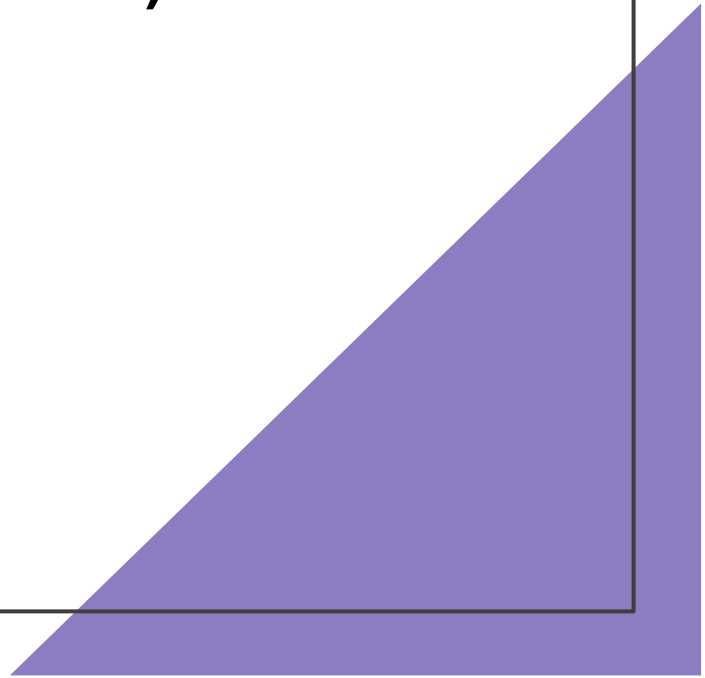




ALIGN (ALTERNATIVE LEARNING INITIATIVE GROUP NETWORK)

**Spring Network Meeting
14/05/2026
16:00-17:30**





Agenda

- Welcome and introduction - AG
- Key points arising from *Every Child Achieving and Thriving* and *Putting Children and Young People First* - Catherine Brennan (Independent Consultant and Ed Tech Director)
- *Navigating the changes*
- *The invisible child* (Sharon Townsend, The Exceed Centre Therapeutic AP)
- *The sanctuary cohort* (Leanne Jacques, Lightbulb Moment PDA Support)
- *Using the Ansoff method to manage a changing landscape* (Sarah Muirhead, Be Your Best Mentoring)
- *Forming strategic partnerships* (Rachel Girling, Sewing Seeds Tuition)
- Q&A
- Presentation from Kloodle

SEND Reform: Putting Children and Young People First

The Key points for NSAP: Principles

- Clear ideological principle emphasizing that children learn best in school with their peers
- Evidence-based provision and practice is a strong theme
- Investment and diversion of existing funds planned over next 3 years with the aim of making mainstream more inclusive for children with SEND
- Where specialist provision is needed the intention is to deliver this in registered settings where possible

SEND Reform: Putting Children and Young People First

The Key points for NSAP: Principles

- National panel of experts to advise LAs and schools on 'what works'
- National costing framework will be established to ensure VFM
- Additional investment of £1.6 billion over the next 3 years, some of which will provide Family Support Hubs and SEND training for school staff

SEND Reform: Putting Children and Young People First

The Key points for NSAP: Implementation

- 'Commonly occurring needs' expected to be met within mainstream provision
- Universal inclusion offer to include school access to experts such as SALT and 'thousands of new places in Inclusion Hubs within mainstream schools'
- 'Targeted' and 'Targeted Plus' to provide additional support in schools to children who need more than the universal offer

SEND Reform: Putting Children and Young People First

The Key points for NSAP: Implementation

- All children with identified SEND will need an Individual Support Plan
- ‘Specialist Support Packages’ for children with needs which can’t be met by universal, Targeted or Targeted Plus offer
- SSPs will underpin EHCPs
- ‘Complex needs’ will refer to needs which fall within the range of SSPs
- National expert panel will set out approximately 7 packages and these will be assigned according to ‘best fit for presenting needs’

SEND Reform: Putting Children and Young People First

The Key points for NSAP: Impact on Sector?

- NSAPs will need to evidence impact
- Many of the barriers experienced by children currently placed in NSAP are likely to be considered to be 'commonly occurring needs', and as such met within universal provision
- The use of specialist provision for children with 'complex, low incidence needs' will be limited due to the financial burden these place on LAs.
- 'Thousands of new places in Inclusion Hubs', if/when they materialize, would inevitably lead to a slow down in referrals to NSAP

SEND Reform: Putting Children and Young People First

The Key points for NSAP: Impact on Sector?

- The amount NSAPs can charge is likely to change, providers should review their costing structures, benchmark against the framework and be prepared to evidence impact
- In addition to the issues arising out of the details set out in the reform consultation document, providers also need to keep in mind the National Standards and the issues discussed in *Strengthening Protections in Non-School AP*, in particular what constitutes an illegal school

SEND Reform: Putting Children and Young People First

The Key points for NSAP: Opportunities

- Experts at hand and local transformation grant funding will create a market for specialist outreach and consultancy services which NSAP providers are well placed to serve
- The shift from EHCPs to ISPs and an emphasis on early, targeted support reduces long EHCP timelines and opens up space for short-term AP interventions and ISP-aligned packages
- EOTAS arrangements have not yet been finalised by DfE but this strand of government planning may offer opportunities for drawing on the expertise of NSAP sector

SEND Reform: Putting Children and Young People First

The Key points for NSAP: Opportunities

Key points for NSAP: Impact on the sector

Some possible ways forward

- **Design ISP-aligned short programmes** (6–12 weeks) with clear reintegration metrics; market to LAs and MATs
- **Bid for Experts at Hand / transformation funding** by partnering with ICBs and EP services
- **Build multi-disciplinary teams** (access to therapists, specialist teachers, EP access) to meet the new expectation of joined-up support
- **Offer outreach packages** to mainstream schools to reduce exclusions and support ISPs

SEND Reform: Putting Children and Young People First

The Key points for NSAP: Risks

- **Risk:** Funding is routed via LAs and ICBs, so market access requires strong local partnerships
- *Mitigation:* co-produce bids with LAs/ICBs and evidence impact.
- **Risk:** ISPs are still being defined; policy detail may change
- *Mitigation:* design flexible contracts and pilot programmes that map to both ISPs and EHCP thresholds
- **Risk:** Ofsted's stronger inclusion judgement increases scrutiny of AP quality
- *Mitigation:* embed curriculum access, attendance strategies, and measurable outcomes

The New SEND Reforms: *The Invisible Child*

- Impact on children in care accessing Non-School Alternative Provision (AP)
- Not on school roll

Current Context

- Nearly 84,000 children are currently in care in England
- In 2025, 29,244 children were accessing unregistered alternative provision (AP) — more than those in registered AP.
- Many experience trauma, exclusions and disrupted education
- Thousands access alternative provision or are not on school roll
- Children in care are overrepresented in SEND and AP

(sources; Gov.uk, Children's Commissioner)

What are the SEND Reforms?

- Greater focus on mainstream inclusion
- Reduced reliance on EHCPs
- Introduction of Individual Support Plans (ISPs)
- Earlier intervention and multi-agency support

A system built around schools

A central strength of the reform is its emphasis on:

- Early identification
- Evidence-based intervention
- Expansion of specialist services

However, these developments are mainly school based and assume a child is:

- able to engage in a formal setting
- ready to learn
- on school roll

What happens to those not on school roll?

The reality for a child not on school roll

Risks:

- Loss or reduction of EHCP protections
- ISPs may not carry the same legal enforceability
- Pressure to reintegrate into unsuitable mainstream settings
- Funding uncertainty for bespoke AP packages
- Increased vulnerability during transitions
- Children outside school systems will become more likely to fall through the cracks and become invisible

Combined impact of SEND reforms and Non-School AP standards

- May reduce flexibility for vulnerable children educated outside mainstream settings
- Increased regulation and push for mainstream reintegration may limit therapeutic, relationship-based and bespoke provision
- Smaller specialist providers may struggle to remain viable, reducing access to vital personalised SEND and trauma-informed support

Key Risks for Children in Care

- Reduced legal protection if EHCPs decrease
- Placement instability and further interrupted education
- Loss of specialist therapeutic provision
- Children falling between care, education and SEND systems – they will become invisible



The Sanctuary Cohort in Non-School AP

Leanne Jaques



“The Sanctuary Cohort - children for whom the traditional school environment is simply not tenable; the children whose needs were not identified early enough and were then not accommodated once they were identified.”

Special Needs Jungle, 2026



How might we identify a young person that fits into this cohort?

- Neurodivergent (undiagnosed)
- Highly Anxious (high alert nervous system)
- Social Challenges
- Sensory Sensitivities
- Rejection Sensitivity Dysphoria
- Mental Health Needs
- Fatigue
- Trauma (reaction)
- Loss of Trust
- Making
- Misunderstood
- Failed placements

Proposals:

The government's response to chapter one:

Targeted interventions in non-school alternative provision will be time-limited, but there will be flexibility for the duration of placements to be extended in exceptional circumstances. Children will be registered with schools throughout their placements and will receive the support they need to re-integrate successfully back into full time in-school education when their interventions end.

non-school alternative provision full time for up to 12 weeks.

part time placements for up to 2 days or 4 sessions per week for as long as is needed... while attending lessons in school for the rest of the week.

Mainstream Inclusion????

If current mainstream environments are illogical for this group then how can we begin to prepare for transition back into them?

In my recent blog post for ALIGN I explored:
What will mainstream inclusion look like for PDAers?

I explored what would need to change:

- **Environment**
- **Strict Behaviour Policies**
- **Uniform**
- **School Size**
- **Staff Training**
- **Lived Experience**
- **Curriculum**
- **Pressure**
- **Co-regulation**
- **Purposeful**
- **Relevant**
- **Independence**



How NSAP
supports this
cohort

Freedom to move

Time and space

Autonomy

Genuine interests

Needs led

Relational practice

Trust

Sanctuary

Flexibility

Tailored

Understanding

Lived experience

EOTAS



Be Your Best Mentoring (BYBM)



About me

I moved from corporate senior leadership into teaching, then senior leadership in a social-emotional school. I founded Be Your Best Mentoring (BYBM) to meet young people where they are and help them move forward with confidence in South & West Devon & East Cornwall. I am part of the Align Steering Group Team.

What we do

- 1:1 and 1:2 mentoring in the community
- Tailored mentoring and coaching
- Vocational support and employability guidance
- Preparation for adulthood and independent living skills
- Academic support to strengthen learning and engagement

Who we work with

Our cohort is predominantly neurodiverse but can be county lines, school transitions, looked after children.

Where we work

No fixed site—we meet at home, in schools, or in the community.

How we work (approach)

Rooted in the Reggio Emilia approach: “the environment is the third teacher.” For us, the community is that teacher.



- 1 – Low Risk
- 2 – Moderate Risk
- 3 – Moderate Risk
- 4 - High Risk

- 1:1, 1:2 Community Mentoring
- Devon & Cornwall LA/Schools

Existing Product
in Existing Market

New Product
in Existing Market

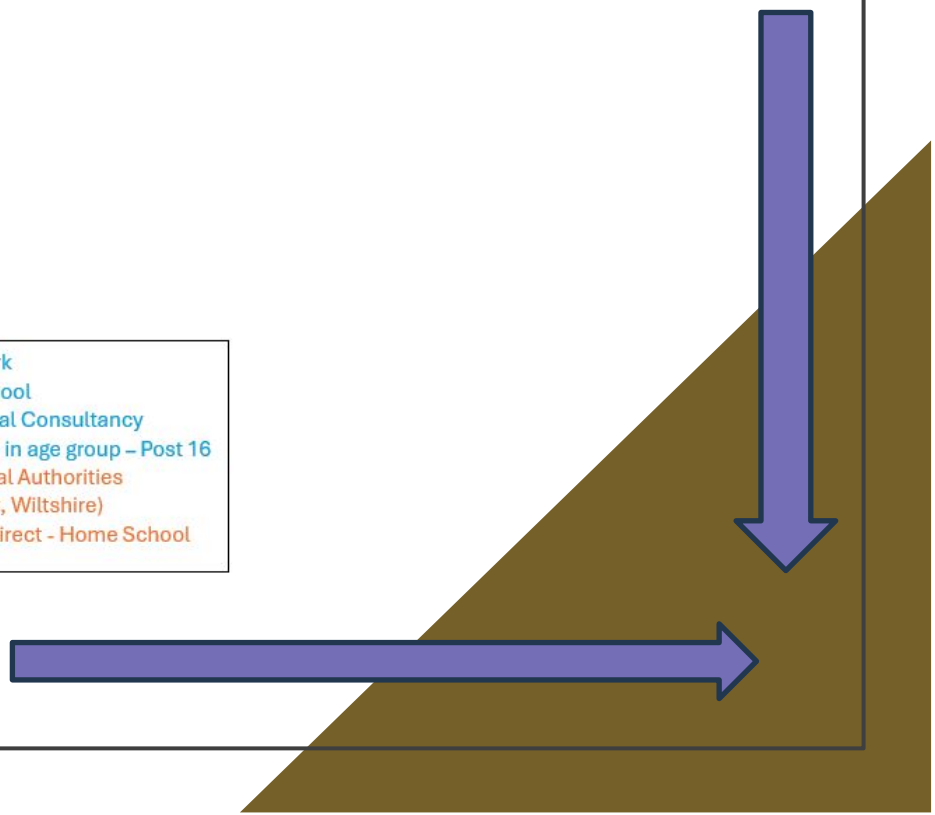
- Group work
- Forest school
- Educational Consultancy
- Specialise in age group – Post 16
- Devon & Cornwall LA/Schools

- 1:1 & 1:2 community mentoring
- Other Local Authorities (Somerset, Wiltshire)
- Families direct - Home School

Existing Product
in New Market

New Product
in New Market

- Group work
- Forest school
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- Specialise in age group – Post 16
- Other Local Authorities (Somerset, Wiltshire)
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Ansoff Matrix

A strategic tool to help visual and identify grow opportunities while managing risk





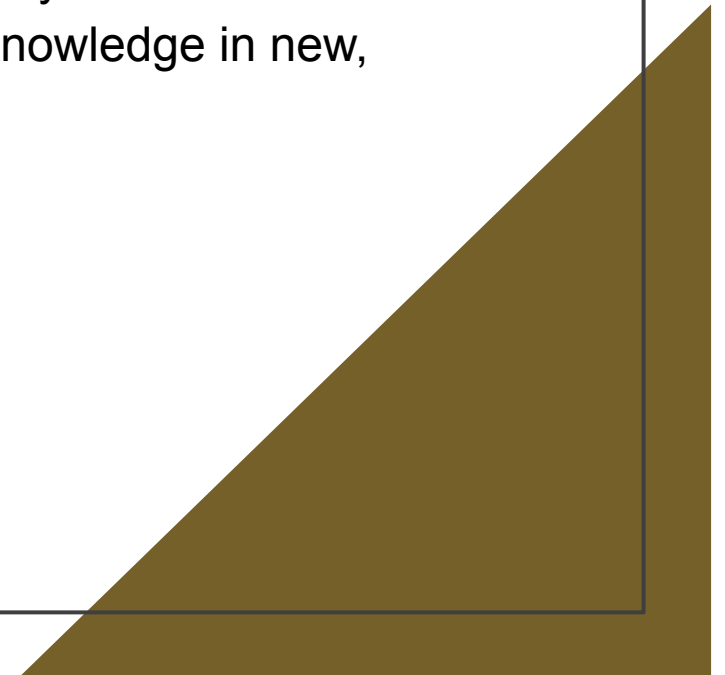
Diversification

Why Diversification Is High Risk

- New funding and compliance requirements
- Different professional skill sets needed
- Risk of stretching leadership and staff capacity
- Potential distraction from core purpose & success
- Political Risk - Change of political policy

Why It Might Still Make Sense

- Reduces reliance on a single funding source
- Creates sustainable income
- Extends our impact beyond current learners
- Uses our specialist knowledge in new, meaningful ways



Creating Inclusive Ecosystems: *The Role of Non-Schools in a Changing SEND Landscape*





Why partnership models matter

- Trusts are under pressure to improve attendance, inclusion, and SEND outcomes
- Schools need flexible support that can be implemented quickly
- Commissioners want trusted providers with scalable solutions
- Partnerships increase credibility, stability, and long-term sustainability
- Collaborative models reduce isolation and strengthen sector influence



Partnering with Multi-Acade my Trusts

- Offer targeted intervention packages linked to Trust priorities
- Provide outreach, mentoring, transition, attendance, SEMH, or reintegration support
- Position your provision as a preventative alternative before exclusion
- Create pilot programmes with measurable outcomes
- Develop strategic relationships with Executive Heads, SEND Directors, and Inclusion Leads

Short-Term Packages

- 12-week intervention packages can feel lower risk to commissioners
- Allows Trusts and local authorities to test impact before larger contracts
- Supports rapid response to support children with SEND, attendance, SEMH, EBSA, or behavioural concerns
- Creates opportunities for long-term commissioned partnerships
- Demonstrates flexibility and responsiveness



Creating Long-Term Partnerships

Under the proposed SEND reforms, non-schools and alternative providers may need to move away from short-term crisis placements alone and develop longer-term, partnership-based specialist offers that align with:

- early intervention,
- inclusion outreach,
- Specialist Provision Packages,
- Individual Support Plans (ISPs),
- targeted intervention,
- Preparation for adulthood programmes
- and flexible mainstream support models.

This creates opportunities for non-schools to position themselves as part of an inclusive ecosystem, rather than solely as an external placement provider.



Turning Short-Term Work into Long-Term Contracts

- Collect impact data from the beginning
- Track attendance, engagement, behaviour, and academic progress
- Provide case studies and qualitative feedback
- Offer review meetings with commissioners and Trust leaders
- Develop tiered service agreements and retained partnerships



Reposition Yourself in the LA

- Move from being viewed as 'last resort provision' to strategic inclusion partners
- Lead conversations around prevention and early intervention
- Become known for specialist expertise and measurable impact
- Build local influence through collaboration and visibility
- Advocate collectively with other non-school providers