

# Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) Programme

## Explanatory note for schools

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## Summary

### ***About this explanatory note***

This explanatory note contains information for all school and academy trust staff taking part in the PINS Programme.

This note has been produced to help schools and trusts understand their role in the PINS programme and should be read alongside the PINS Self-Assessment tool and PINS Menu of Support. This explanatory note also contains information on the 'Children's Voice Self-Assessment Tool' and suggestions for completing this, which schools may find useful.

### ***Overview of the PINS Programme***

Meeting the needs of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in mainstream schools is the cornerstone to improving outcomes (across attainment, attendance and wellbeing), parental confidence and delivering the financially sustainable SEND system, as envisaged in the SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan.

Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) will bring health and education specialists and expert parent carers into mainstream primary settings to:

- Help shape whole school SEND provision.
- Provide early interventions at a whole school level.
- Upskill school staff.
- Support strengthening of partnerships between schools and parent carers.

We believe that this will leave a sustainable impact after the funded period and that it will build evidence on closer collaboration between education and health, including working collaboratively across professional boundaries, training for non-health staff and creating environments that facilitate best possible outcomes for children and young people. This will support a shift away from the need for diagnosis and more intensive levels of support. Instead, it will focus on strengthening knowledge, skills and improving environments to better meet the needs of neurodiverse children and reframe the focus to how a supportive learning environment and well-equipped school can improve the outcomes for this group of children. The offer to participating schools includes five days' worth (delivered flexibly) of specialist support. More information on the types of support can be found in the [menu of support](#) section below.

The PINS programme will run between January 2024 and March 2025 and is available to be accessed by every Integrated Care Board (ICB) in England, who will work with 40 chosen mainstream primary schools per ICB area. The programme is funded by the Department for Education (DfE), supported by the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) and NHS England (NHSE).

### ***Delivery plan process and governance structure***

ICBs will have responsibility for leading PINS and are expected to work alongside local partners across health, schools, parent carer forums (PCFs) and families to deliver the programme.

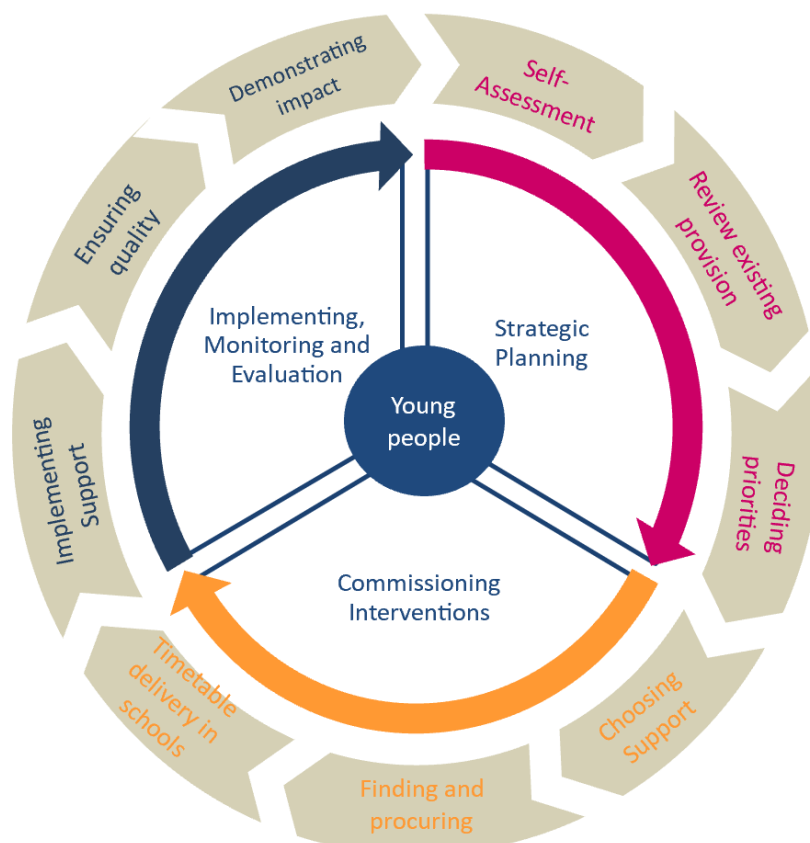
In order for ICBs to receive funding, ICBs will develop a delivery plan with local partners demonstrating how they intend to work together in partnership, what support is expected and any potential barriers.

Alongside the delivery plan, ICBs will be asked to use a multi-agency governance structure with a SEND focus to support and oversee the delivery of the PINS programme.

### ***The role of evidence***

PINS aims to use evidence-informed approaches to deliver enhanced support, which is responsive to the identified needs and priorities of each school. How support is implemented will impact on their effectiveness.

The following diagram captures the process for the PINS programme



## **Expectation of Schools**

### ***School selection process***

PINS projects will be expected to work with 40 mainstream primary schools per ICB area and ICBs will be responsible for deciding which schools to work with. The Department for Education (DfE) will provide ICBs with a list of all primary schools in their area and they will have significant flexibility in deciding which schools to work with, using local knowledge and working with partners to help them decide. There is no requirement to work with specific schools on the list. We understand that some schools may not have the capacity to engage and being a part of this project is entirely voluntary for schools.

If your school is already receiving support from other programmes such as Mental Health Support Teams, Autism in Schools, and Early Language Support For Every Child (ELSEC), you are still able to be a part of the programme. However, we will be asking schools to inform where other programmes are already in place, so there can be evaluation consideration of impact where schools may have a single offer or multiple offers.

### ***Self-Assessment tool***

To support the successful delivery of the PINS programme, your school will be asked to complete a self-assessment tool to help identify the strengths and weaknesses of your whole school approach to neurodiversity. It seeks input from school leaders, the governing body, SENCO, *and should be considered alongside your school's children and parent/carer voice feedback*, to understand the areas in which your school would most benefit from support from health and education specialists and expert parent carers.

There are three sections to the self-assessment tool:

- i) SENCO and school leader input: this should be completed by a school leader (we recommend a Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher), with input from the SENCO.
- ii) Governing body (or equivalent accountability group in your school) input: a summary comment which should be completed by the Chair of Governors, following input from the SEND governor and ideally from the rest of the governing body. If your school is an academy, please involve the most appropriate accountability group – this may be a local governing body or group, or may be part of the Trust.

- iii) Summary sheet: this should be completed by a school leader to capture your identified support priorities and must be returned to your ICB.

***Schools should retain the full Self-Assessment Tool to support discussion with your local project lead.*** Scores and feedback from the self-assessment will be reviewed by the local project team to identify the most appropriate support. Each participating school will receive the equivalent of 5 days' worth of whole-school support in sessions or hours.

The self-assessment tool and menu of support covers a list of domain areas including Leadership, Culture and Values; Mental Health; Readiness to Learn; Teaching and Learning; Environment and Communication. We ask that all of these sections are completed to help you better understand which areas may need more focus or support.

### ***Children's Voice Self-Assessment Tool***

In addition, we ask your school to seek children's feedback. A suitable member of staff should facilitate and collate children's feedback. Collated feedback should then be used to inform and complete the Children's Voice Self-Assessment Tool.

Children's feedback is very important to the PINS Programme, and we encourage you to seek the views of children in your school, especially those children you think may benefit from the programme. We also want to ensure the views of children who may not attend school on a regular basis are represented.

Children can provide feedback in any way that suits their needs. We have made some suggestions below for schools to consider, however we encourage schools to use their knowledge of children's needs to choose the best way to seek feedback. We have provided optional resources for seeking feedback in the Children's Voice Resource Pack.

### **Suggestions for seeking children's feedback:**

**1. Who:** children could provide feedback independently, in pairs or small groups, and/or with a facilitating adult. If a facilitating adult, such as a Teaching Assistant or Learning Support Assistant, is helping they should record responses in the child's voice using their words.

**2. What and how:** children could choose what method they would like to use to provide feedback. This could be through speech, writing, drawing, or activity based - such as a school walk-around. We encourage flexibility in how the views of children are captured.

**3. When:** it is important that seeking children's feedback does not cause disruption to regular routines, for example, children should not miss lunch/break time. We suggest seeking feedback in normal learning time.

**4. Where:** children could choose a space where they feel comfortable to express themselves in - whether this be a classroom, the playground, or another space within the school.

**5. Why:** it is important to explain to children why they are being asked to provide feedback and how their views will be used, in a way that is accessible and needs appropriate.

We have aligned the Children's Voice Self Assessment Tool with the six self-assessment domains, so that children's feedback can feed into your school support priorities. This should be discussed as part of your support planning conversation with your local PINS project team. Following completion of the self-assessment tools, a PINS local project delivery team member will work with staff, including SENCOs and school leaders, to help you pick out the most suitable type, length and content of support for your school. This will be achieved by matching the feedback from the self-assessment tool to the suggested range of support as set out in the menu of support provided.

As part of the school's involvement with the PINS programme, the local Parent Carer Forum will send out a survey for parents and carers to complete, to ensure that parent carer views are considered when planning the support provided, and to support the national evaluation of the project using anonymised themes across schools involved in PINS.

### ***Menu of support***

You will have been given a menu of support document alongside the self-assessment tool and this explanatory note. The menu of support has been created by the Department for Education and NHS England, with input from parent carers, health professionals, school and MAT leaders, educational psychologists, SENCOs, and specialist advisors. The menu of support is

designed to help you identify the most appropriate, evidence-informed support for your school setting, based on the areas that you have prioritised from your self-assessment.

While the support given should focus on a whole school approach and funding cannot be used for direct support for individual groups of children, SENCOs and school leaders can choose the best audience for each element of the support delivered. You may choose support in the form of training for all school staff, smaller groups, 1:1 coaching with relevant professionals or, if desired, jointly run sessions for schools and parent carers on a topic in the menu of support. The intention is that you can use it to deliver the support flexibly to best match your needs.

Depending on the length of support, a number of different domains and topics may be chosen to meet the needs of your school, so long as they can be delivered within the five days' worth of school-level support. Where appropriate, you may decide it is best to focus on a single domain or topic throughout the delivery of the five days' of support (or equivalent).

You will have flexibility on how you decide to timetable the five days of support, either in sessions or hours this will need to be agreed locally. We understand that schools may have already booked their INSET days in advance, and we do not expect that all support will be delivered in full day sessions. Instead, you may choose to split the chosen support over a number of hours or weeks either as INSET, embedded within the school day or delivered through twilight sessions. The ICB local project delivery team will work with SENCOs and school leaders to devise the right timetable of support, which in most cases will be delivered from September 2024 onwards and must be completed by the end of the programme (by 31st March 2025).

### **ICB PINS Local Project Delivery team**

The ICB will lead a PINS local project delivery team that will support schools and partners with the day-to day running of the programme.

You will work alongside this team to:

- Share the information from your self-assessment tool to commission the support required.
- Co-ordinate and timetable the delivery of support for your school.
- Discuss how you would like to receive the five days' worth (hours / sessions) of support, with all delivery completed by March 2025.

*Annex A details the process map for schools.*

## ***Working with Parents and Carers***

Collaboration with parents and carers is critical to the success of the PINS programme, in order to build or strengthen parental relationships with schools, and to build confidence in local ways of working and the support that parents can expect for their children. Parent carers are key partners in the delivery of PINS and there will be parent carer representation at all levels.

The funding for ICBs includes £40,000 ringfenced to support the strengthening of relationships between school leadership teams and parent carers, and to build a lasting legacy of parent carer engagement with each school. This is in addition to the five days' worth of support drawn from the school's self-assessment and menu of support and provides a complementary parent carer engagement offer.

PCFs are representative local groups of parents and carers of children and young people with disabilities. They work alongside LAs, education, health and other service providers to ensure the services meet the needs of children and families.

We understand that some schools may be apprehensive about working with parent carers. However, the parent carer voice will be used to help support the project and capture thematic views instead of individual parental concerns. There are many benefits to schools of working with PCFs including the opportunity to share knowledge and experiences of support and services, promote opportunities where parent carers can contribute to service design and to facilitate a response to feedback to improve the experience of families. The PCFs' role will be to facilitate constructive relationships and joint working with parents and carers.



### **Case study: Co-production and parent carer leadership**

In a project situated in an urban area in the North of England, a co-production approach to the Autism in Schools project was adopted, with PCF representatives playing a central leadership role alongside Local Authority, Health, and charity partners. Involving PCF representatives in all key decisions from the start was described as one of the project's biggest successes. For example, in conversations about which schools to engage in the project, PCF representatives were able to suggest schools where they were already in touch with parents about issues relating to autism. In areas where project leads from other organisations left, PCF representatives were able to provide leadership and continuity to successfully progress project delivery.

PCF activities to date have included meetings with coffee and cake, focused on engaging, supporting, and linking groups of parents whose children attend the same school and have autism or additional needs. Training has been delivered based on group needs, e.g. in response to parent carer concerns about anxiety in young people relating to secondary school assessments a session was arranged with Kooth to cover wellbeing, stress, anxiety, triggers, and how to support. Email or WhatsApp groups have been set up for each school group for ongoing support between sessions. PCF representatives also aim to build constructive relationships between families and school staff, for example:

- providing constructive feedback to schools based on parent carer discussions
- facilitating conversations between SENCOs and parent groups

Work has been undertaken to ensure PCF activities are inclusive and engage a diverse range of families including those with English as an additional language. Further efforts were made to have conversations with these parents, understand their needs, and adapt – a Parent Carer Representative who speaks five languages now attends all parent groups to support with translation.

Project partners vary depending on which organisations work into each local area, close partnership working has supported individuals and teams involved in the project to join up their work with families - e.g. sharing relevant learning from children and young people's groups with parent carers. Overall, the co-production approach was described very positively by parent carer representatives and charity partners, who discussed how it had generated real enthusiasm among all involved and raised standards.

The core objectives for PCFs taking part in the project are:

- To work strategically with the ICB and LA partners to develop and deliver the project.
- To work with schools and parent carers to strengthen relationships between schools and their parent carers of neurodiverse children in their schools.
- To support the development of improved co-production with families to facilitate service design and delivery.

Whilst there will be flexibility within delivery at a local level, there will be some responsibilities for schools, and the PCF or other representative parent carer groups taking part in PINS. This includes holding termly meetings with the school leadership team, supporting communication between the PCF and the parent carer community through the use of the school's communication channels and promoting a person-centred approach to working with parent carers as outlined in the Children and Families Act and SEND Code of Practice. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be put in place to clearly identify these roles and responsibilities.

### ***Timelines for delivery***

#### Planned National Delivery Timeline

Programme launch	November 2023 – January 2024
Programme set up phase (ICB delivery teams established, schools recruited, funding allocated)	January 2024 – August 2024
Programme delivery in schools	September 2024 – March 2025
Programme completion	March 2025
Sharing the findings from the programme	July 2025

*Please note that in some areas delivery may start sooner than the dates indicated here. Your local Project Delivery Team will indicate if the timeline differs for your area.*

*Annex A gives an overview of expected timeline of activities.*

## **Evaluating PINS**

Funding for the PINS Programme is conditional on an evaluation being conducted to assess the effectiveness of the programme.

DfE will commission a high-quality mixed method and multi-informant process and impact evaluation. The evaluation will run for 18 months between January 2024 and July 2025 in parallel with delivery and completion of the programme.

The aim of this evaluation is to understand how PINS was implemented and to examine the impact of the programme on outcomes for neurodiverse children.

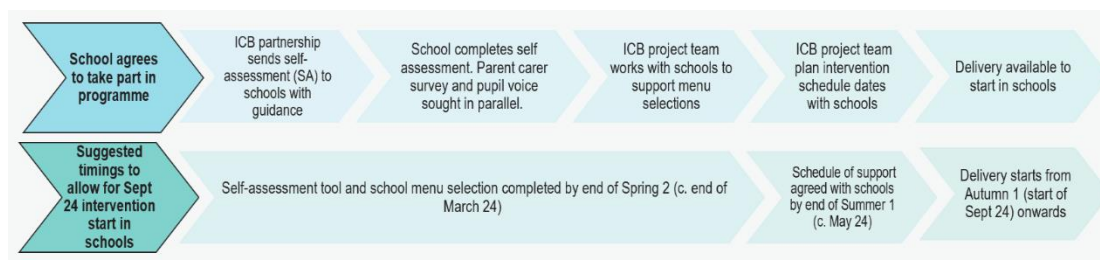
The evaluation will seek to:

- Understand how PINS was implemented; identify barriers to delivery and how the barriers were overcome.
- Determine, whether and to what extent, PINS improved schools' ability to support neurodivergent children.
- Assess the acceptability, suitability and benefit of PINS being rolled out more widely, including identifying any unintended consequences.

To evaluate the programme, ICBs and their strategic partners including schools will be expected to cooperate with the appointed evaluator and provide information when requested. DfE are in the process of appointing an independent evaluator for the PINS programme. Once an evaluator has been appointed, we will share plans for how schools will be involved and input into the evaluation. This evaluation process will run parallel and separately to the use of the self-assessment tool by individual schools.

Additionally, the parent carer survey will be repeated after the school receives support and these findings will feed into the evaluation of PINS at a national level (as opposed to at an individual school level).

## Annex A: Process Map for Schools



## Annex B: PINS Programme Teams

**National Delivery Support Team (NHSE, DfE, DHSC)** – National Team with oversight of Programme and capacity to support delivery in local areas

**Local Project Delivery Team** – Local project delivery team funded via the ICB, but this may be delegated to other partners such as Local Authorities or PCFs to host the project where appropriate.

**Local PINS Project Governance Group** – A partnership comprising the ICB, Local Authorities, and parent carer representation, to oversee delivery of the project. Wherever possible, we advise utilising existing Governance structures, which could include the Local Area Inclusion Partnership in areas taking part in the SEND and AP Change Programme.