

# Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs

## Pathfinder Application Form

### HERTFORDSHIRE



*This completed application form must be sent to [SEND.contracts@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:SEND.contracts@education.gsi.gov.uk) by midday, 15 August 2011*

#### I – Applicant details

Name(s) of local authority/  
authorities

**Hertfordshire County Council**

[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]

Name(s) of PCT(s)

**NHS Hertfordshire**

[Redacted]  
[Redacted]

## II – Background information

Please provide figures below for each LA area in the pathfinder

<p><u>Number of children and young people</u></p> <p>0-19: 275,500 ONS Mid-2010 Population Estimate</p>	<p><u>% and number of children and young people with Statements of SEN</u></p> <p>4182 (1.75%) SEN2 return, June 2011</p>
<p><u>% and number of Looked After Children</u></p> <p>1097 (0.398%) Hertfordshire children, at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011</p>	<p><u>% and number of Looked After Children placed out of area</u></p> <p>288 (26.3%), at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011</p>
<p><u>% and number of Looked After Children placed in your area</u></p> <p>786 (71.6%) Hertfordshire children, plus 132 other local authority children, at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011 23 (2.1%) are confidential or 'not required'</p>	<p><u>% and number of Children in Need</u></p> <p>5378 (1.95%) at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011 12,647 (4.59%) throughout 2011/12</p>
<p><u>Number of Tribunal cases and % successful</u></p> <p>2008/09: 75; 9 successful (12%) 2009/10: 82; 13 successful (15.9%) 2010/11: 106; 16 successful (15.1%)</p>	<p><u>% SEN statements completed in 26 weeks</u></p> <p>100% in 2011/12</p>
<p><u>Please state whether this pathfinder is an NHS early implementer</u></p> <p>YES</p>	<p><u>Please state whether any partner in this pathfinder is already engaged in:</u></p> <p>a) piloting personal health budgets NO b) Piloting DfE Individual Budgets NO</p>

Please describe the socio-economic make-up of your area (max 100 words)

Hertfordshire is perceived to be an affluent county, however there are pockets of deprivation and hidden need which can lead to inequalities in service delivery and outcomes for children and young people.

Hertfordshire has over 32,000 children living in poverty (13.1%). Two districts – Broxbourne and Stevenage – have levels of child poverty (17.6% and 18.6% respectively) in the upper-middle quartile of most deprived lower-tier local authorities. 43 of Hertfordshire's LSOAs (6.3%) are within the top quartile, and these areas are found in all ten districts.

***For ease of reference, we have colour-coded the content of this application:***

***Evidence of our current good practice which our pathfinder will build upon is given in yellow.***

***Our plans for our pathfinder are shown in green.***

### **III – Basic Information**

Describe how this pathfinder demonstrates the basics. Text must include all the headings listed (*max 150 words per heading*)

#### **Partnership arrangements**

Hertfordshire has a strong track record of partnership working through the Children’s Trust Partnership. This application has been developed through meetings involving colleagues from all relevant services – SEN, educational psychology, early years, Youth Connexions, health, social care, parent partnership, police, adult services, schools and the VCS. It has been endorsed at the most senior level in the County Council and PCT, and by partners.

Our pathfinder will be progressed through Hertfordshire’s new partnership commissioning framework under the Health & Wellbeing Board. A new Children & Young People’s Strategic Commissioning Group is supported by three commissioning sub-groups. Hertfordshire’s SEND pathfinder will be overseen by the newly-formed ‘Children with Complex Care & Additional Needs’ (CCCAN) subgroup, which brings together all commissioning for children with disabilities, SEN and other complex needs. This group, which includes parent and VCS representation, has considered the implications of the SEND Green Paper and fully supports this bid.

#### **Work with a range of front line services**

We have an established framework for engaging front line services as well as parents and the VCS sector. Services, mainstream and special schools and VCS providers are represented on our new commissioning groups. We have already strengthened the engagement of schools and colleges through our Developing

Special Provision Locally (DSPL) programme and our support services are configured around localities. From September partnerships of schools, colleges and other services will manage and develop SEN resources to meet local needs.

In developing a new, single assessment and planning process, we will be involving front line professionals from all agencies currently delivering services (including occupational therapists, health visitors, advisory teachers and social workers). We will be building on the concept of the 'lead professional' and ensuring that the assessment is holistic in a meaningful way. This will require us to build on the trust between partner agencies in order that all practitioners have confidence in the final plan. This will be achieved at an operational level through the development of the assessment and planning framework and through joint training.

### **Role of VCS sector**

The sector already has a key role in delivering services for SEND in Hertfordshire, and in challenging our commissioners and providers. We have successful partnerships with a range of VCS organisations, including Leonard Cheshire Disability (direct payments support scheme), KIDS (Disability Hubs, mediation), Action for Children and Jubilee Trust (short breaks), Voice and Watford Mencap (advocacy) and Carers in Herts, Hertfordshire Parent-Carer Involvement Board and other representative groups (e.g. to commission and review services).

We are increasing the VCS role in the strategic planning of services for SEND through the CCCAN commissioning group and want to use this opportunity to test their involvement in assessment and planning for individual children and families. We are looking to make better use of their expertise, helping families put together bespoke support packages and providing effective early mediation and involvement in decision-making. The groups listed above have been engaged in developing this application and want to be involved. We plan to undertake further work with them to finalise the scope of their role.

### **Engagement of parents**

Hertfordshire has a good track record of engaging with parents through our Parent Partnership Service, Parent & Voluntary Advisory Group, five Parent Carer Forums and work with Hertfordshire Parent Carer Involvement Board and Carers in Herts. Parents and carers have been actively involved in developing our AHDC and DSPL programmes, and will be members of our 9 local SEND commissioning

groups influencing the strategic development of provision. We also make every effort to listen to individual parents and communicate face to face.

Parental involvement in the development of the assessment process, achieved through the forums above, will increase confidence, improve transparency and potentially facilitate shared ownership of the plan and improve outcomes for children. We will extend family-held plans and use the best elements of Early Support, CAF and LfLW, to develop the format and process of this single assessment.

We also plan to build on existing networks to develop peer mentoring/advocacy approaches as well as the possibility of shared purchasing through direct payments. Parents will be involved in the governance of our pathfinder and we see this as an essential factor to ensure shared understanding across all involved.

### **Engagement of children and young people**

We have engaged young people with SEND through forums in our four FE colleges, through our Children in Care Council, and through specific projects to understand their views about schools and the accessibility of other services. There is some excellent practice with individual young people with very severe and complex needs.

'Mystery shopping' has been used as a tool across the partnership and has been particularly influential in the development of health services to young people.

We plan to work with these established groups to strengthen meaningful engagement and develop more effective methods of engaging younger children or children with greater learning needs. We want to embed the use of person-centred planning, and will train front-line professionals, parents and the voluntary and community sector to achieve this.

As well as better individual planning we are looking to further develop young people's involvement in service development and commissioning through, for example, building on the 'mystery shopping' approach.

## **Capacity to test and innovate**

Hertfordshire has a strong track record of successfully managing change and delivering significant improvements in a short time period.

We have also demonstrated our ability to innovate through piloting and implementing improved services for children who are disabled or have SEND. For example:

- A successful bid for World Class Commissioning Speech, Language and Communication Needs to test a new service model. We are now implementing this, in partnership across the county
- Piloting the Learning for Living and Work framework, and establishing it as the transition plan for all young people with SEND
- Our DSPL strategy is forward looking with local commissioning by partnerships of stakeholders, working together to manage SEND resources.

This application sets out ambitious plans to lead change across services for children with SEND, and we are confident that the outcome of this project will be a more streamlined process that gives children, young people and their families more control over, easier access to and a better understanding of service delivery. It will also enable professionals to better coordinate and maximise the impact of their activities. We are confident that we have the capacity to deliver the work required within the timescales and resources available.

## **Project plans**

Through our pathfinder we plan to:

- ✓ Review and revise the current NHS and LA assessment and planning frameworks to establish a new single assessment and outcome-focused education, health & care plan for a pilot group of children and families
- ✓ Develop support for and engagement with children, young people and families, through the VCS
- ✓ Develop personal budgets for young people and their families, drawing on resources from education, health and social care
- ✓ Develop and set out a clear local offer about what support is available
- ✓ Work with front line services and provide training and ongoing support for staff to deliver these new arrangements.
- ✓ Enhance the engagement of parents, the VCS and other agencies in SEND strategic planning
- ✓ Develop an evaluation framework to assess the outcomes and VFM of the new system

Detailed business cases, project plans, risk management, communication, monitoring and reporting arrangements will be developed at an early stage and maintained throughout the course of our pathfinder. The multi-agency CCCAN commissioning group will form the programme board for our pathfinder.

### **Evidence base**

Hertfordshire has developed an evidence base for SEND through our Aiming High and DSPL programmes. We have a full demographic profile of all children and young people with SEND. We have shared detailed data by each community on needs, use and cost of SEND services and provision so that local schools, parents, services and partners can plan developments to services and provision from an informed basis. We have data from our Joint Strategic Needs Analysis and feedback from parents/carers through our established Hertfordshire Additional Needs Database (HAND).

Our pathfinder will also learn from and build upon a wider national evidence base on the implementation and impact of reforms. For example:

- Evaluations of the individual budgets and personal health budget pilots have indicated that these are welcomed by families and can have positive impacts, but also highlighted significant challenges
- The Lamb Enquiry identified the need for clear communication and a stronger voice for parents, and refocusing the system on securing better outcomes for children
- The Ofsted SEND Review in 2010 identified clear problems in the identification, assessment and planning processes

## IV – Core testing areas

### Impact on children and young people of all ages (0-25)

Improving outcomes for children with SEND aged 0-25 is a very high priority in our Children & Young People's Plan. We aim for all children and young people with SEND to be empowered to reach their full potential and to:

- Receive high-quality, timely, co-ordinated multi-agency support from appropriate services working together with the parents/carers and families
- Take part in and enjoy leisure and educational activities outside of school that reflect their interests and meet their needs
- Progress into adult life having benefited from a range of opportunities that meet their needs, reflect their aspirations and enhance their quality of life

We have made good progress in these aims but now want to achieve a systemic step-change and improvement in our systems and processes for assessing, planning for and supporting all children and young people who are disabled or have SEN and their families. We want to pilot arrangements which will be simpler, more efficient and effective, and which provide a seamless journey for children and young people and their families as their needs change and they grow older.

The last ten years have seen the development of several valuable, but largely separate, new assessment frameworks for children and young people with SEND including Early Support, the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), and Learning for Living and Work (LfLW), all successfully implemented in Hertfordshire. The pathfinder gives us a real opportunity to use our experience and good local multi-agency arrangements to test the streamlining and integration of these assessments.

We plan to take the best elements of each framework – the 'parent-friendly' information in Early Support, the outcomes focus of CAF, the improved focus on outcomes and specificity in Statements and the comprehensiveness of LfLW – and integrate/align them with the current statutory SEN process, Section 139A and social care assessment and planning processes.

We propose to trial this new framework with an initial group of 20 children and young people with a range of needs in mainstream and specialist settings at each of three transition phases:

- from early years into school
- from primary to secondary school and;
- in the transition to further education and adulthood

Numbers will increase as determined appropriate by the overarching project board. Using 'pilot groups' in this way will enable us to compare both the qualitative experience of and the outcomes achieved through this new approach.

## Person-centred planning approach

We have considerable experience of implementing person-centred planning as part of 14+ and 16+ transition planning with young people with significant SEND. A seconded senior member of staff from a special school has worked with schools, colleges, services and parents and significantly extended and improved the application of this of practice.

Ensuring that our new assessment and planning processes are person-centred will be crucial to their success. This means that they will need to:

- Keep the child or young person and their family at the centre, rather than the service
- Involve the child or young person, their family and friends
- Reflect what is important to and for the child or young person
- Have a live action plan focused on outcomes

As a pathfinder we intend to use what we have learned from our existing practice and develop the person-centred planning approach with a broader age range. In order to achieve this we will need to further explore the role of parents and other important adults in developing a person-centred approach to work with younger children. We will also need to demonstrate an enhanced level of trust in families knowing what is best for their children, a position that will be supported by the lead professional involved.

The further development of a person-centred approach will link well to our intention to explore the optional area 'age range and employment'. Person-centred planning is an approach that is very well embedded with our colleagues in Health & Community Services (adult services) and we would be looking to learn from them as well as to develop an enhanced transition 'pathway' for our young people with more complex needs.

We plan to introduce more face to face elements into the assessment and planning framework and are looking to explore the development of the role of professionals such as educational psychologists, occupational therapists and family support workers to increase the use of a person-centred approach. We will pilot this approach with the groups identified above and explore how this could also be used at an annual review process as well as part of the assessment.

Person-centred planning will also be supported in our pathfinder by offering more children, young people and families the option of a personal budget or direct payment. This will place families at the centre of the decision-making process, giving them more choice and control over their plans and support from a range of different services.

## Links between planning and assessment

We recognise the finding of Ofsted's SEND Review in 2010, that despite (or perhaps because of) the large number of assessments carried out by different agencies at different times, these do not always lead to effective or consistent plans and high-quality support.

Already our new commissioning arrangements under the Health and Wellbeing Board provide a potential for much better integrated needs assessment through the JSNA, and effective commissioning and delivery of services to meet those needs. Our well advanced plans for DSPL will strengthen the links between needs assessment, planning processes and strategic commissioning decisions. SEND resources will be devolved to local partnerships with strategic oversight by a stakeholder steering group which will feed into the new commissioning board for Children with Complex Care and Additional Needs (CCCAN).

As a pathfinder we will strengthen the links between planning and assessment, by reducing the number of different assessments carried out at different times, and bringing the statutory assessment and planning processes together in one place. We will test the outcomes from planning with the family, ie. co-production, in a process which engages the family and builds relationships, as opposed to the often described experience of 'being done to' or 'having' a statement/plan.

Through this pathfinder we are looking to develop, on the micro level, a multi-agency planning process that mirrors our joint commissioning activity (the macro level). In the same way that partners will be developing a single needs assessment through the JSNA and joint planning and commissioning through the CCCAN commissioning group, so we will be developing a single assessment which will lead to a single plan.

Additionally, the CCCAN partnership commissioning group will play a crucial role by monitoring and overseeing the project and building learning about individual activity into the joint commissioning strategy.

An essential component of person centred planning is the development of a plan that can be understood by all parties. Traditionally, plans have been designed around the professionals delivering interventions and this will need to be addressed through building on what is already the more flexible approach used in this area of practice. This may include completely redesigning plans, using activities such as drawing or using a range of IT solutions, all of which can be tested through this project.

## **Plans for more transparency about what is provided**

Hertfordshire has made significant progress in developing a clear local offer for children and young people with SEND and their families, which is reflected in the above-average scores achieved by Hertfordshire in the 'information' element of the national survey of parental experiences (NI 54):

- Through our Aiming High for Disabled Children (AHDC) programme we were able to pull together in one place ([www.hertsdirect.org/specialneeds](http://www.hertsdirect.org/specialneeds)) much of the information that parents and carers want to know about our services and how to access them.
- Our Parent Partnership Service and VCS partners also provide detailed and bespoke support to families
- Youth Connexions services provide ongoing information, advice and guidance to young people from Year 9.
- Two new Disability Hubs (developed under AHDC)

We are providing transparent data about the use of provision and expenditure on children with SEND in the community. From September local stakeholder groups will start to develop commissioning plans for SEND provision based on this data. Parents and the VCS have been part of the developments and will be members of these groups.

We will build on this work to further improve the reach, clarity and detail of our local offer and will pilot a VCS organisation chairing a DSPL strategic group. We will provide further and clearer information on:

- The provision normally available in schools of different types
- The role of each agency and what families should expect from them
- The availability of short breaks
- The funding arrangements for different services
- Thresholds for different types of support
- Personal budgets and direct payments
- Assessment and planning processes
- Further sources of information and advice.

We will work with the VCS to develop their role in improving the effectiveness of information for children, young people and families, for example to provide the full range of information that will be required by families managing a personal budget.

Where we pilot a new single plan we will cost it making those costs transparent, either through a notional or real budget. Where a direct payment is provided a brokerage service will be developed and we will work with the VCS to trial this. We will find the best ways to ensure that information reaches and is well understood by 'hard-to-reach' families. One aspect of the pathfinder that we will be monitoring is whether such enhanced transparency about costs and 'entitlement' helps better manage the expectations of families.

## The key professionals who will support new planning regime

We fully recognise that the ambition of our plans for a new single assessment and planning framework for children and young people who are disabled or have SEN across education, health and social care mean that the full range of services and professionals will need to be engaged in developing and piloting it. It will therefore be important that the respective roles and responsibilities of different agencies in implementing and maintaining the new framework are clearly identified, defined, tested and agreed through our pathfinder including decision making and budget holding responsibilities under a new system

As a pathfinder:

- We will identify a *multi-agency group of front-line professionals* to help us develop the new framework.
- *NHS and LA commissioners* will need to help shape the new framework, and consider how it impacts on the services and resources required on the ground.
- *Service managers* will need to provide leadership for the new system, allowing flexibility to accommodate the changes required.
- *Schools* will be crucial in developing the way they listen to and engage with pupils, parents and services to assess needs and develop outcome-focused plans. We will trial the new framework across transition to see the role schools can play in giving parents confidence and easing transition points for families
- The *voluntary and community sector* will play a key role in strategic development and as an independent advocate and champion for children, young people and families through the assessment and planning process. We will involve the VCS and parents in the training and development of professionals in order to change the culture to a more family and child-focused approach, building on the Early Support approach.
- *Finance* staff will need to be involved in monitoring expenditure on the new system, and its links with direct payments and personal budgets.
- *Health, Education and Social Care Professionals* will all take on the role of the 'lead professional', co-ordinating and planning service delivery with the child and family members. Wherever possible, family members will be involved in the identification of the lead professional, giving them the opportunity to work closely with the professional with whom they have the best working relationship. Whilst this will lead to an increased demand with this family, it is hoped/anticipated that the role of the lead professional will be spread relatively evenly across the partnership so that any increased demand will be offset by other reductions

The pathfinder will also help us to identify the training, development and ongoing support needs for the range of professionals involved.

## New single plan with focus on outcomes

We have improved the quality of individual plans and statements for children with SEND and believe that a good Statement of SEN has the potential to act as an effective single education, health & care plan. However, we recognise that this has not always been achieved in practice, and we therefore need to change both the manner in which the assessment and planning is carried out, and the experience of families, giving them more control and confidence in the process and outcomes.

As set out above, as part of our pathfinder we will take the best elements of each of the existing assessment and planning frameworks (Early Support, CAF, LfLW) and integrate these with the statutory statement, Section 139A and social care assessment and planning processes, to produce a single assessment planning framework for all children and young people who are disabled or have SEN.

We will identify a multi-agency group of front-line professionals to help us develop this new framework, working with commissioners, representatives for children and young people, parents/carers, and the voluntary and community sector. These professionals will pilot the new framework for groups of children and young people within their caseloads at key transition points as described above – from early years to school, primary to secondary, and transition to adulthood – enabling consistency across the life-course.

This approach will help to ensure that the new assessments and plans are focused on outcomes, and this will also be achieved by adopting a person-centred planning approach, as set out above. We will include the identification of a lead professional or key worker for all cases where a new assessment and plan is piloted.

Evidence from Ofsted's SEND Review in 2010 indicated that the best outcomes are associated with high aspirations and promoting independence, rigorous monitoring of progress towards desired goals, timely intervention and thorough evaluation of its impact. We will ensure that these features are prominent in the format and process of our new assessment and planning framework. We will ensure new approaches are supported by maximising opportunities for parents and professionals to work directly together. We want to learn what is needed in order to embed the required culture change into practices.

## Alignment of resources

Hertfordshire already has arrangements in place to facilitate the alignment and pooling of resources between education, health and social care. Our multi-agency Panels make decisions on placements and joint packages of support to meet the assessed needs of the child or young person, and they determine the respective contributions of health and social care to direct payment packages for disabled children and their families. Where they work well, the Early Support, CAF and LfLW frameworks also ensure the development of joined-up assessment, support plans and interventions which make best use of the resources available from each agency.

Our DSPL strategy is bringing together SEND resources at a county and local level for the 0-25 age range. Initially this is primarily educational resources with some therapy resources but the framework has the potential to include the alignment of other resources.

Through our new partnership commissioning framework for children and young people and multi-agency commissioning groups, there is further opportunity to pool and align budgets at a more strategic level and to establish a full joint commissioning strategy based on the needs identified in the JSNA. Work has already begun to map the resources spent by different agencies on services for children with complex care needs and SEN, in order to inform the work of the CCCAN commissioning group and there is currently an absolute willingness to share and work together in order to minimise duplication and maximise the impact of tight resources.

Personal budgets are also key to greater alignment of resources at an individual level. We expect the funding for personal budgets will be drawn from education (for example, special school transport), social care (short breaks, home care, equipment) and health (complex care, therapy, equipment) budgets. We will also work with schools to explore whether any school-based services could be included. We will work with a voluntary and community sector partner to provide support to young people and families who want to take up a personal budget, building on the current successful support provided for our direct payments scheme.

We are particularly looking to inform national policy with regard to direct payments within the health sector. The current legislative framework is not conducive to devolving choice and decision making to families and so this is an area where we will be looking to increase our current level of 'creativity' in order to promote improved control for families.

Also at an individual level, the development of a single assessment and planning framework will encourage more consistent joined-up assessment, support plans and interventions.

## **Join-up between key agencies**

Hertfordshire has a strong track record of partnership working across the NHS, local authority and other agencies under the Hertfordshire Children's Trust Partnership.

As of July 2011, this is being continued through a new partnership commissioning framework under Hertfordshire's Health & Wellbeing Board. A new Children & Young People's Strategic Commissioning Group is supported by three commissioning sub-groups. Hertfordshire's SEND pathfinder will be overseen by the 'Children with Complex Care & Additional Needs' subgroup, which brings together the commissioning of services for children with disabilities, SEN and other complex needs.

At an operational level, Hertfordshire has established strong working partnerships between services for children and young people with SEND, particularly in their transition to adulthood. Over the last five years, through the implementation of 'Improving Choice' and then 'Learning for Living and Work', a greater number of young people with a range of more complex disabilities have been enabled to access local, personalised support for learning and work arrangements through close collaboration between Youth Connexions Personal Advisers, Learning for Living and Work Brokers and workers from the Transition Team. Our Transition Coordinators now compliment this by making closer links to the schools and to young people with more complex needs to ensure a joined up approach, preventing dependency on services and enabling people to take more control wherever possible.

We feel we are well placed in this area but plan to strengthen these partnerships further as part of our pathfinder activity, in order to extend our best practice for young people through to other age groups, and to children and young people with more complex health and social care needs.

Transitions, particularly for children in care, will be greatly enhanced through the use of person-centred planning processes as described above, and through better joined-up working.

## Value for money and assessment of cost

In line with the plans set out in this application, other evidence and experience, indicative start-up costs for our pathfinder in year one will be:

- Project management (to be absorbed in-house)
- Commissioning improved support for and engagement with families through VCS organisations [REDACTED]
- Reviewing and revising assessment and planning frameworks [REDACTED]
- Establishing systems and processes to deliver a personal budgets scheme (£[REDACTED] brokerage, [REDACTED] finance support)
- Developing and promoting an enhanced and transparent local offer [REDACTED]
- Training for staff [REDACTED]
- Materials and administration ([REDACTED])
- Contingency [REDACTED]

It is anticipated that in the second year of the programme, additional resources will be dedicated to support for the voluntary sector and brokerage for parents.

We recognise that there are particular budget implications and risks involved in establishing a personal budget scheme. Evidence from pilots indicates significant set-up and running costs, and an early task will be to develop a process by which need can be mapped against financial resources, through a robust resource allocation system. On the other hand, improvements in services may deliver savings (e.g. from more efficient practice or reduction in the numbers of complaints and appeals, tribunals and independent placements) which can offset the additional costs involved.

We will need to take particular care to ensure that our pathfinder delivers value for money, and we therefore plan, at an early stage, to develop more detailed business cases for each pathfinder proposal which will determine the detailed scope of our work as well as the costs and benefits.

The proposals in this application have already been developed with value for money clearly in mind. For example:

- We will build on existing frameworks and services where possible, reducing bureaucracy and duplication
- We will use existing project management capacity within our organisations, so that all additional pathfinder funding can be used to improve services on the ground.
- We will look to secure better value for money by working with some of our neighbouring local authorities (Luton, Central Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire) to finalise and implement our proposals (see below).

The costs and value for money of our pathfinder activity will be closely measured, managed and evaluated through robust project management and close oversight from the multi-agency CCCAN partnership commissioning group.

## Use of mediation

Hertfordshire currently has a contract with KIDS Mediation for the small percentage of parents who require a formal and fully independent approach to dispute resolution to resolve disagreements with schools and/or the local authority. The Hertfordshire Parent Partnership team offers information and help to solve problems and resolve disagreements for the majority of families who need support through use of helplines, an e-magazine and other information, and a casework service which can include joint work with other relevant professionals.

Despite the best efforts on all sides to agree on provision for individual children, young people and families, in an environment of scarce resources there is always likely to be some disagreement between parents and professionals. By involving parents and the VCS alongside schools, settings, services and other agencies at a strategic level we believe we can build confidence and reduce adversarial relationships.

We believe it is possible to reduce the sometimes adversarial nature of engagement even where there is not a total agreement about what should be provided. We want to further reduce the need for formal appeals and tribunal processes. As part of our pathfinder we therefore plan to extend parental involvement, giving them more control in individual assessment and planning processes as well more influence collectively in strategic decision-making. We will work with the voluntary and community sector to provide additional advocacy support, making the best use of their expertise and knowledge, and develop a clearer and more transparent local offer.

We want to improve communication, and ensure that right from the beginning, parents know who is the lead professional and who to contact to access impartial information, advocacy and support. We will make this integral to the assessment and planning process. We believe this will have a better range of outcomes for families and avoid appeals to tribunal, which for many parents is the result of the build up of unresolved issues, and is hugely stressful.

We believe there is scope to improve and strengthen mediation services. As part of our pathfinder, we therefore plan to develop an earlier, more local, and more responsive process which is identified to parents right at the start. We will work with parents and their representative groups to review the current service, and to develop and monitor this improved offer.

## Transferability of plan

We recognise that Hertfordshire is part of a national system of support for children who are disabled or have SEN and our pathfinder will remain part of this national system, and that families expect this system to operate in a coordinated and seamless manner irrespective of organisational boundaries. Hertfordshire already has cross-border arrangements in place with other areas, and it is important that our pathfinder proposals are also not finalised, implemented and tested in isolation.

We therefore plan to work closely with the DfE's external independent support team and the Pathfinder Advisory Group to finalise our arrangements for a single assessment and planning framework and to test its transferability across boundaries. We believe that our proposed approach – building on the existing Early Support, CAF and LfLW and statutory frameworks and processes – will make this accessible for all other local authorities.

In developing this application we have had early discussions with some of our neighbouring local authorities (Luton, Central Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire) and regional organisations. If selected, we plan to have further discussions to determine how to ensure that our activities are fully complementary and that we are learning from each other and not in isolation. Our discussion will also focus on how arrangements for a single assessment and planning framework can transfer across our local authority boundaries and how the effectiveness of this approach can be tested. We will establish sub-regional governance arrangements in order to facilitate this.

## V – Optional areas

Please rank from 1 to 5 (1= favourite to test, 5 = least favourite) the optional testing areas in order of preference. It is acceptable choose more than one 'favourite' option: please make sure your ranking reflects this. Please note that we will prioritise applications from pathfinders wishing to work on children's personal budgets. Please indicate how many additional options your pathfinder could reasonably test.

Number of options	2
Personal Budgets	1
Banded Funding	5
Age Range & Employment	2
Support to parents and young people	4
Support to vulnerable children	3

## VI – Contact details

Please provide a lead contact for the pathfinder as a whole and for each local authority and PCT cluster engaged in this bid

### Lead Pathfinder Officer

Name of local authority	Hertfordshire County Council
Name of lead contact	[REDACTED]
Position of lead contact	[REDACTED]
E-mail of lead contact	[REDACTED]
Tel of lead contact	[REDACTED]
Address of lead contact	[REDACTED]

### PCT

Name of PCT	NHS Hertfordshire
Name of lead contact	[REDACTED]
Position of lead contact	[REDACTED]
E-mail of lead contact	[REDACTED]
Tel of lead contact	[REDACTED]
Address of lead contact	[REDACTED]