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Placements North West
c/o Stockport Council
www.nwadcs.org.uk

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Dear Provider

Call for Independent Non-Maintained Special Schools and Specialist Post-16 Institutions to join the SEND FPS

There is **increasing demand for places in Independent Non-Maintained Special Schools (INMSS) and Specialist Post-16 Institutions (SPI)**. Across the North West there were 15,248 new EHC plans issued in 2024, 12% more than the previous year. We anticipate that the 2025 data will show a further rise as some areas respond to further growth in demand.

Our regional **SEND flexible purchasing system (FPS) provides local authorities with a framework for commissioning school and college places** from external providers. We are pleased that over 50 providers have joined the FPS since 2021 bringing over 110 settings into the contract. The contract now allows authorities to access a range of provision including settings from larger providers and those with just one school or college.

We estimate that there are over 4,500 registered places in settings on the SEND FPS, however authorities continue to report that there are no available places. Following consultation, we are asking new providers to join the FPS to support authorities to source the places they need for children. To facilitate this, **we are re-opening the North West Flexible Purchasing System for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and will advertise the opportunity to join on 2 March**. We will be holding an online information session for new providers and you can [register for this here](#).

Providers who are not currently on the contract will only need to go through a [light touch tender process to join](#). They should [register for an account with Proactis](#) if they do not already have one and select the offer to receive notifications for category reference 321100 - Social Community Care Supplies & Services – Children.

This lack of sufficiency relates both to the higher numbers of children needing to find the right provision and those with more complex needs for whom a more bespoke approach is required. **We urge providers who are able to consider more innovative education options for children to contact us** so we can facilitate discussions with relevant commissioners.

Providers already on the contract should contact us at placementsnorthwest@stockport.gov.uk to **ensure that they have all their available provision listed and available** in the information provided to local authorities.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jo Siddle'.

Jo Siddle

**Strategic Director Children and Education (DCS), Blackburn with Darwen Council
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