



[Home](#) ▾ [Education, training and skills](#)

- ▾ [Special educational needs and disability \(SEND\) and high needs](#)
- ▾ [Support for special educational needs and disability \(SEND\)](#)
- ▾ [SEND reform: education otherwise than at school](#)



[Department
for Education](#)

Open consultation

SEND reform: education otherwise than at school – what parents and carers of children and young people need to know

Updated 14 July 2026

Applies to England

Contents

[Introduction](#)

[What is EOTAS?](#)

[How this links to the government's other SEND consultations](#)

[What will happen for children, young people and families who currently receive EOTAS?](#)

[The main proposals](#)

[Find out more](#)

Introduction

One in 3 children are identified as having special educational needs (SEN) at some point in their education, but many of these children and young people are not getting the support they need to achieve and thrive.

The government has consulted on plans to address this by ending the postcode lottery of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) support, boosting early identification of needs and creating a more inclusive mainstream system that delivers high standards for all.

As we consider the responses to our overarching [SEND reform consultation](#), we're now asking for your views on how the government can better support children and young people whose education, health and care (EHC) plan has set out that they should be educated outside a school or college setting. This is sometimes called education otherwise than at school or EOTAS.

This consultation also covers:

- support for children who cannot attend school because of health needs
- how schools and local authorities use accredited online education providers for alternative provision

Our priority is for children who receive EOTAS to be well supported, so they can experience the best possible outcomes and wellbeing. As well as this consultation, we're doing additional research to understand better why young people need to access EOTAS and what their outcomes and wellbeing look like at the moment. No decisions have been made. We want to hear from parents, carers, children and young people before anything changes.

What is EOTAS?

EOTAS is when a local authority arranges a child's special educational provision somewhere other than a school or college (for example, at home or through a mix of providers), because a school or college setting is not right for their needs. EOTAS is currently part of a child's EHC plan.

EOTAS is different to alternative provision and takes place outside a mainstream or special school. Local authorities arrange alternative provision for children who cannot

attend school because of illness, exclusion or other reasons. Schools may also arrange alternative provision to support children who have underlying behavioural needs that mean they need additional support outside their setting.

How this links to the government's other SEND consultations

We want to get these reforms right and that means listening to the people with the most experience of how the current system works, and where it falls short. Families and professionals with direct experience of EOTAS told us throughout our overarching SEND reform consultation (which closed in May 2026) that this area needed specific attention.

This consultation seeks further views, ensuring an additional opportunity to directly shape how EOTAS works in the future. We're also currently consulting on [increasing upfront funding for SEND in mainstream schools](#). All of these consultation responses will be considered together.

We have received thousands of responses to our overarching SEND reform consultation and held more than 200 engagement events with young people, parents, carers and professionals across the system. We will continue to work closely with everyone with a stake in our education system to make it work for all our children and young people.

What will happen for children, young people and families who currently receive EOTAS?

We know that many families whose children receive EOTAS have been through a really difficult journey, often involving placement breakdowns, long periods without the right support and having to fight hard to get where they are now.

Currently, more than 90% of children who receive EOTAS are over 11. Under these proposals, children and young people of secondary school age and above who are already receiving EOTAS when the new system comes in would be able to continue

with their existing arrangements. They will be offered voluntary support if they want to transition back to a school or college.

For the small number of children in early years or primary school who receive EOTAS, we want to make sure there's a proper, supported process to consider what's best for them.

An option we propose is to reassess their needs at the end of primary school. That might mean continuing with EOTAS as part of a new specialist provision package or through a supported transition arrangement.

A transition arrangement would be overseen by an alternative provision school and would aim for a return to a school only where appropriate and achievable. There would be no time limit on such transition arrangements. No child would simply be moved without consideration of their individual needs.

Nothing is changing now. If any changes are introduced, they would come into effect from September 2030 at the earliest and only if approved by Parliament.

The main proposals

Earlier support

The wider SEND reforms aim to spot and respond to children's needs earlier, so fewer children experience placement breakdowns or long periods out of education. We know that some will still need EOTAS and we want to make sure it's there for them when needed.

Better-quality provision

We want all EOTAS provision to be safe, high-quality, regularly reviewed and focused on helping your child make progress and achieve their goals. Our consultation asks whether national standards should apply to EOTAS provision and if there is a role for local authorities in making sure those standards are being met.

Clearer responsibility and accountability

We're consulting on how oversight of EOTAS arrangements should work in the future and what role local authorities should play in deciding if EOTAS provision is required.

Under the proposals, every child receiving EOTAS would be connected to (that is, on the roll of) a named school or further education college that would be responsible for managing the EOTAS arrangements, working with families and other services. This would generally be a specialist setting that has not previously supported the child or young person, and not a setting where previous difficulties or a placement breakdown occurred.

We also know that families need to be able to raise concerns and challenge decisions. We're seeking views on the best way to make sure that's possible.

When a child or young person wants to be in school or college, that should be what happens. That is why we've asked about holding local authorities to account for only using EOTAS when it is in the best interest of the child or young person, not simply because the local authority cannot find a place for them.

Any decision about whether a child or young person moves to a school or college in the future would be made individually, with families involved throughout, and only where it's genuinely right for that person.

Higher standards for providers

We're consulting on whether organisations delivering EOTAS provision should have to meet national quality standards and how that should be checked.

Supporting children with health needs

The consultation also looks at how schools, local authorities and health services can work better together when a child cannot attend school or college because of physical or mental health needs. We want to explore how to:

- provide support earlier
- reduce delays in accessing help
- keep children connected to learning during periods of absence
- support a return to school or college where that's the right option

Using online education safely

The consultation looks at how schools and local authorities arrange alternative provision with accredited online providers, including how to make sure children remain connected to a school wherever possible, with clear expectations about when online provision is appropriate and for how long.

Have your say

No decisions have been made. We are consulting because we want to hear the views of parents, carers, schools and local authorities before deciding whether to take these proposals forward.

The consultation is open until 18 September 2026.

You can respond:

- online at [SEND reform: education otherwise than at school](#)
- through our [online events](#)

Find out more

You can also read:

- [Every child achieving and thriving](#), the schools white paper
- [further information and fact sheets about SEND reform](#)

Help us improve GOV.UK

To help us improve GOV.UK, we'd like to know more about your visit today. [Please fill in this survey \(opens in a new tab\)](#).

Cancel



Services and information

[Benefits](#)

[Births, death, marriages and care](#)

[Business and self-employed](#)

[Childcare and parenting](#)

[Citizenship and living in the UK](#)

[Crime, justice and the law](#)

[Disabled people](#)

[Driving and transport](#)

[Education and learning](#)

[Employing people](#)

Government activity

[Departments](#)

[News](#)

[Guidance and regulation](#)

[Research and statistics](#)

[Policy papers and consultations](#)

[Transparency](#)

[How government works](#)

[Get involved](#)

[Environment and countryside](#)

[Housing and local services](#)

[Money and tax](#)

[Passports, travel and living abroad](#)

[Visas and immigration](#)

[Working, jobs and pensions](#)

[Help](#) [Privacy](#) [Cookies](#) [Accessibility statement](#) [Contact](#)

[Terms and conditions](#) [Rhestr o Wasanaethau Cymraeg](#)

[Government Digital Service](#)

OGI

All content is available under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#), except where otherwise stated



[© Crown copyright](#)