnerships and Practice

Your feedback will directly inform local decision-making and planning.

Who should attend?

- Parents and carers of children and young people with SEND
- Schools, settings, and colleges
- Education, health and social care professionals

Event details

There are 3 dates for the SEND Engagement Events (you only need to attend 1 date)

- Monday 27th April – 1pm – 3pm
- Wednesday 29th April – 1pm – 3pm
- Tuesday 05th May – 9am – 11am

Details of venue will be sent once your place is confirmed.

How to book

Please use this link to book your place

[SEND Engagement Events - SEND Reform Plan – Fill out form](#)

Why your voice matters

By attending, you can help ensure changes are inclusive, transparent, and focused on improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND. We look forward to hearing from you. Together, we can shape a better SEND system.

SEND Reform Plan



1

Why is SEND reform happening?

- Current system is under significant pressure; demand for EHC needs assessments have risen significantly and many (if not all) partnership areas are facing financial pressures
- Inconsistent support in mainstream settings; training for staff is variable and confidence in supporting children and young people with SEND is variable; families are experiencing a 'postcode lottery'
- Rising numbers of children and young people with SEND are travelling long distances to access support and school placements
- The reforms aim to improve inclusion, early support and a system that is sustainable



2

Principles for SEND reform

- **Early.** Children should receive the support they need as soon as possible. This will start to break the cycle of needs going unmet and getting worse, instead intervening upstream, earlier in children's lives when this can have most impact.
- **Local.** Children and young people with SEND should be able to learn at a school close to their home, alongside their peers, rather than travelling long distances from their family and community. Special schools should continue to play a vital role supporting children and young people with the most complex needs.
- **Fair.** Every school should be resourced and able to meet common and predictable needs, including as they change over time, without parents having to fight to get support for their children. Where specialist provision is needed for children in mainstream, special or Alternative Provision, we will ensure it is there, with clear legal requirements and safeguards for children and parents.
- **Effective.** Reforms should be grounded in evidence, ensuring all education settings know where to go to find effective practice that has excellent long-term outcomes for children.
- **Shared.** Education, health and care services should work in partnership with one another, local government, families, teachers, experts and representative bodies to deliver better experiences and outcomes for all our children.



3

Who is responsible for delivering reform?

- Local Authority
- Integrated Care Board (ICB)
- Parent Carer Forum and young people
- Schools and Multi-Academy Trusts
- Early Years Providers
- Further Education (FE) Providers
- Providers (health, education and social care)



4

What the local area must submit:

- Local SEND reform plan
- Partnership Maturity Assessment
- Reform Data Template



5

What is the SEND Reform Plan?

Local Authority SEND Reform Plan should set out how the authority will implement national SEND reforms locally, improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND, and create a more inclusive, sustainable system.

- The Plan is structured into five key sections:

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

The vision and goals for your local system in line with the national vision set out in the Schools White Paper.

2. **Strategy** – How the local area partnership plans to achieve it

Where the local system expects to be in the next 3 years, its theory of change, roadmap for the next 3 years and delivery plan for the first year.

3. **Monitoring and Evaluation** – How the local area partnership will know delivery is on track

The processes for tracking progress against milestones and outcomes and reporting to decision-makers.

4. **Governance** – What action the local area partnership will take to stay on track

The governance and processes for monitoring progress and taking action to ensure delivery remains on track.

5. **Central Government Support** – How we can help the local area partnership

An opportunity to identify practical support from central government that will help you deliver your plan.



6

What is the Maturity Assessment?

Tool to identify local partnership area maturity in terms of collaboration and partnership working, providing a shared understanding of opportunities to strengthen the culture and practice of partnership in context. There are 7 pillars within the maturity assessment:

Pillar 1: Co-production with parents and carers, and children and young people

Pillar 2: Effective system leadership and governance

Pillar 3: Accurate understanding of needs and experiences of children and young people through effective use of quantitative and qualitative data

Pillar 4: High quality service delivery at universal, targeted and specialist level to promote inclusion

Pillar 5: Effective partnerships working across education, health and social care

Pillar 6: Skilled and organised workforce across local authority, education settings, health and social care

Pillar 7: Targeted and sustainable use of resources, including sufficiency, place planning and use of capital



7

What have we done so far:

- Theory of Change Day
- Outcome of SEND Local Area monitoring visit
- Updated SEND Improvement Plan
- Draft SEND Strategy
- Initial meetings with DfE Advisers
- You Said, We Did – Focus on Experts at Hand tabletop activity



8

What will we be doing:

- Key group overseeing SEND Reform Plan including Transformation Team, HoS, Deputy HoS, EPS, DCO, DSCO
- Engagement sessions with PCF, schools, MAT leads, ICB/health colleagues
- Focused meetings with key officers across LA and ICB (providers, data, finance, DCO, DSCO, Directors, etc)
- Progress meetings with DfE Advisors
- Meetings with Heads of SEND & Inclusion from across Cheshire and Mersey (9 LAs) are meeting on a fortnightly basis to provide peer support.
- ICB oversight in relation to Experts at Hand and what we do as a Cheshire & Mersey ICB (Specialist posts in relation to SLT and OT)



9

Engagement events – focus & provisional dates

There will be 3 key focus groups for each of the engagement sessions:

- Experts at Hand Offer
- Embedding the Experts at Hand within wider reform strategy
- Strengthening Effective Partnerships and Practice

Dates for engagement events:

- Monday 27th April – 1pm – 3pm (DCBL Stadium)
- Wednesday 29th April – 1pm – 3pm (TBC)
- Tuesday 05th May – 9am – 11am (DCBL Stadium)

We will also liaise with PCF to facilitate an evening engagement session (either face-to-face or online)



10

Key Dates for submission:

- Draft SEND Reform Plan – **15th May 2026**
- Final submission of SEND Reform Plan – **19th June 2026**



11

Risks & challenges

- Timescales for submission; alongside submission of SEND Reform Plan, we also have SEND Improvement Plan to submit and key meetings following monitoring visit.
- Consultation still open in relation to White Paper – will things change following consultation period? Will this impact on what is expected within SEND Reform Plans?
- Lack of detail in relation to Expert at Hand guidance. Acknowledgement from DfE Advisers that we may not be able to fully complete some elements of the plan prior to draft submission on 15th May. No confirmed date from DfE on detail of Experts at Hand

Funding allocation for Halton = £1,090,429



12

**WAS YOUR CHILD SUPPORTED
THROUGH THEIR EARLY YEARS
TRANSITION TO PRIMARY SCHOOL?**

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED



**RESEARCH STUDY:
-SINGLE 1-HOUR INTERVIEW
-OPTIONAL FOCUS GROUP FOLLOW UP**

Requirements:

- Parent/Carers of Children with SEND* but no EHCP** (at time of transition)
- You were involved in a supported enhanced transition for your child during Summer 2025
- Your child transitioned from private nursery to mainstream primary school within Halton



**Register your interest
SXD889@STUDENT.BHAM.AC.UK
by 15th May 2026**



*SEND: Special Educational Need and Disabilities **EHCP: Educational, Health, Care, Plan

Project timeline

- 1 Interest can be registered by participants by 15th May 2026 via email. If there is over-registration, participants will be selected at random.
- 2 Participants will be contacted to book an interview. There will be no financial reimbursement for participating.
- 3 Single, in-person interview will last approximately 1 hour, in a location that the participant is most comfortable with.
- 4 The interview will be audio-recorded then transcribed, anonymised and stored confidentially to be analysed by the researcher.
- 5 Participants will be invited to join the focus group in Winter 2026 to discuss the findings and consider ideas for change. The focus group will be audio recorded, so the findings can be summarised.



PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

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RESEARCHER

Sophie Dickinson

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This project has been approved by the University of Birmingham Research Ethics Committee.

Ethics review number:

ERN_5606-APR2026

If you are unhappy about any aspect of the project, then please contact me in the first instance. You may also contact Dr. Kieranjit Sangha if you have a more significant complaint or feel that your concern has not been heard. If you still feel that your complaint has not been handled to your satisfaction, then you can contact the University of Birmingham Research Ethics Committee on ethics-queries@contacts.bham.ac.uk

This research project is part of my (Sophie) thesis for my doctoral degree in Applied Educational and Child Psychology at University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TT, United Kingdom



UNIVERSITY OF
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Early Years
Enhanced Transitions

Research PROJECT

Information Sheet

