



**High Needs Base Panel  
Terms of Reference**

**Created: 09/04/2024**

**Amended 31/03/2026**



## 1. CONTEXT

The High Needs Base panel was established in 2017 to ensure there is consistent and transparent decision making for the allocation of High Needs Base places for children aged two to four years old. Children are not allocated places for their reception year or the academic year in which they turn five. Therefore a child who is deferring their reception year cannot access a high needs base place.

The panel will review the suitability of the children, currently placed within the HNB provisions and consider the applications as to whether they meet criteria or not. Following decisions made jointly the panel will place children who have met criteria into the closest setting to the family home and most suitable to meet the individual needs of the child. There are fifty-two-part time places, split between five mainstream nurseries.

- **All Saints Primary School** take children with a wide range of additional needs.
- The children placed at **The Orchards Nursery School** HNB have a primary need of physical and sensory, they are usually considered to have profound and multiple Learning Difficulties and often had additional medical needs.
- **Thomasson Memorial School's** HNB is where we would place children whose main need is a Hearing Impairment.
- **Children's Opportunity Group** HNB take children who primarily have social communication needs or a diagnosis of Autism.
- **Grosvenor Nursery School** take children with a wide range of additional needs.

Children are allocated fifteen or thirty hours depending on their eligibility. Additional hours above eligibility are not offered.

Following placement, the Senior Hub Co-ordinator supports each setting with the induction of children and monitors progress and impact of the High Needs Base provisions.

Recommendations and decisions will be based on the evidence presented in the children's information packs and group members will consider decisions in the context of the SEND Code of Practice as well as Bolton's SEND framework and SEND Strategy.

The impact and the outcomes of the High Needs Bases are monitored through the SEND development group.

## 2. MEMBERSHIP



The Group will be made up of a range of professionals. The following representatives will form the core group:

- Senior Hub Co-ordinator(chair)
- Representatives from Bolton High Needs Bases including head teachers and managers.
- Representatives from health
- Representatives from SENDAS
- Head of Service for Children with SEND
- Representatives from Start Well SEND
- Start Well SEND and Inclusion Lead
- Representatives from Woodbridge SEND service
- A representative from the Speech and Language Service
- Additional representatives may be invited to attend the Panel on an advisory basis for individual cases where specialist advice is required:
- Head of Start Well, Strategic Lead for Early Years

There may be observers who are invited to attend panel. The Terms of Reference would be distributed to them prior to panel. Observers would not be required to give views as part of the decision-making process.

### **3. CHAIR**

The Panel will be chaired by the Senior Hub Co-ordinator who will ensure that all representations from the agencies are considered and there is a consistency of decision making. In the absence of the Senior Hub Co-ordinator a substitute will be named, either Start Well SEND and Inclusion Lead or Head of Service for Children with SEND

### **4. QUORACY**

The quorum will be the chair or substitute and five other panel members.

### **5. FREQUENCY AND LOCATION OF MEETINGS**

The meetings will be organised by the Senior Hub Co-ordinator. The panel will meet termly via Microsoft Teams on a Wednesday afternoon. The dates of the group meetings for each academic year will be circulated at the start of the year.

### **6. ADMINISTRATION AND RUNNING OF THE PANEL**



All referrals must be submitted via e-mail to [jo.brown@bolton.gov.uk](mailto:jo.brown@bolton.gov.uk) or in their absence to [startwellsend@bolton.gov.uk](mailto:startwellsend@bolton.gov.uk).

Panel packs, criteria, order of panel/agenda and terms of reference will be distributed electronically by the Senior Hub Co-ordinator, at least five working days prior to the panel. Prior to the distribution of the panel packs the Senior Hub Co-ordinator will ensure that the correct documentation is included for each child, including parent/carer permissions and eligibility of funding. In the event of a late application being received prior to panel having taken place, the panel will consider whether the application can be accepted, according to the emergency protocol. In the event of an application being received after panel has taken place, the emergency protocol will be implemented if relevant.

On the closing date for panel applications, the Senior Hub Co-ordinator will review the panel packs. If further information or permissions are needed the applicant will have two working days to provide this information.

If an application is submitted for a child who is unknown to Bolton education and health professionals, endeavours will be made to visit the child in setting or home prior to panel

For specific considerations within the panel, to support decision making, protocols will be referred to.

- Appeals (see statement on website)
- Emergencies (see protocol)
- Children within Reception cohort (see protocol)
- Attendance procedures (see protocol)
- Ranking (see protocol)
- Children who attend non-Bolton settings (see section 10 of the High Needs Base Terms of Reference)

## **7. CONFIDENTIALITY**

All matters considered by the Panel are confidential and will not be discussed other than at other professional meetings with consent.

## **8. REVIEWING ARRANGEMENTS**

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually or in line with any changes in legislation, guidance or LA processes.

## **9. DECISION MAKING CRITERIA**



All panel members will read paperwork for all children to be considered for the panel. Panel members will use the HNB criteria document to inform their decision as to whether a High Needs Base provision is appropriate or not. Each panel member will share their decision and where the decision is not unanimous the panel will discuss their views on how they came to their decision. Where the decision is not unanimous a majority view will be accepted. Outcomes of the panel are recorded along with a summary of the discussion.

When a child does not meet criteria, their level of funding will be considered using the Early Years Inclusion Fund matrix documents within ten working days.

#### **10. APPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN WITH A NON-BOLTON ADDRESS AND/OR AN OUT OF BOROUGH G.P/CHILDCARE SETTING**

Children can only access a HNB place when they attend an EY provider within Bolton LA or are not yet attending a nursery but live in Bolton. Children who attend an out of borough setting but live in Bolton are not eligible for a High Needs Base place.

When capacity in the High Needs Base is limited, priority will be given to children within a Bolton setting with a Bolton address.

EHCNA referrals for children who do not have a Bolton home address will be initiated by the setting using the child's local area pathway and procedures.

Children whose GP is out of the borough will require access to healthcare from the NHS service linked to where their GP is based. The HNB Lead and/or SENCO will be required to make contact and source advice and guidelines from parents or professionals involved from the borough in which the child accesses GP services

#### **11. INDUCTION INTO HIGH NEEDS BASES**

See setting induction policy.

#### **12. TRAVEL ASSISTANCE**

The Senior Hub Co-ordinator will send out the link to apply for travel assistance and a covering letter to all referrers or in some cases directly to parents/carers of children referred to the panel within ten working days of receiving the referral. Parents/carers who have a Bolton address are invited to apply for travel assistance



in principle if they have exceptional or extenuating circumstances. The cover letter clearly states;

“Should your child meet the criteria for a place within a High Needs Base you will be eligible to apply for travel assistance. This will only be allocated to your child if your travel application presents exceptional or extenuating circumstances as to why you cannot transport them yourselves.”

Application forms will not be sent to families with a Non-Bolton address as they would not meet criteria for transport.

### **13. POSSIBLE OUTCOMES FROM HNB PANEL**

#### **High Needs Base is no longer suitable for a child**

- Senior Hub Co-ordinator to discuss options with parents/carers.
- Suitable setting found to meet child’s needs
- Enhanced transition carried out to support the move to a new setting
- Child to receive level 4 EYIF for two terms

#### **Child is allocated a place as they have met criteria, preferred setting choice has capacity and can meet child’s needs.**

- Child transfers to the setting at the beginning of the next term

#### **Child has met criteria; preferred setting choice does not have capacity.**

- Parent/carer offered closest setting with capacity which could meet need.
- If parent/carer declines the alternative offer, level 4 Inclusion Fund is offered to the current setting.

#### **Child has met criteria; preferred setting choice would not meet the needs of the child.**

- Parent/carer offered closest setting with capacity which could meet need.
- If parent/carer declines the alternative offer, level 4 Inclusion Fund is offered to the current setting.

#### **Child has not met criteria.**

- If the child has been matrixed within two terms of the HNB panel the child remains on the current level of funding.
- Otherwise, a Child Information Form (CIF) will be requested from the referrer/setting and two panel members will matrix/re-matrix the child for Inclusion Fund
- If the child is not in a setting the Senior Hub Co-ordinator would support the referrer and family to source a suitable setting and follow the EYIF pathway.

**Child has met criteria; preferred setting choice does not have capacity and child attends a non-Bolton setting.**

- Senior Hub Co-ordinator would contact referrer and with parent/carer consent contact the relevant LA SEND staff.

**Child has not met criteria, and child attends a non-Bolton setting.**

- Senior Hub Co-ordinator would contact referrer and with parent/carer consent contact the relevant LA SEND staff.

**Child has met criteria; preferred setting choice does not have capacity until a later term.**

- If relevant child remains at current setting with level 4 Inclusion Fund until place is available at the preferred setting
- However, if the place is not available within three terms a new application would need to be submitted.

**Child has met criteria but only has one term left before their reception year.**

- Current setting would be offered level 4 to continue in their current setting.
- In significant, extenuating circumstances where the child is at risk of exclusion or is not in a setting a place would be allocated.

#### **14. Post Panel Communication**

**Following panel the Senior Hub Co-ordinator will:**

- Inform the referrer as to the outcome via email within seven working days
- Parent/carer will receive a letter if the child has been allocated a place at the HNB with the outcome within seven working days of the panel
- The Senior Hub Co-ordinator offers individualised support for the referrer according to the needs and circumstances of the child
- The Senior Hub Co-ordinator informs transport which children have been allocated a HNB place within seven working days of the panel
- The Senior Hub Co-ordinator meets with the Start Well SEND manager to advice of the outcomes of panel within ten working days
- The Senior Hub Co-ordinator advises Bolton council finance and SENDAS of the outcomes from panel within seven working days

#### **15. Child no longer meets criteria for High Needs Base**

- During part one of each panel, the High Needs Base leads/headteachers/manager provide information about each child's progress, attainment and suitability to remain the HNB. Where it is agreed a



child no longer meets criteria for a HNB the child would 'step down' into a mainstream provision.

- Next steps would be discussed and agreed with parent/carer considering parent preference for mainstream nursery.
- Transition would be planned for the child by the HNB lead and next setting
- Level 4 inclusion funding would be allocated to the child to ensure a successful transition for up to two terms (three terms for N2 children)
- The Senior Hub Co-ordinator will advise the appropriate administrator of any changes within seven working days
- Following on from the settling in process, the child would be reviewed the SPOA process to consider whether Start Well, Woodbridge or Educational Psychology input is needed. Local authority initiation of EHCP will also be considered, if the child is meeting level 4 criteria