

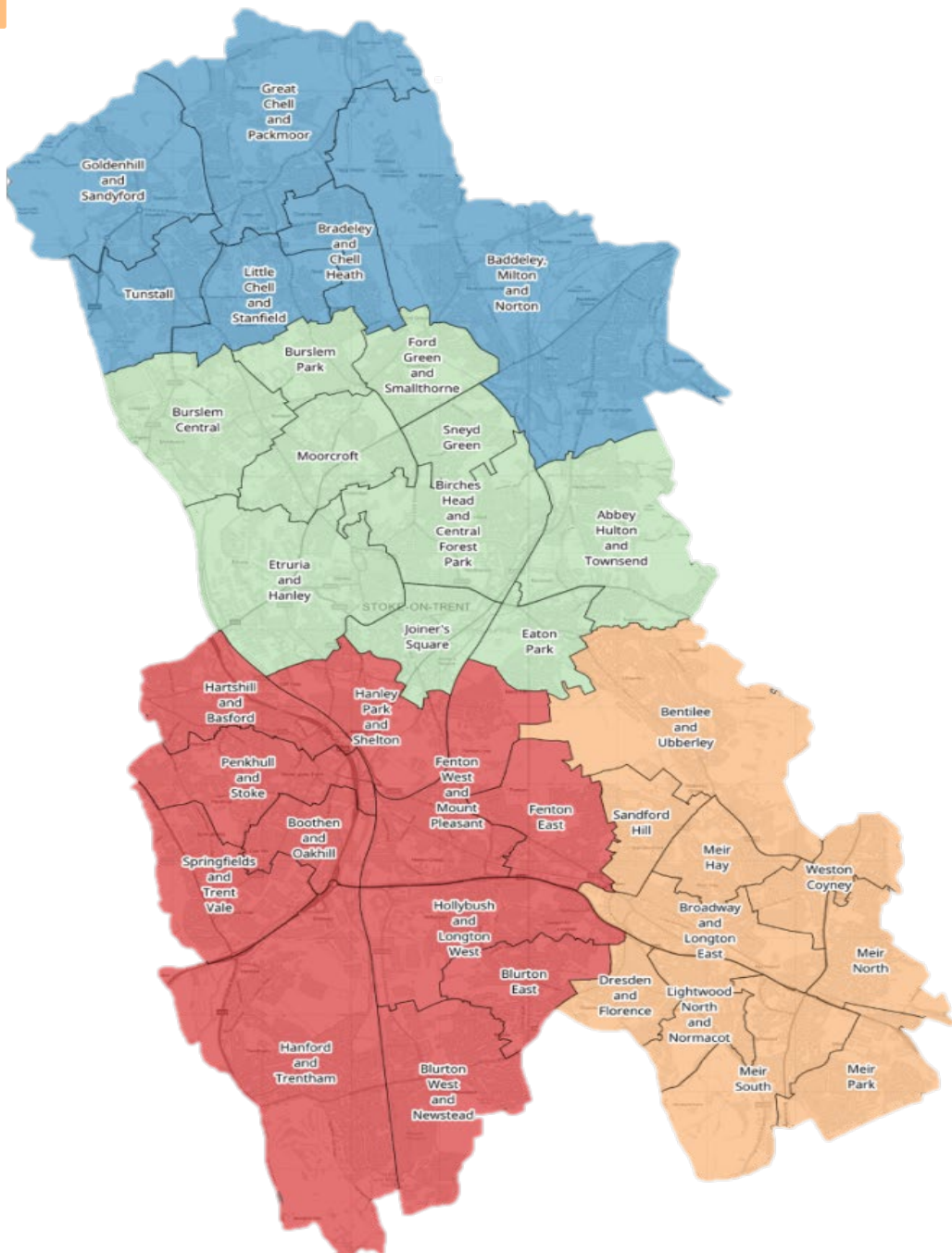
Children and Family Services

Cluster Model Briefing
September 2025





The Central Locality



Settings

23 Primary Schools

4 Secondary Schools

1 Alternative Provision

1 Special School

1 FE College

Children and young people

2031 at SEN Support

435 EHC plans

29 moves to PEX in 24/25

1111 suspensions

Funding

£1.96m top-up for EHC plans in mainstream

49 CYP transitioned from mainstream to special



Why a cluster model?

- How to reallocate high needs funding towards schools in the city
- Build capacity across schools to meet SEND needs earlier
- Enable quicker access to support, not reliant on EHCPs
- Encourages collaboration, shared learning, and innovation
- Support better outcomes for children and young people



Principles & values

- Right support, right time, right place
- Equity and consistency across schools
- Shared responsibility and decision-making
- Early intervention
- Financial sustainability and flexibility



What is the ask of schools?

- Be open-minded about the approach and how it can develop across the locality and then the city
- Actively participate in cluster meetings – half termly
- Consider any children that would benefit from support and prepare and submit referrals
- Identify gaps in provision and opportunities to work collaboratively with other schools in the city to increase what is **ordinarily available** in the locality
- Share best practice and collaborate on solutions
- Implement agreed actions and feedback on impact
- Honestly share the impact of support/interventions
- Engage in cluster-wide CPD, projects, research and initiatives

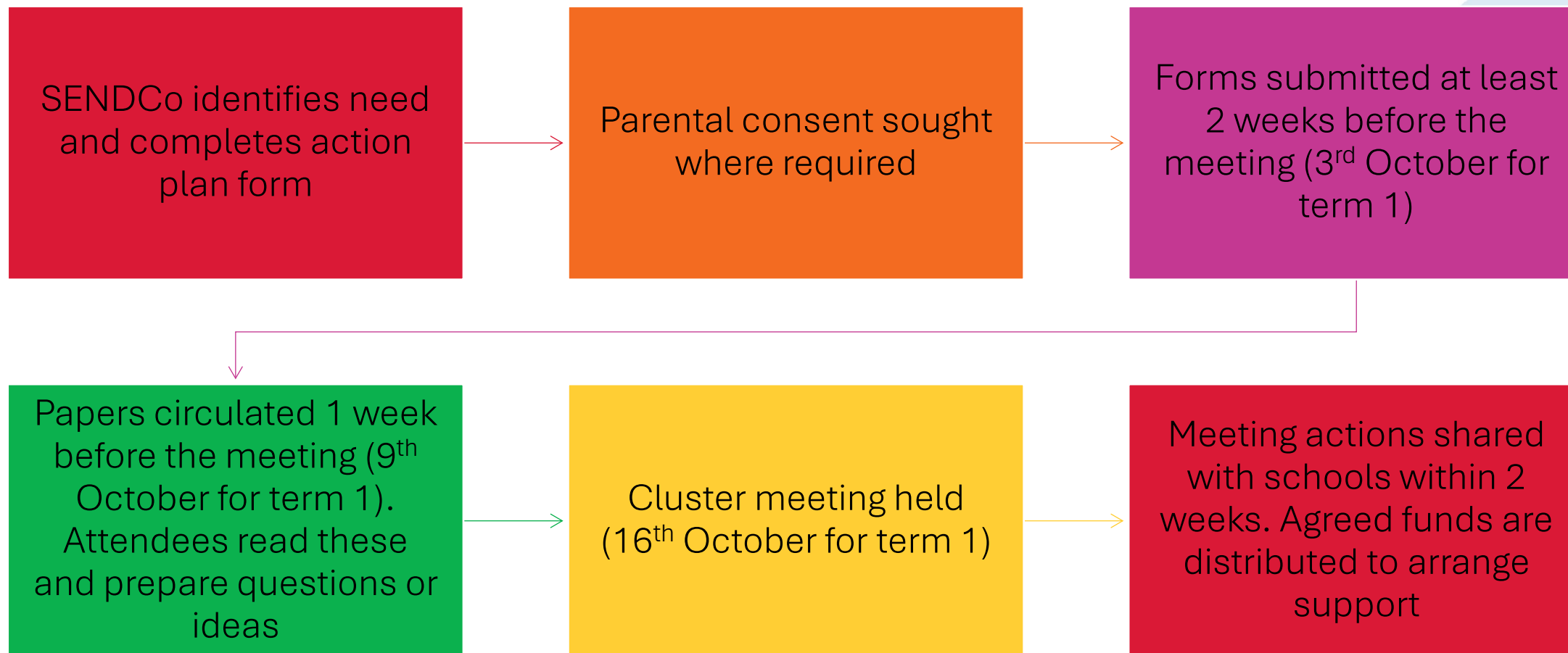


What will the cluster meetings look like?

- Held half-termly virtually via teams
- School/setting led
- First meeting 09:30 – 13:00 16/10/2025
- SENDCo or inclusion leaders from all schools and settings in clusters asked to attend
- LA team around the cluster will offer support and include educational psychology, commissioning, SEND advisors, early help advisors, virtual school officers
- Agenda will review:
 - Admin and finance
 - A look at cluster-wide issues
 - Group-level matters
 - Individual cases
- Actions and decisions will be recorded and fed back to schools



How to access support from the cluster





Additional funding for the cluster



Revenue funding

- £210,000 in additional funding for the Central Cluster
- Use to be determined by the cluster. Must be used to support meeting the needs of high needs children in the locality
- Opportunity to reinvest ad hoc funding currently allocated to children with an EHC plan – c£490k ending within the next academic year.
- Incentive to reinvest savings in year 2 – reduction in escalations to ISP



Capital funding

- £175,000 in additional funding from the High Needs Capital Allocation fund
- Maximum £15,000 per school to support the development of inclusive environments



Additional funding for the cluster



Revenue funding examples

- Child level interventions and support not available within notional funding – not ongoing
- Training to realign ordinarily available provision with needs of children
- Centrally commissioned specialist support – therapeutic, specialist etc.
- Developing provisions



Capital funding examples

- Sensory spaces – indoor and outdoor
- Developing provisions
- Outdoor equipment
- Lighting, acoustics etc



Meeting the needs of our communities through a multi-agency response

- A cluster panel chair will facilitate meetings
- Team around the cluster will offer advice and support
- Cluster members will agree spend
- Cluster Steering Group will oversee the strategic implementation of the model
- LA business support will record decisions and actions



Measuring impact

Child level

- Attendance
- Exclusions and suspensions
- Number of children moving into ISP

System level

- Number of children moving from mainstream to special school
- Number of requests for an EHC needs assessment



Questions and answers



Expression of interest for cluster panel chair

- Role: Chair meetings, agree agendas, liaise with LA and schools
- Skills: Leadership, facilitation, SEND knowledge, collaboration
- Please submit any EOI to Sarah.Halls@stoke.gov.uk by 30th September
- **Chair will be appointed by the Cluster Steering Group**



**For more information,
please visit the
SENDCo Hub Website**

**[https://sendcohub.stoke.gov.
uk/home/cluster-funding](https://sendcohub.stoke.gov.uk/home/cluster-funding)**

