

Swindon Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Bulletin

Special Educational Needs and Disability – 2025 Data Update

Key Points

- This is a data update of the 2017 JSNA bulletin, note a HNA regarding learning disabilities is ongoing
- The number of children and young people with SEND, in Swindon 2024/25, is increasing – the proportion of those with SEND compared to the school population is also increasing (driven by an increase in EHC plans, whilst SEN support levels remain stable)
- 34.6% of pupils with an EHC plan have a primary need of autistic spectrum disorder. In 2024/25, speech, language and communication needs overtook Social, Emotional and Mental Health as the second most common need (18.6% and 18.5% respectively for pupils with EHC plans)
- The number of children in care was 320 in Swindon 2023/24 (a rate of 60 per 10,000 people), 59.5% of these children in Swindon were identified with SEN
- Outcomes for those with SEND are generally lower than their non-SEND peers, In Swindon 2023/24 SEND pupils average attainment 8 scores were below the average of the South-West & England, and the gap widened from the previous year
- The 2017 JSNA made 9 recommendations – seen at the end of the report
- **Note SEN2 data reported is from January to January per calendar year (i.e. the most recent data is up to Jan 25)**

What is a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)?

The JSNA process is overseen by Swindon's Health and wellbeing board, where the council, the integrated care board (ICB) and other partners must work together to assess the health needs of local people.

The JSNA helps us to understand

- The health and care needs of the local population
- How these needs are currently being met
- Identifying gaps in need
- How to best meet their needs going forward

Understanding Swindon's changing population, and the factors that affect education, health and wellbeing, and the implications for future services are vital in setting priorities and planning future services to improve the outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

Introduction and background

Nationally children and young people with SEND have poorer outcomes than their non-SEND peers. We want to better understand the needs of our SEND population so we can commission appropriate services to meet their needs and improve outcomes.

What is SEND?

Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) can affect a child or young person's ability to learn. One definition includes those with 'a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her'. There is overlap between those with disabilities and those with SEN, but not all children with disabilities will have SEN and vice versa.

This provision is provided in two forms:

- SEN Support – It is provided for those identified with having a learning difficulty or a disability that requires extra / different help to that normally provided as part of the school's usual curriculum offer. A pupil with SEN support WILL NOT have an EHC plan.
- Education Health and Care (EHC) Plan – A local authority may issue an EHC plan for a pupil who requires more support than available through SEN support. This follows a statutory process looking at educational, social and health needs; setting long term outcomes; and specifies provision to deliver additional support to meet needs

Pupils with SEN in Schools in Swindon

The most recent census in 2021 showed a population in Swindon of 233,400; this is an increase of 11.6% from 209,200 in 2011. In 2021, 29.1% of Swindon's population were under the age of 25, which equates to 67,919 individuals according to the 2021 census.

The ONS predicts that the number of individuals under the age of 25 will be approximately 63,000 by 2035, a decrease of roughly 7%.

How many children and young people with SEND in Swindon?

The number and percentage of pupils identified with SEND has continued to rise.

Figure 1 shows the number of pupils identified with an EHC plan year on year since 2014/15, with a relative increase of 80% since 2015/16 – growth being more pronounced in the last 6 years. Pupils with SEN support have increased overall since 2015/16 by 21.7%, although the number of pupils has fluctuated over this time.

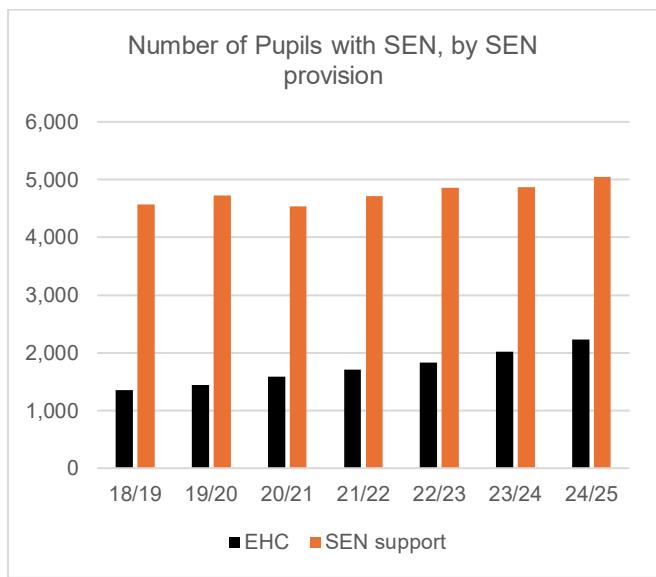


Figure 1 Swindon's SEND population (2025 Department for Education, Special Educational Needs in England)

By the start of 2025 the percentage of the school population who have an EHC plan is 5.9%, compared to 5.3% and 5.5% for England and the South-West respectively. Looking at Figure 2, we can see that the proportion of pupils with EHC plans has been tending upwards consistently in line with both the South-West and England. Swindon's proportion of pupils with EHC plans has remain above the average of the South-West and England, but the gap has narrowed.

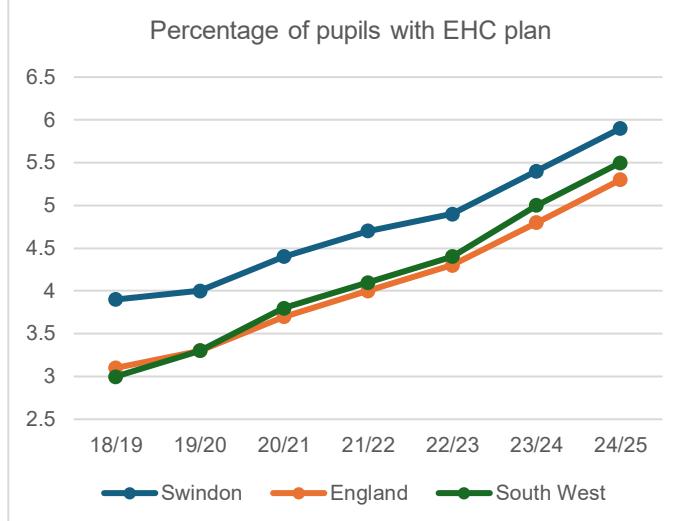


Figure 2 Comparison of percentage of pupils with EHC plans (2025 Department for Education, Special Educational Needs in England)

The proportion of Swindon's pupils requiring SEN support (without an EHC plan) in Jan 2025 was 13.4% compared with 14.2 and 14.9 for England and the South-West respectively. Previously, Swindon had a higher % of SEN support compared to the average of England or the South-West. Figure 3 shows the opposite is now true – this is largely due to growth in England and the South-West and the proportion of SEN support pupils in Swindon remaining stable.

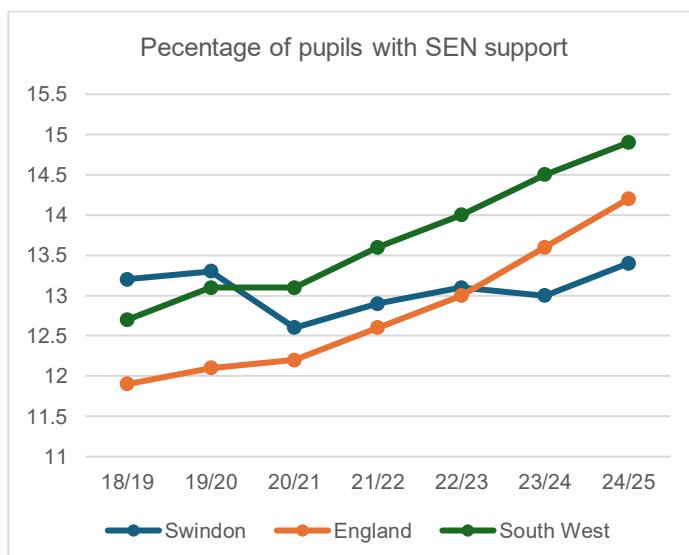


Figure 3 Proportion of pupils with SEN support (2025 Department for Education, Special Educational Needs in England)

EHC plan statutory assessments

There were 548 requests for an EHC needs assessment in Swindon in 2024, compared to 645 the year prior. This decrease is despite the total number of assessments increasing in England and the South-West.

In 67.9% of these requests the local authority proceeded with assessment (compared to 59.5% the year prior). Local authorities should make this decision within 6 weeks. 87% of decisions were made within 6 weeks in Swindon, compared with 79.3% and 84.8% in the South-West and England respectively. Although, this was a small decrease from 90.6% in 2023.

In 2024 there were 281 new EHC plans in Swindon, a decrease from 2023 from 371.

What are the needs of children and young people with SEND?

Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) remains the most prevalent primary need for pupils on an EHC plan at 34.6% in 2024/25, a slight drop of 0.3% compared to the year prior. Nationally the proportion of ASD pupils has increased 0.5% to 33.5% in 2024/25. This means that Swindon is currently 1.1% above the national average, compared to 1.4% the year prior.

19.9% of pupils with an EHC plan had a primary need of Speech, Language and Communication needs. This is an increase of 2.8% from 2023/24 and is now proportionally the 2nd largest primary need - previously Social, Emotional and Mental Needs which remains 2nd nationally.

Social, Emotional and Mental Needs remained stable at 18.5% in 2024/25 compared to 18.6% the year prior. Nationally the proportion of Social, Emotional and Mental Needs is growing and currently stands at 16%; this need has the largest gap from the national average (2.5% above).

These three needs collectively were already the biggest in 2016 and have increased on average since. In 2024/25, Swindon broadly reflects the outlook in England in other areas of need for pupils with an EHC plan.

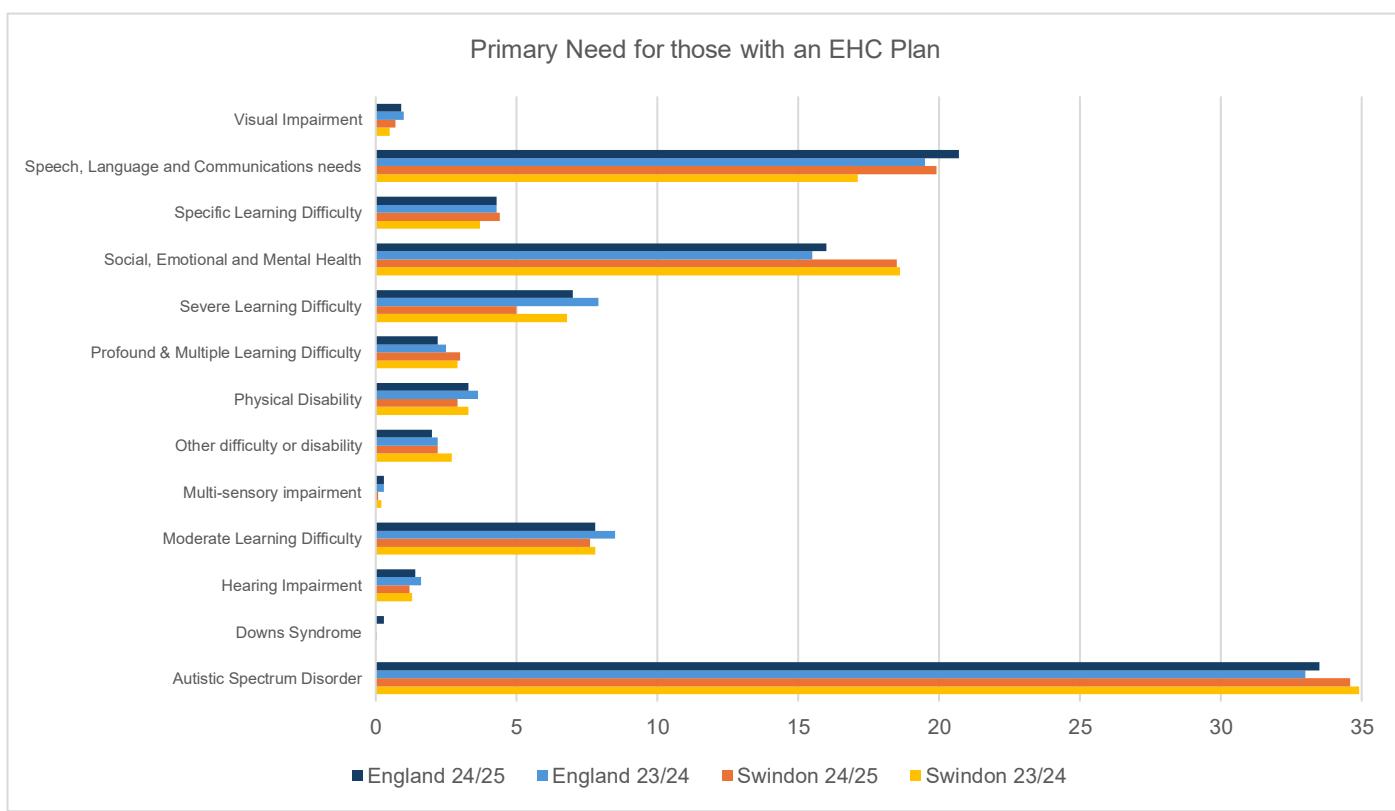


Figure 4 Primary Need for pupils with EHC plan
(2025 Department for Education, Special Educational Needs in England)

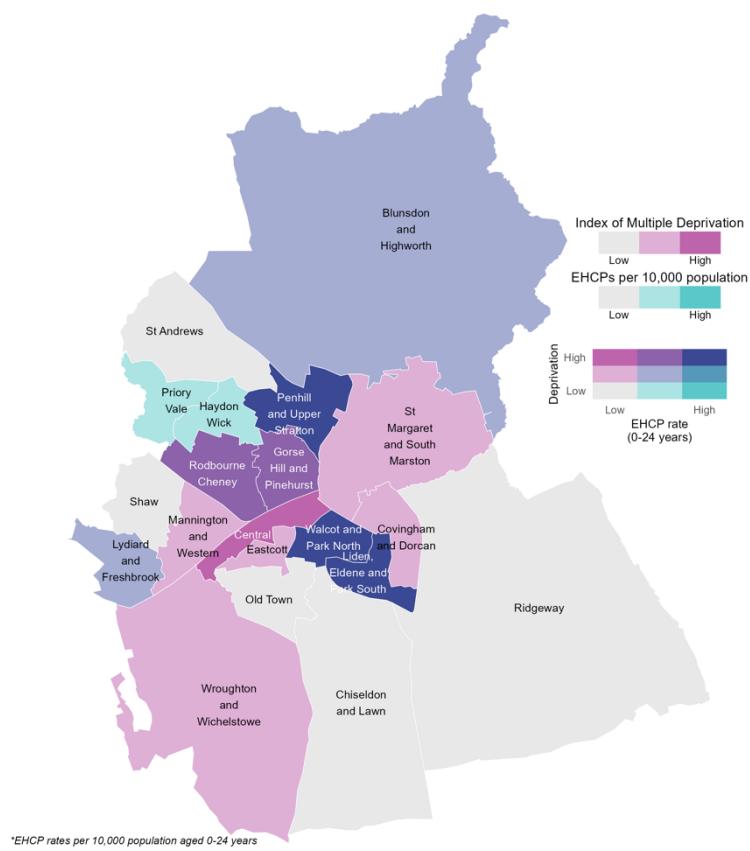
Where do children and young people with SEND live?

The map below shows where children with EHC plans currently live in Swindon, based on 2022 population estimates. Currently, the number of EHC plans per 10,000 (those aged 0-24) in the 6 most deprived areas is around 435, compared to an average rate of 264 in the other areas in Swindon.

Liden, Eldene & Park South is the area with the highest rate of EHC plans at 536 per 10,000 people, followed by Penhill & Upper Stratton and Walcot and Park North with a rate of roughly 490 for both.

In contrast Old Town and Eastcott have the lowest rates in Swindon (184 and 222 per 10,000 people respectively)

Deprivation and Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) rates in Swindon wards



Bivariate map showing distribution of children of SEND by ward in Swindon, in the context of deprivation (Council held data 2025)

Where are pupils with SEND educated?

As mentioned previously, Swindon has a higher proportion of our pupil population with EHC plans, but a higher proportion of these pupils remain in mainstream education than the national average.

In Swindon 2024/25, 46% of pupils with an EHC plan are educated in mainstream education and a further 3.1% have specialist resourced provision (SRP) within mainstream schools. The former being higher than the national average (39.7%) and those with SRP being lower (3.84%).

The proportion of pupils in mainstream education has risen by 2.6% compared to the year prior. In 2018 the proportion pupils with EHC plans in mainstream education without SRP was 37%.

Figure 5 shows a breakdown of pupils by provision and in comparison, the England average. The proportion of pupils at special schools remains stable. The proportion of pupils educated outside of the borough is also stable and below the national average.

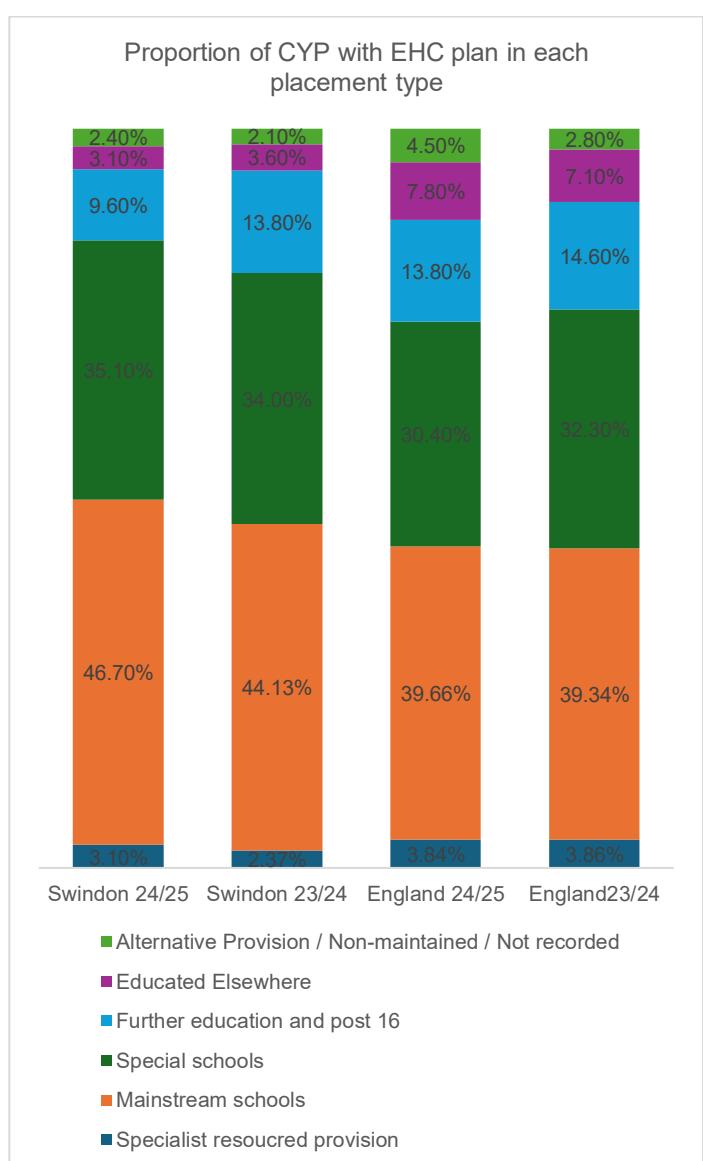


Figure 5 Breakdown of where pupils with EHC plans are educated (2025 Department for Education, Education, Health and Care plans)

Children and young people with SEND who are looked after

In 2024 there were 320 children in care (looked after), this is a rate of 60 per 10,000. This is lower than the national average and South-West, with rates of 70 and 63 per 10,000 respectively. The rate of looked after children has dropped from 65/10,000 in 2023, whereas the rate has slightly increased year on year in the South-West and England.

There tends to be a higher prevalence of SEN amongst looked after children than in the child population. In Swindon (2023/24), 62.2% of looked after children in Swindon were identified with SEN. This is below the South-West (65.9%), but above the national average of 59.5%. Figure x shows the trends over the last 4 years. The proportion of looked after children decreased from 2022/23 by 2.4%, against slight rises in England and the South-West.

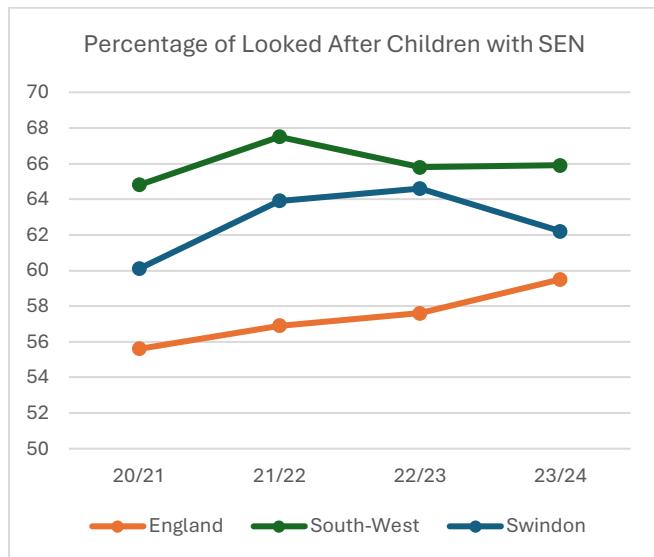


Figure 6 Breakdown of where pupils with EHC plans are educated (2025 Department for Education, Children Looked after in England)

Services for children and young people with SEND

The local authority, in partnership with the Integrated Care Board, commissions a range of educational, health and social care provision for children and young people with SEND. This section covers some of the key services these pupils engage with. It should be noted that due to changes to providers and reporting of data directly comparable data is not available prior to the last 12 months. Where comparisons can be made, they have been stated. Data is not limited to those with identified SEND need.

Neurodevelopmental pathway

This pathway exists to diagnose neurodevelopmental conditions such as ADHD, autism, dyslexia and intellectual disabilities. Individuals with SEND tend to have needs related to these conditions. The average

monthly referrals from July 24 to Mar 25 was 69.4, with referrals consistent over this 9-month period. In Mar 25 there were 770 on the waiting list and has steadily increased from a low of 605 in July 24. The average wait time has increased in the same time from 11.5 months to 13 months.

Therapy Services

Speech and language therapy (SALT) – These services help children and adults with difficulties with speech, language, communication and swallowing. In practical terms this deals with making clear sounds (articulation), understanding/expressing ideas (language), fluency (stuttering) and safe eating/drinking. Therapists assess, diagnose and provide personalised treatment plans working with families, educators and other professionals. In the month of Dec 24, there were 461 individuals on the waiting list, with the longest waiting time 74 weeks in Swindon. This has remained stable over the last 6 months.

Physiotherapy and Occupational Health (OH) – These services work in tandem in a SEND setting exists to improve daily living skills, helping with fine and gross motor skills, assisting with children with sensory issues, and providing specialist equipment to aid with tasks or mobility – physiotherapy focuses on motor skills. In the month of Dec 24, for OH, there were 38 referrals, with 10 on the waiting list and an average wait time of 1 week(s) and a maximum wait of 3 weeks. This largely remained stable over the last 6 months. For physiotherapy, again the wait times and referral numbers have stayed consistent over the last 6 months. In Dec 24, there were 30 referrals, with 24 on the waiting list, and an average wait of 7 weeks, with a maximum wait of 4 weeks.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

Mental Health for SEND pupils is delivered jointly by Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust and Be U Swindon. Services are provided via CAMHS which is community based and provides crisis and ongoing mental health treatment and via Mental Health Support Team (MHST) where mental health practitioners support pupils in schools with mental health issues in an early intervention and identification role.

CAMHS (Be U) – Be U deals primarily with defined mental health need related to anxiety, self-harm, or low mood. In Swindon (June 2025) there was an average of 48.9 referrals a month, with month-by-month referral numbers largely consistent over the last 12 months, but the waiting list has dropped in that time from 654 to 481 by June 25. The average wait from referral to treatment in June 25 was 112, which has gradually

increased from 22 in July 24 – the wait time has been consistent in the last 4 months.

CAMHS (Oxford Health) – Oxford Health deals with more complex or acute needs and receives referrals from Be U and the wider health system. In Aug 2025 there was an average of 74.3 referrals per month over the last 12 months, referrals were consistent over the last 12 months. In June 25 the percentage of CYP seen in the last 4 weeks was 97% in Swindon. This compares to 68.3% in Dec 24, and 64% for the region in the same month (June 25). There are no Swindon specific wait times – the number of CYP in the region waiting over 91 days for first contact was 98 in June 25, up from 73 in Dec 24. The average wait from referral to treatment in June 25 was 112, which has gradually increased from 22 in July 24 – the wait time has been consistent in the last 4 months.

MHST – In Aug 2025 there was an average of 39.3 referrals per month over the last 12 months, referrals were consistent over the last 12 months. The average wait from referral to assessment was 42 weeks in June 25, which has increased from a low of 21 weeks in July 24. The wait from referral to intervention has also increased from a low of 31 in July 24 to 51 in June 25.

Attitudes regarding SEND in Swindon

In 2024 Swindon performed its annual SEND survey, the following sub-section cover the key findings.

Young people

- 60% of young people were happy or very happy with Swindon's SEND services overall. This is an overall increase from 2023 of 2.4%, including an increase of 15.9% who were very happy.
- "When you need help or support with your education, your health or how you are feeling, do you get the right support at the right time?" – percentage of young people who said always or most of the time was 44%. This is an overall increase from 2023 of 8.5%, including an increase of always by 3.9%.

Parents and Carers

- 28.08% of parents and carers were happy or very happy with Swindon's SEND services overall. This is an overall increase from 2023 of 6.46% who were happy or very happy.
- "Overall do services in Swindon provide the right support at the right time, for the right length of time?" – percentage of parents/carers who said always or frequently was 10.96%. This is an overall decrease from 2023 of 0.86%.
- Parents/carers main themes for why were: not enough support and long waiting lists.

- "I feel that opportunities for children and young people with SEND have improved over the last 12 months" - percentage of parents/carers who said yes was 14.7%. This is an overall increase from 2023 of 8.3%

Practitioners and Professionals

- 73.9% of practitioners and professionals were happy or very happy with Swindon's SEND services overall. This is an overall increase from 2023 of 30% who were very satisfied or satisfied
- "Overall, do services in Swindon provide the right support at the right time, for the right length of time?" – 47.88% of practitioners/professionals said always or frequently. This is an increase of 2.46%.
- Practitioners/professionals main themes for why were: long waiting lists, resources.
- "I feel that opportunities for children and young people with SEND have improved over the last 12 months" – 19.6% of practitioners/professionals said yes. This is an overall decrease from 2023 of 11.7%

What are the outcomes for children and young people with SEND?

Children and young people with SEND tend to have poorer outcomes, particularly when it comes to employment and educational achievement, compared to their peers. They face multiple barriers (e.g. schools not having appropriate provision to meet their needs) making it harder to reach their potential.

It should be noted that data discussed covers the post-pandemic period. Data in 2022 was comparable to pre-pandemic levels and teacher-graded results during the pandemic overinflated grades between 2019-22.

Key stage 2 achievement

Achievement at the end of KS2 in Swindon is in keeping with the national picture, although slightly below the England average for both SEND/non-SEND. In 2024 the gap between those without SEND and those with remains wide, however the gap has remained stable within the last 3 years, and comparable to national benchmarks. Figure 6 demonstrates this.

The largest difference between Swindon and nationally is achievement in SEN support, 22% and 26% respectively in 2023/24. However, achievement has grown by 4% since 2021/22 in Swindon compared to 5% nationally. Percentage achievement in Swindon is similar (for both SEND/non-SEND pupils) to pre-pandemic levels (2017/18).

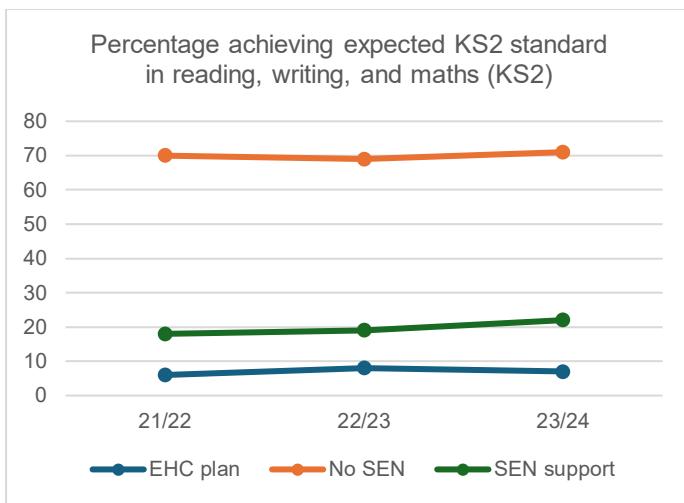


Figure 7 KS2 attainment: % achieving expected standard in reading, writing and maths
(2025 Department for Education, KS2 attainment)

Key stage 4 achievement

Overall, Swindon's achievement at a secondary school level is below the national average for both SEND and non-SEND pupils.

72.1% of non-SEN pupils achieved Grade 4 or above in English and Maths, compared to 72.8% nationally in 2024. There was no significant change to the year prior. For pupils identified with SEN, this was 24.2% in Swindon compared to the national average of 30.8. The gap widened compared to the year prior with 29.9% meeting a passing grade compared to 30.5% nationally. For context, in 2017/18 the national gap between SEND and non-SEND was wider compared to Swindon.

Average attainment 8 scores for Swindon pupils with SEND have been below the national average for the last 3 years as seen in Figure 8. The gap has widened in the period between the last two recorded periods.



Figure 8 Average Attainment 8 score
Note: Attainment 8 measures achievement across 8 qualifications
(2025 Department for Education, KS4 attainment)

Post 16 achievement

Attainment for pupils identified with SEN has worsened against the national picture. In 2023/24 the proportion of pupils, identified with SEN, that achieved level 2 attainment (5 or more GCSE's C or higher) by age 19 was 53.1%. This is below both the average for England and for the South-West, the former standing at 55.3%. In 2021/22 Swindon was above the national average at 56.8%. This has been driven by falling attainment in those with EHC plans with attainment at 23.8% in 2023/24 and 38.2% in 2021/22.

The number of non-SEN pupils achieving level 2 attainment by 19 in Swindon is 88.1% in 2023/24. This has been stable over the prior 3 years and is equivalent to the national average over the same time. Attainment in SEN pupils is decreasing and therefore is widening the gap between SEN pupils and their peers. The pattern described above is also seen in level 3 attainment (equivalent to passing 2 or more A-levels).

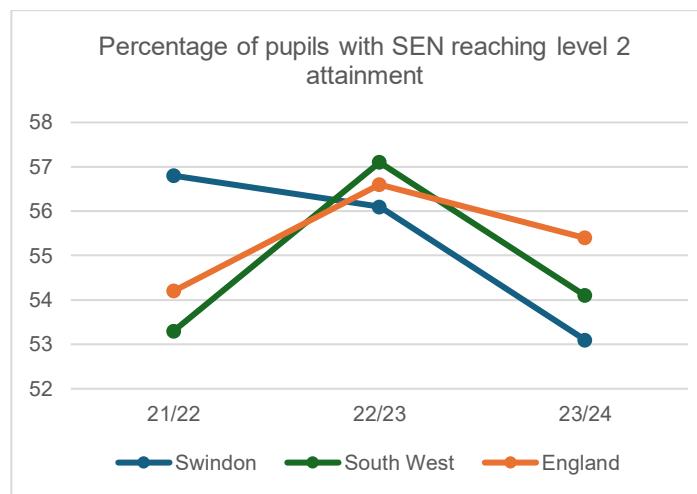


Figure 9 Comparison of performance of SEN-identified pupils achieving level 2 attainment
(2025 Department for Education, Level 2 and 3 attainment age 16 to 25)

Education, Employment and Training

Young people with SEND are less likely to be engaged in positive learning activities, education, employment or training than their peers. In Swindon 2024/25, 20% of those aged 16-17 with SEN support are not in education, training or employment (NEET), compared to 9.6% nationally. NEET for those with EHC plans remained below the national average at 8.1% (compared to 10.1%). It should be noted NEET for non-SEN pupils is also raised 11% compared to 4.9% nationally.

Figure 10 shows the trend over the last 4 years, showing NEET for all pupils trending up in the last year, but a significant increase for SEN support pupils. Nationally there has been no significant changes in NEET for both SEN and non-SEN pupils.

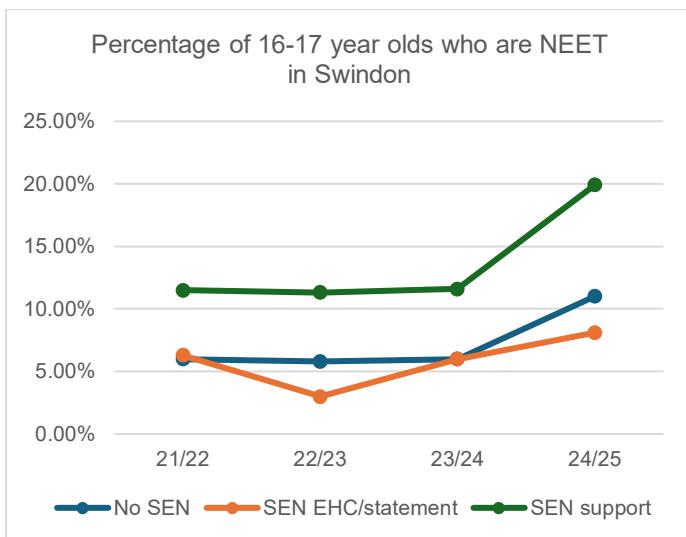


Figure 10 16–17-year-olds who are NEET with/without SEN (2025 Department for Education, NEET and participation)

Attendance and exclusions

Attendance for all pupils in 2023/24 in Swindon was generally in line with the national picture. Non-SEN pupils had an absence rate of 6.1% (6.3% nationally), and EHC pupils and SEN support pupils had an absence rate of 12.3% (12.6% nationally) and 10.8% respectively (10.6% nationally). The overall absence rate has remained stable for all groups over the last 3 years, again like the average for England.

Pupils of all three categories have seen a decrease in persistent absence (10% or more missed), but a slight increase in severe absence (>50%) over the last 3 year. This pattern again closely mirrors the trends across England. 39.4% of pupils with an EHC plan were persistently absent in 2021/22, compared with 34.5% in 2023/24. 6% of these pupils were severely absent in 2022

Recommendations

These recommendations are from the 2017 SEND JSNA Health Needs Assessment. The above data update shows the situation regarding SEND has changed since, but largely the recommendations are still applicable.

The key changes noted since the prior report are as follows:

- Both the percentage and total number of pupils with SEN support and EHC plans continues to grow, where previously levels were stable
- Social, emotional and mental health needs have now overtaken speech and language needs in Swindon, in contrast to the national picture
- Average attainment 8 scores are much better now compared to 2017, but Swindon remains consistently below the South-West and England in attainment

Joint Commissioning Priorities

1. Autistic Spectrum Disorder – school census data shows that the incidence students with a primary need of ASD is 30.2% of the school population which 6.1% increase in this primary need in Swindon since January 2016. The evidence indicates that early identification, support and provision to meet the needs and improve the outcomes of children and young people with ASD should be a commissioning priority for the LA and CCG.
2. Speech, Language and Communication (SLC) Difficulties – 11.9% of the Swindon school population have Speech, Language and Communication identified as their primary need. This represents a 8% reduction from 2016. However, demand for the Speech and Language Therapy Service remains high and the service receives around 900 referrals per year and an increased number of students have required therapeutic input in recent years. Early identification, support and provision to meet the needs and improve outcomes for children and young people with SLC difficulties should be a joint commissioning priority for the LA and CCG.
3. Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Difficulties – 17.1% of students had a primary need of Social, Emotional and Mental Health. The rate of hospital admissions for self-harm in young people aged 10 to 24 years is significantly higher than in England as a whole. Early identification, support and provision to meet the needs and improve the outcomes of children and young people with SEMH should be a joint commissioning priority for the LA and the CCG.\
4. Specialist provision and services - work alongside colleagues across SBC and the CCG when commissioning and/or decommissioning specialist provision and services in Swindon to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND and improve their outcomes.
5. Employment for SEND – Alongside colleagues through employment and training workstream review current provision and options and outcome measures for young people to increase the percentage of young people with SEND in sustainable paid employment. Identify support and provision options and pathways for future commissioning priorities for the LA and the CCG.

Data Monitoring

6. SEND Population and demographic – The percentage of the school population with an EHC plan in 2019 is 3.9%, 0.2% higher than in 2018. Swindon is 0.8% above the national average where the rates are broadly stable. The LA should continue to closely monitor the overall SEND population to ensure that the percentage of the school population with an EHC plan continues to not increase and that the proportion at each age group is stable.
7. Requests for Statutory Assessment and EHC plans issued – Since 2012 the number of EHC plans (or previously statements) issued annually has been on an upward trajectory. The LA should continue to closely monitor by age range the proportion of requests per 10,000 of the population and against national and regional benchmarks to ensure that this remains stable and begins to reduce over time.

Further analysis and research

8. Children in Care with SEND – Children in Care in Swindon are more likely to have SEND. Further research and analysis is required of the SEND cohort of children in care to identify why there is a disproportionate number of children in care with SEND and their outcomes. Once this is better understood this should inform the a joint commissioning priority for the LA and CCG to ensure there is early identification, support and provision in place to meet the needs and improve the outcomes of children in care with SEND.
9. Employment outcomes for young people with SEND – develop baseline data on outcomes and employment for young people with SEND in order to develop strategies and commissioning priorities to improve employment outcomes for young all people with SEND.

Further information

This bulletin is an updated version of the 2017 JSNA bulletin.

Both versions of the bulletin and the full 2017 SEND JSNA report can be found on Swindon's JSNA website:
<https://www.swindonjsna.co.uk/dna/SEND>