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Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) newsletter

SEND Reform White Paper 2026

A Day In the Life

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DBT skills group

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Children's Conference

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Supported Internships

MARCH 2026

The SEND Reform White Paper 2026

Every Child Achieving and Thriving

What is a White Paper?

A White Paper explains the government's plans and direction for the future. It does not mean immediate changes to the law or to children's current rights. The ideas in a White Paper are usually consulted on and developed over time - this White Paper refers to a number of current and future consultations. Because of this, changes take place gradually over several years. Many of the proposed SEND reforms are not expected to take effect until 2029.

What the White Paper aims to do

The government's view is that the education system works well for some children and young people, but not for all. The aim of the White Paper is to spread opportunity and good practice, so the system works better for every young person.

The White Paper is based on the belief that children do best when they feel included, supported and that they belong. Schools are seen as the core of a wider community, working alongside families and services to support children's learning, wellbeing and inclusion.

It focuses on SEND, disadvantage, schools working together, strong partnerships with parents and carers, and positive behaviour and attendance.

What this means in practice

- Inclusion in mainstream schools will be the expectation, and this will be monitored through Ofsted.
- Schools will be expected to identify needs earlier, using clearer digital Individual Support Plans (ISPs).
- Mainstream schools will be better supported and funded to meet children's needs more consistently, including £1.6bn of Inclusive Mainstream Funding over three years.
- There will be clear national standards for inclusion, setting consistent expectations across the country.
- The focus is on better outcomes for all children, including closing the disadvantage gap.

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- Attendance and belonging are central, with schools expected to understand how children and young people feel about school and whether they feel included.
- Children should experience a broad, knowledge-rich curriculum, with enrichment opportunities beyond exams.
- There will be more focus on recruiting, retaining and training the workforce to support children well.

You can find further information about this, including details of the proposed layers of support in our parent carer presentation slides here:

SEND White paper Parent/Carer information

Legal rights

It is important to note that legal rights for children and young people remain the same for now.

There are no immediate changes to EHCPs, legal rights or current support Parents and carers will continue to have a voice, clear rights, and routes to challenge and support.

EHCPs remain in place, and children's legal rights are protected There are no immediate changes to current entitlements or support. Any changes proposed are future-focused, with a new Code of Practice expected from 2029. Changes will happen gradually over several years.

Changes will happen gradually over several years, with safeguards in place Individual Support Plans (ISPs) do not replace EHCPs - EHCPs remain for children with the most complex needs.

The consultation

The government is consulting on proposals to reform the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system. The consultation closes on Monday 18th May 2026.

It is open to everyone who has an interest in the reforms including:

- Children, young people and families
- Teachers and leaders
- Schools, trusts and early years and post-16 providers
- Local authorities
- Experts and academic organisations
- Representative groups

The consultation includes 39 questions, but you are not required to respond to all 39 questions. These questions focus on key parts of the proposed SEND reforms, including:

- Individual Support Plans (ISPs)
- National Inclusion Standards





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- Specialist Provision Packages
- How and when EHCPs would be used in the future
- Funding, accountability and consistency of support

The government is not asking for feedback on everything in the White Paper. Instead, the 39 questions focus on specific areas where views can still influence how reforms are designed and implemented.

The questions are spread throughout the consultation document, with a full list included in Appendix C (Part B). We have put the questions onto a word document that can be accessed on the local offer parent page, here:

SEND_White_Paper_Consultation_Questions_March_2026.docx

This is a link to the consultation questionnaire:

SEND reform: putting children and young people first - Department for Education - Citizen Space

Supporting information on the consultation can be found here:

Every child achieving and thriving and SEND consultation supporting information - GOV.UK

The 39 Steps: SNJ's guidance to help you respond to the White Paper SEND Consultation - Special Needs Jungle

Where can I find more information?

We have added a page to the Local Offer which will be updated as further national detail is published and as local plans develop.

Here, you can currently find useful links, parent carer presentation slides and information about the consultation.

Barnet Local Offer :: Home / Info and Advice / SEND Reform White Paper 2026





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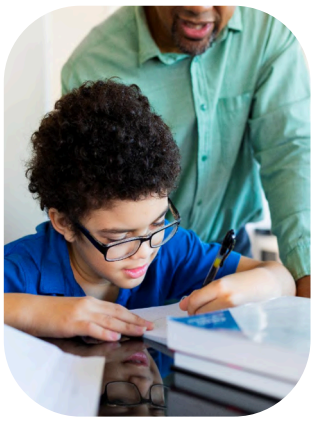




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"A Day in The Life" – Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) in Specialist School.

Today started, as many do, with me confidently making a coffee and then immediately abandoning it to get the update from my Occupational Therapy (OT) and Physiotherapy (PT) colleagues on events of note that happened the day before. We try as much as possible to cross over in our schools, as these face-to-face handovers are so valuable. I was alerted about who slept badly, who's feeling a bit under the weather today, and who is having a great week. These conversations shape everything that follows — no therapy happens in isolation here.

My first stop was an observation in a classroom to review multiple students' communication targets. I sat through a lovely Look and Listen circle, in which the teacher had the Bucket of Dreams that kept the children attending beautifully. One child was feeling a bit dysregulated in the circle – so together with the Learning Support staff we created a breakout space at the back of the room, which gave me an opportunity to work more individually with this child as they engaged in activities of their choosing. I took a Core Language Symbol Board readily hanging on the wall and modelled language as he played. We got a few glances throughout (win!) and as I sang goodbye, we got a very clear point to "FINISHED". Feeling simultaneously proud and hurt at the same time, I returned to the circle for further observations. Quick chat with the teacher during the transition, discussing some strategies to support processing time and modelling of language using symbols, and on to the next classroom.

My OT colleague and I arrived at the next location at the same time. Time for some lunchtime reviews. SLT, OT and PT often work together in specialist settings to ensure optimal positioning, safety and independence during mealtimes. Today, we assessed a child's drinking – trialling different strategies to increase his independence, now that he is transitioning away from baby bottles. The child can hold the handles of an open cup but couldn't quite bring it up to his mouth. My OT colleague demonstrated how to provide light physical prompting under the elbow, directing the child's strength to get the cup up to the mouth for drinking. He looked very pleased with himself!

Back to the office for some notes, a sip of my cold coffee and then preparing for an afternoon training with the teachers on site. Today's topic was on 'Target Setting' – our collaboration with teachers on setting appropriate targets for children is vital. Effective outcome measurement allows us to plan further input, identify barriers and problem solve. Our wonderful teachers are central to integrating therapy strategies throughout the day, therefore collaborating on targets underpins our therapeutic input. We had a lovely Q&A, discussing some specific students and determining appropriate next steps together.

And that was the end of a very rewarding day as a Speech and Language Therapist working in a specialist school. Now, where did I put that coffee...







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The Barnet 18-25 Transition Brief DBT skills group

The Barnet 18–25 Transition Pathway is an AMHT service designed to support young adults aged 18–25 as they navigate both adult mental health services and the broader transition into adulthood. Our aim is to provide this generation of young adults with practical, social, and emotional support tailored to their needs.

Among the young people we work with, many experience challenges related to emotional regulation and maintaining interpersonal relationships. As a team, we recognised that this is a significant area requiring focused intervention. A few months ago, several colleagues attended a brief two-day DBT skills programme, which inspired the development of our own six-week DBT-informed skills group.



The first cohort ran from December 2025 to January 2026. The group initially began with five young people and settled into a core group of three, supported by two facilitators. Throughout the programme, we explored emotional distress and strategies for managing it, interpersonal skills to support healthier social interactions, and a range of relaxation and mindfulness techniques. We received positive feedback from the young people who attended, and we are using their reflections to refine and strengthen the programme.

We are now preparing to launch a second cohort in April 2026, building on what we learned from the first group and continuing to develop this valuable area of support.



Barnet PINS Newsletter March 2026

The Local Authority recently coordinated a PINS (Promoting Inclusion in Schools) visit to Cromer Road Primary School, attended by MP Mark Sewards, NHS colleagues, and representatives from the Parent Carer Forum. The visit formed part of the ongoing cross-sector work to strengthen inclusive practice across the borough, following last year's training programme on Emotional Regulation, Emotional Coaching, Sensory and Communication Audits, BICs Professionals, and parent-carer engagement.

During the visit, pupils participated in a Q&A session in the school's newly refurbished library. They spoke confidently about the positive impact of the PINS project, including how the Zones of Regulation supports their daily wellbeing check-ins using lolliipop sticks. Pupils also demonstrated their understanding of key emotional regulation concepts such as; the Hand Brain Model, the role of the amygdala, and the Window of Tolerance. Pupils were able to talk about and share their enthusiasm for contributing to the redesign of posters for the school's relational Positive Behaviour Policy.





Download the complete newsletter here





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Celebrating Success: Embracing Autistic Identities Events Week 2026



Following the success of last year's initiative, the BELS Autism Advisory Secondary and Post-16 Team once again partnered with Autistic young people to deliver a vibrant and meaningful Embracing Autistic Identities Events Week, held from 2nd – 6th March 2026.

Throughout the week, the team facilitated guest speakers to host online talks and workshops for parent carers and education professionals. Sessions focused on creating inclusive environments, celebrating young people's identities, and hearing directly from Autistic experiences.



The social media video series "Ask an Autistic Person", featuring three Autistic adults answering questions submitted by Barnet young people encouraged thousands of views across @belsbarnet and @barnetyouth_ Instagram accounts.

The week concluded with a special in-person celebration for Autistic young people from across Barnet secondary schools and colleges. The event was designed using feedback from Barnet's survey of Autistic young people, ensuring the space reflected their preferences, interests, and sensory needs.

Young people had complete freedom to choose from a wide range of activities, including:

- Meeting furry and scaly animals
- Silent disco
- PlayStation gaming
- Arts, crafts and slime-making
- Games and quizzes
- Snacks and chill-out areas



This open, flexible structure allowed each young person to explore activities at their own pace, supporting comfort, independence, and authentic social connection.

A new addition this year was our podcast exploration area, where young people could try out podcast equipment, learn how it works, and experiment with microphones, headphones, and sound desks. Although no recordings were made on the day,



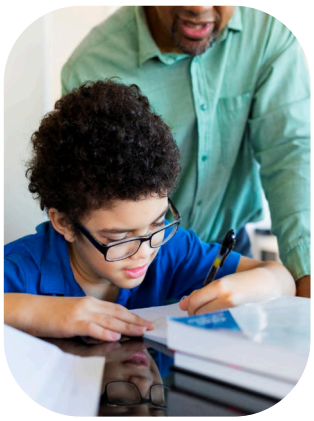


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the space offered an opportunity to build confidence with the equipment.



We hope to develop this further by working with young people across Barnet to create youth-led podcast content. Their voices and ideas will help shape how this platform is used, whether for storytelling, sharing lived experience or creative projects.

Feedback from young people captured the spirit of the day:

"I really enjoyed it. I was so happy and I absolutely loved it."

"This workshop is a brilliant way of bringing Autistic young people together... I found it really fun. Hopefully this event can happen again soon."

"Best day of my life."

"Nostalgic – reminds me of when I was in primary, as everyone was gentle and friendly."

The atmosphere throughout reflected these words: warm, welcoming, creative, and proudly celebratory of Autistic identity.

Deaf Author and Poet Raymond Antrobus

We were delighted to have Deaf Author and Poet Raymond Antrobus join us for some writing workshops for our D/deaf learners at our Barnet schools and at the Colindale office. Raymond also joined us at our two ARPS for Deaf CYP in Summerside School and Hendon School. Each event was highly successful, and the participants were very engaged and learnt so much from Raymond not only about his journey as a young Deaf person growing up in northeast London but also as an award-winning author and writer. Raymond has written many poems and stories for young children, and his new book for adults about his Deafness called 'The Quiet Ear' will be launched in September 2026.







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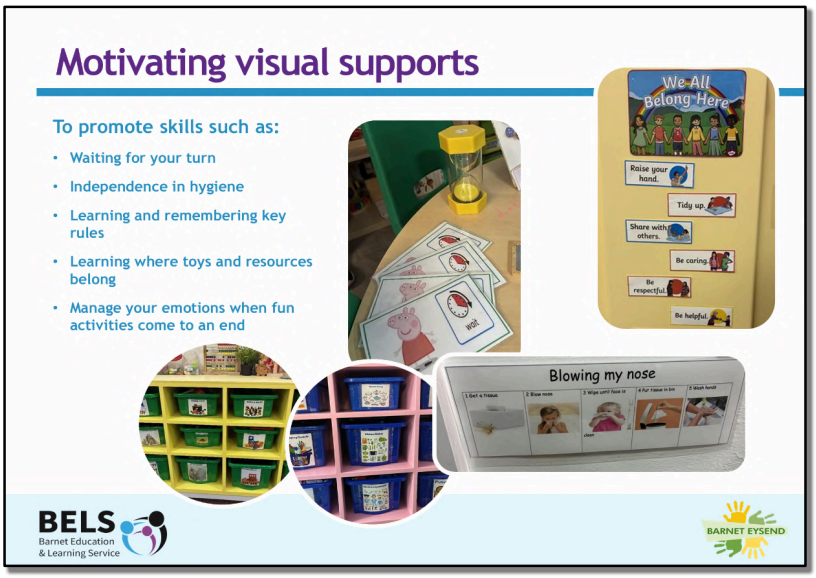


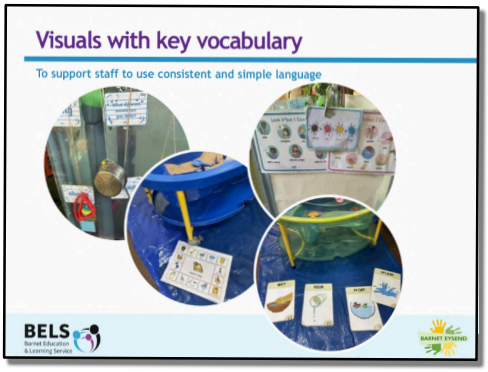






Community Practice and Knowledge Sharing Day







Today's Take-aways: all three settings

We asked: What was your key takeaway from today's session?

"Everywhere you go there is always something to take to take away"

"It was so worth coming! I've got SO many ideas! I don't know where to start"

"All the staff today wore symbols and I am going to talk to my team and set this up"

"I need to send my colleagues next time"

"All the staff today wore symbols and I am going to talk to my team and set this up"

"This day has been so useful. It would be good to do is quite often"

"There are lots of things that we used to do and have let slip. Today has been a good reminder to find the big timetable and visuals and start using them again"





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Settings and Parents/Carers Conference 2026

BARNET EYSEND

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Settings and Parents Carer Conference 2026







Sessions included

- Sleep Training
- PICA: help when your child wants to eat non-food items
- SEND navigation online in Barnet
- Neurodiversity in Early Years
- Support for siblings
- CAMHS for under 5s
- SEND essentials in Early Years
- The National SEND picture - Council for Disabled Children
- Technology and apps to support you

29 January 2026 09:30 - 15:00





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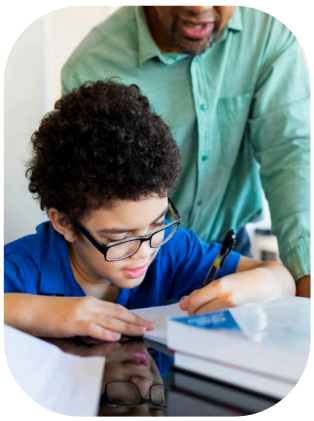
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Children's Conference 2026.

We asked the children and young people this question: Children and young people should be involved in decision making because...?

Here are some of the things they said.









We also asked them: If you could invent a children's right, what would it be?

Here are some of the things they said.











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Our Spring SENCO Conference: Being a Child and Young Person in the 21st Century

Our Spring term SENCO Conference was a fantastic event with over 150 of our Barnet schools and BELS colleagues attending the day.

The day began with a dynamic and engaging presentation from our keynote speaker Gary Aubin, from SENDMatters. His keynote explored the SEND Reforms White paper, 'Every child achieving and thriving', and its vision for schools and special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to support every child to achieve and thrive. The session included lots of thoughtful discussion and reflections on the proposed reforms.

The afternoon included valuable updates and opportunities to collaborate and share practice within our SENCO community.

Thank you to our wonderful Barnet SENCOs and schools for their continued commitment and dedication to inclusion.

BELS Inclusion Advisory Team (IAT)

Planning for Adulthood Conference 2026

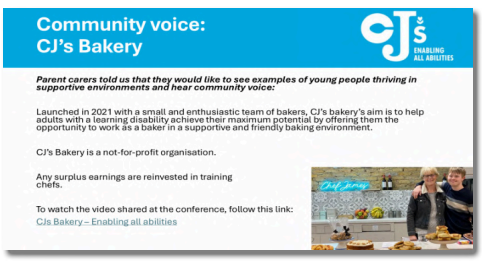
On Tuesday 17 March, during Neurodiversity Celebration Week, BELS hosted the second annual Planning for Adulthood Conference in partnership with the Barnet Parent Carer Forum. Held online, the event aimed to equip parent carers with practical information and guidance to support their young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) as they move towards adulthood.

This year's keynote speaker was Carrie Grant (MBE), whose insights and lived experience helped frame the core themes of the conference in a way that was both meaningful and practical. Around 100 attendees joined the conference to hear from a range of services, organisations, and young people, each sharing valuable perspectives on transition planning, opportunities, and pathways for the future.

BELS is committed to strengthening our partnership with parent carers, and we look forward to offering further events throughout the year based on the feedback received.



[Click here to see slides from the conference]









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Supported Internships

Now recruiting for September 2026 - Supported Internships for young people with an EHCP.

A Supported Internship is a real gateway into the working world for young people with SEND. It's designed for 16–24-year-olds with an EHCP, and it helps students build the skills, confidence, and independence needed to move towards employment.

The Supported Internship programme includes:

Over 600 hours of hands-on experience in a real workplace setting.



Starts in September until June and includes a teaching day/s where young people (interns) will develop their maths, English, employability and personal development skills.

Once confident, the interns will go out on Work Experience Placements 2 to 3 days per week where they will be supported by a Job Coach.

They have the opportunity to take part in 3 Work Experience Placements. From March onwards the interns will start applying for paid jobs with the support of their job coach. Providers we work closely with:

Ambitious About Autism - The Whittington Hospital -Based in Archway

Contact – rmaina@ambitiouscollege.org.uk www.ambitiouscollege.org.uk



Barnet and Southgate College

Contact –Lorraine.Jackson@barnetsouthgate.ac.uk - Based in Barnet

Choices College

You can contact Yusaf directly on yusaf.hamid1@nhs.net Or call his mobile 07777514399

CWC – Goldman Sachs

Contact Gen Botezatu Gen.botezatu@cwc.ac.uk

Supported Internship at Goldman Sachs - Based in the City



Harington

Candidates can email directly and organise to pop in.
Michelle Besant Michelle.Besant@harington.org.uk

Supported Internship | harington - Based in Highgate

Mencap

Contact Hannah Proud Hanna.Proud@mencap.org.uk

Supported internships and Pre-internships | Mencap Training Academy





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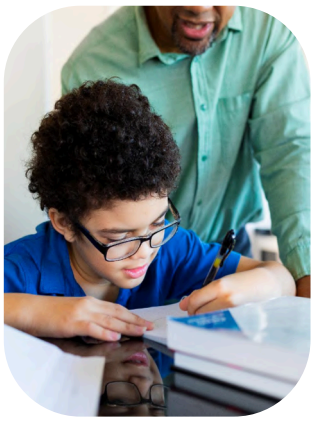




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Hassan was part of a Supported Internship at Goldman Sachs through City of Westminster College, which he completed in June 25. He said of his experience: "I worked in Private Wealth Management (Client onboarding) and internal audit. I completed a Google Cybersecurity course whilst on rotation and delivered a presentation on phishing attacks. I was very well supported by a job coach, which helped me navigate through work life."



Hassan said he would 100% recommend a Supported Internship.

Hassan developed public speaking skills, IT skills and enjoyed the social aspect of getting to know new people.

Hassan is now employed at BELS as Project Officer where he continues to develop his skills. His dream job is to work in cyber security.





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