

Analysis of Buckinghamshire, Regional and National SEN Data 2026

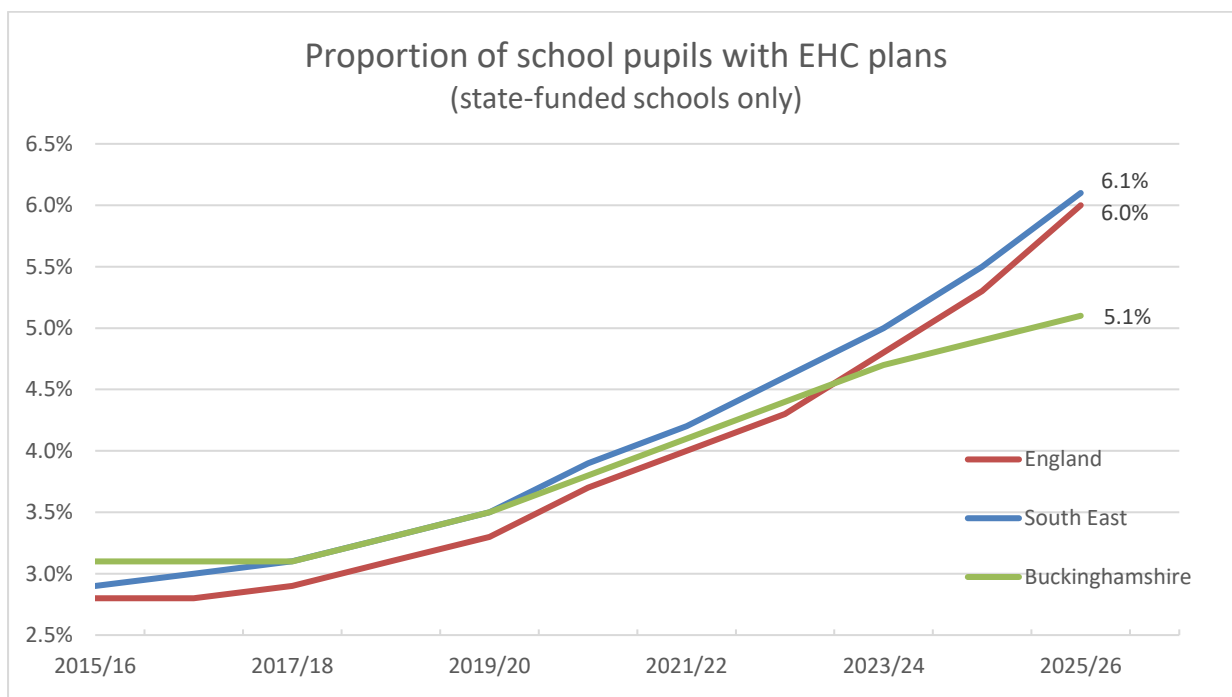
Introduction

The Department for Education collects data every year from school census and local authority data returns about SEND. The school census returns are combined and the data about SEND provision published in the “Special Educational Needs in England” data publicationⁱ. Information provided by local authorities is collated in the “Education, Health and Care Plans” data publicationⁱⁱ. The current year data is as at 15th January 2026.

This report contains highlights of the data published in June 2026 and compares Buckinghamshire to regionalⁱⁱⁱ and national averages.

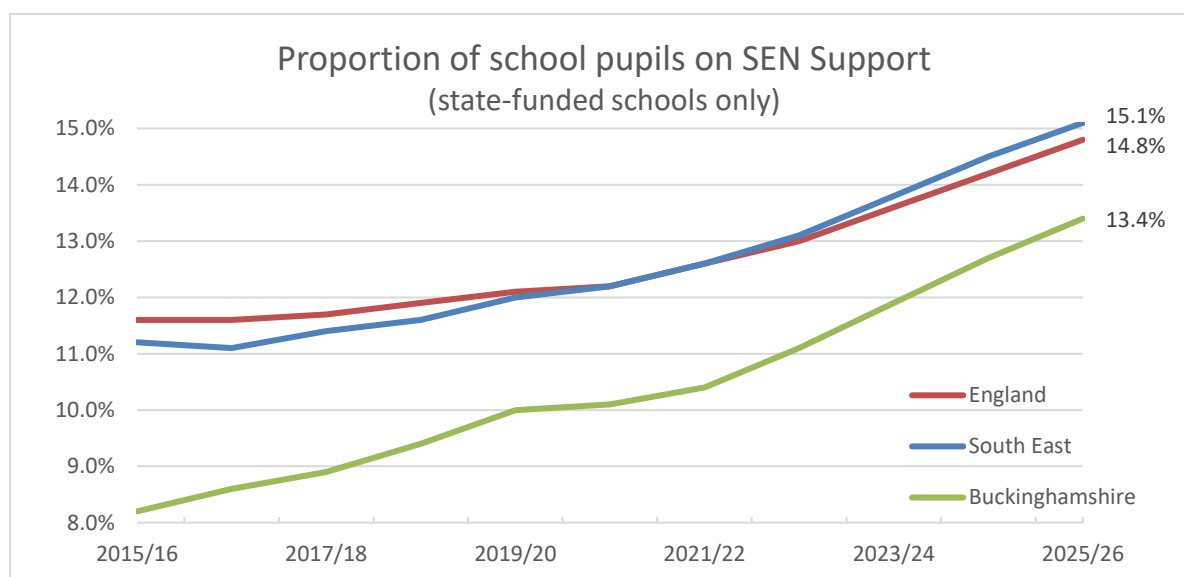
EHC Plans

Prevalence of Plans and SEN Support



Since the current Code of Practice was introduced in 2014 the proportion of pupils with an EHCP or statement has increased steadily. In Buckinghamshire, however, that growth has been significantly lower than national and regional trends, causing the proportion of pupils with plans to move from being more than typical to below typical. That gap became particularly marked in the last year.

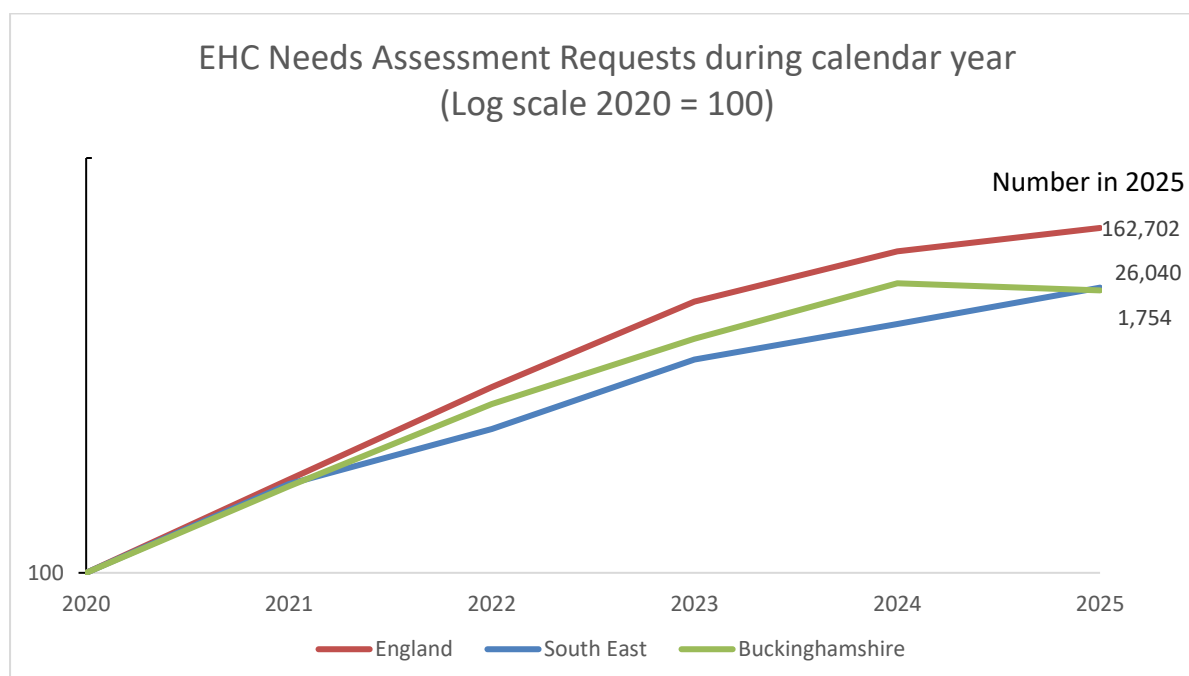
Prevalence of SEN Support



Meanwhile the proportion of pupils receiving SEN support, which was historically low in Buckinghamshire, has increased and the gap regional and national levels has narrowed to less than 2% from more than 3%.

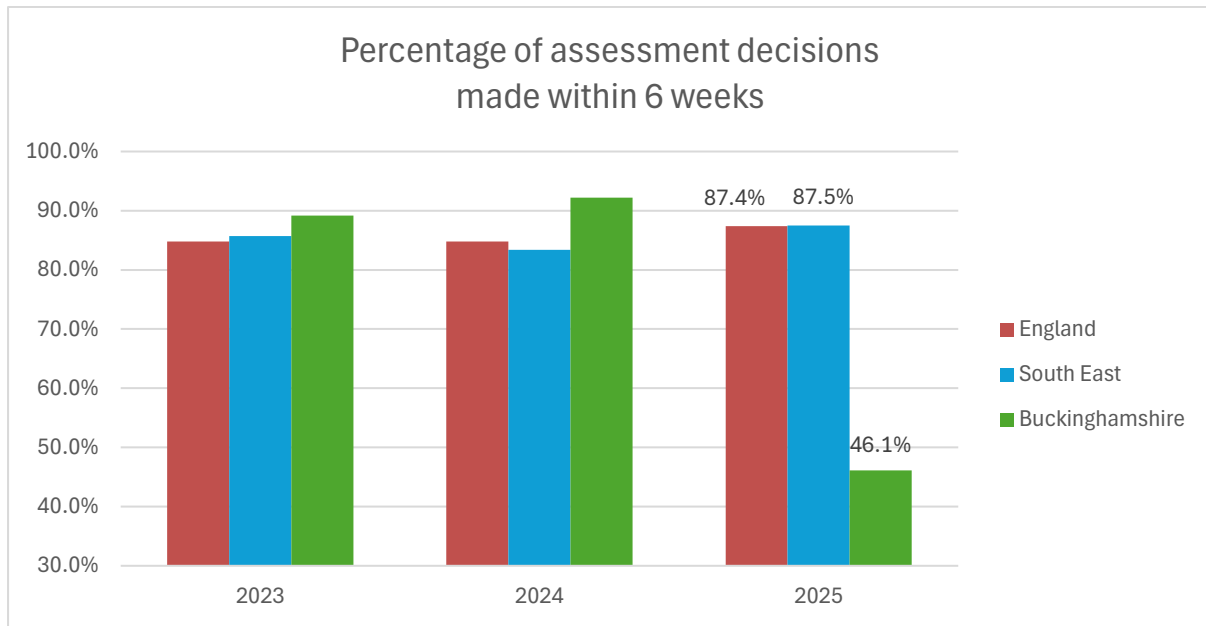
EHCP Needs Assessments

Number of Requests



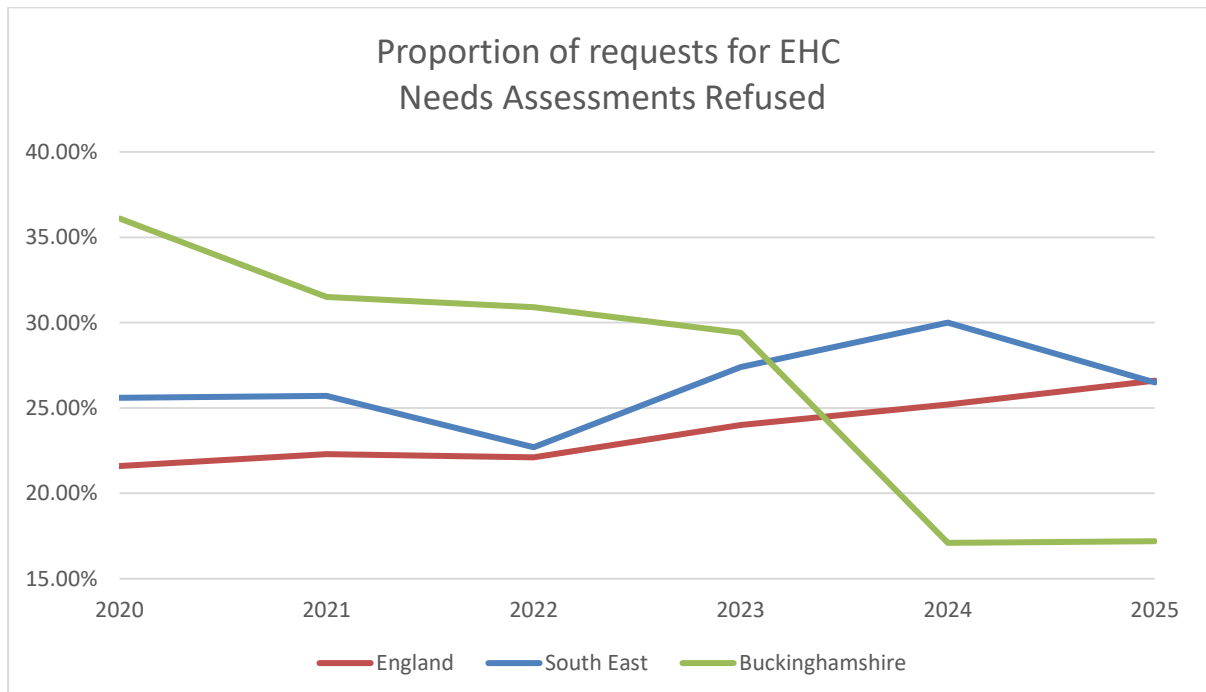
For the first time that this data series has been collected the number of requests for EHC Needs assessments fell in Buckinghamshire during 2025, bucking the national and regional trends of continuing growth.

Timeliness of Assessment Decisions



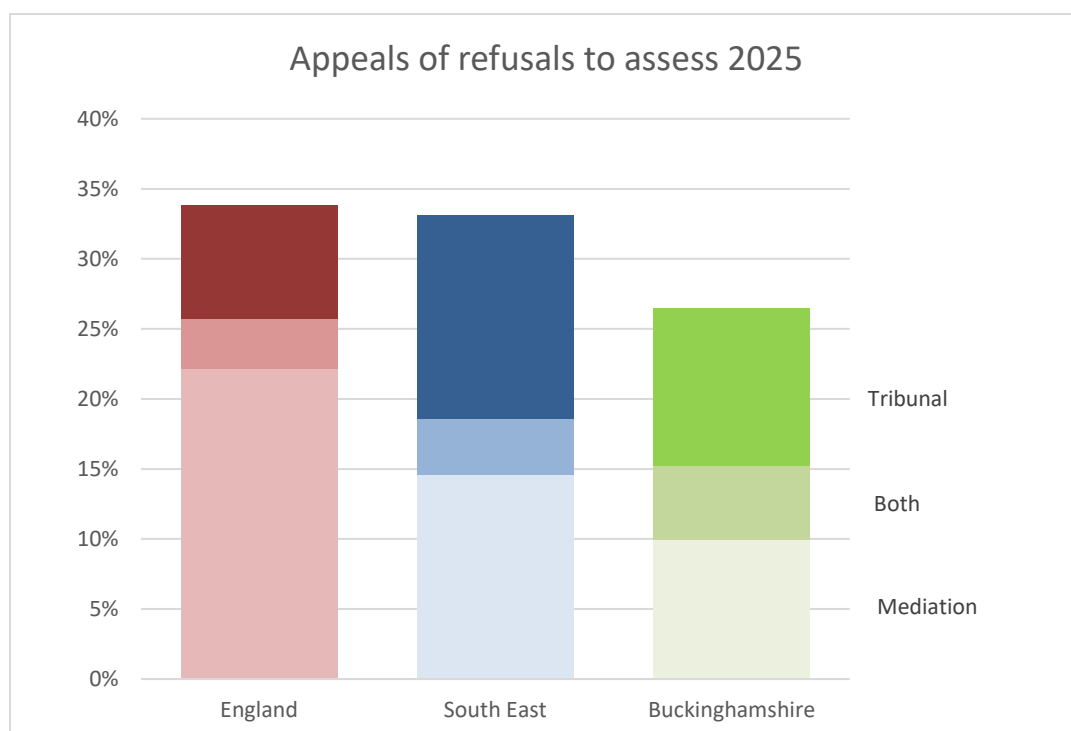
Despite the slight fall in the number of requests for EHC Needs assessments received during the year, the number decided within the 6 week statutory time frame approximately halved in 2025, to 46.1%. Nationally and regionally decision punctuality improved slightly to 87.4%.

Refusal to Assess



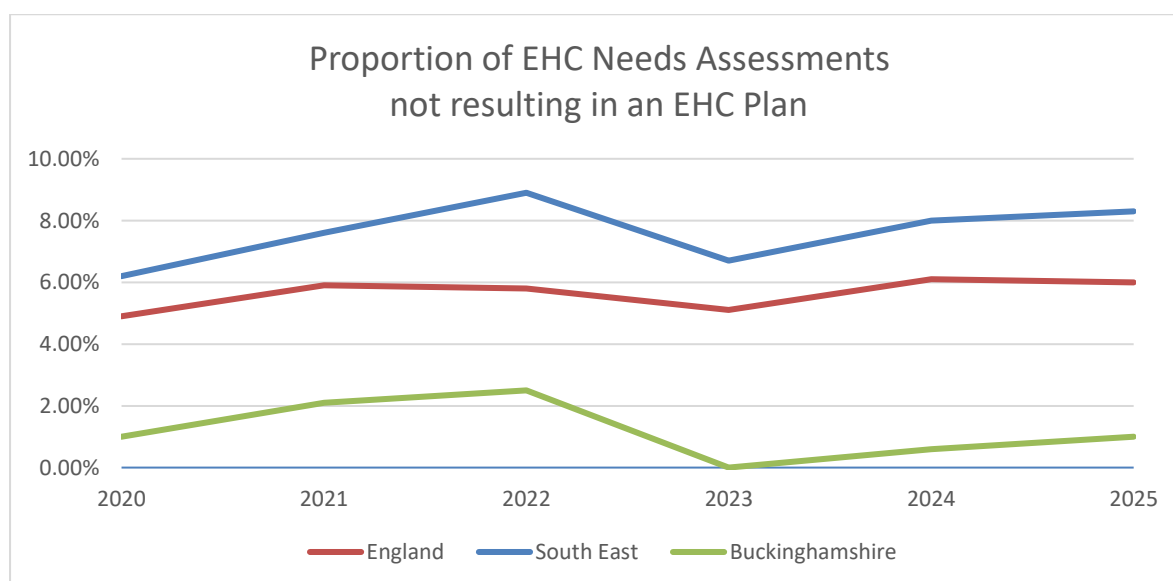
The proportion of EHCNA requests refused in Buckinghamshire has stayed at 17% during the year. This demonstrates the consolidation of a change in approach made during 2024 when the rates of refusal fell from consistently above the national and regional averages of around 25%.

Appeals of Refusal to Assess



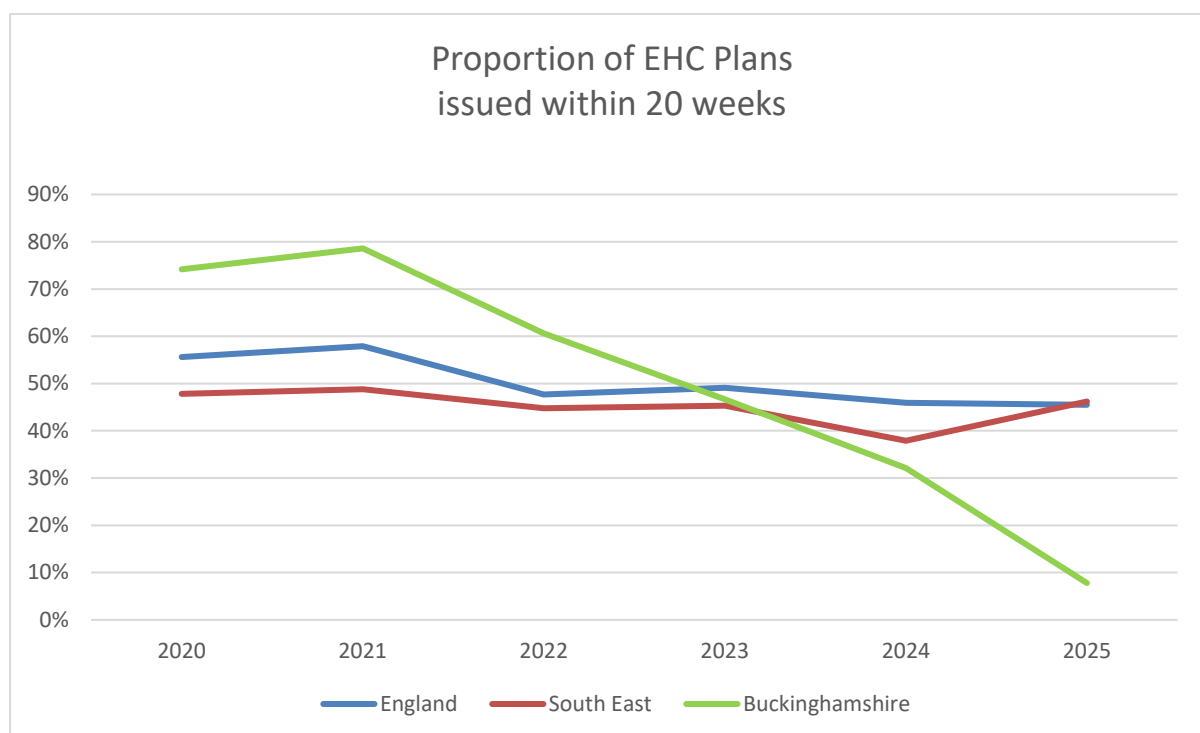
Perhaps as a result of the fall in the proportion of EHCNA requests that are refused, the proportion of those refusals that are appealed to mediation or the tribunal has dropped below national and regional averages.

Unsuccessful Needs Assessment

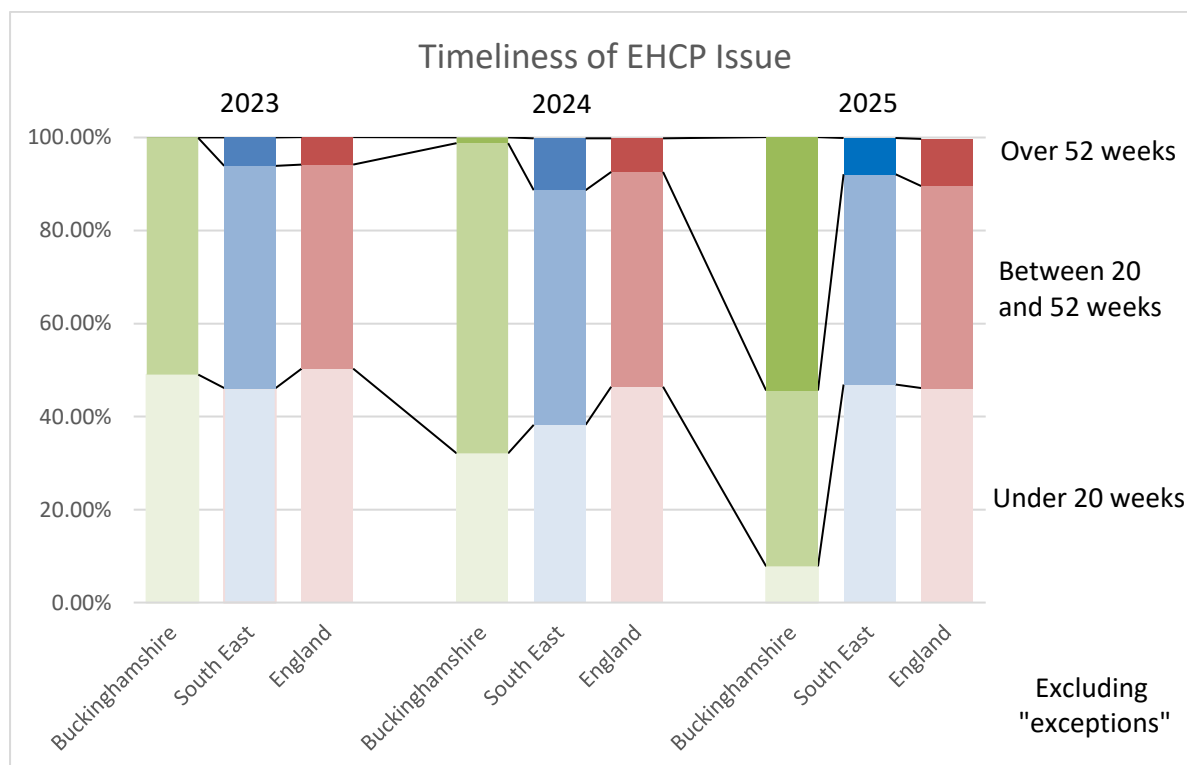


Buckinghamshire remains an outlier in the proportion of EHC Needs Assessments that do not meet the threshold for the issue of an EHC plan, with only 7 out of 725 (1.0%) completed assessments not resulting in an EHCP. Nationally 6.0% percent of assessments did not result in a plan.

Timeliness of Assessment



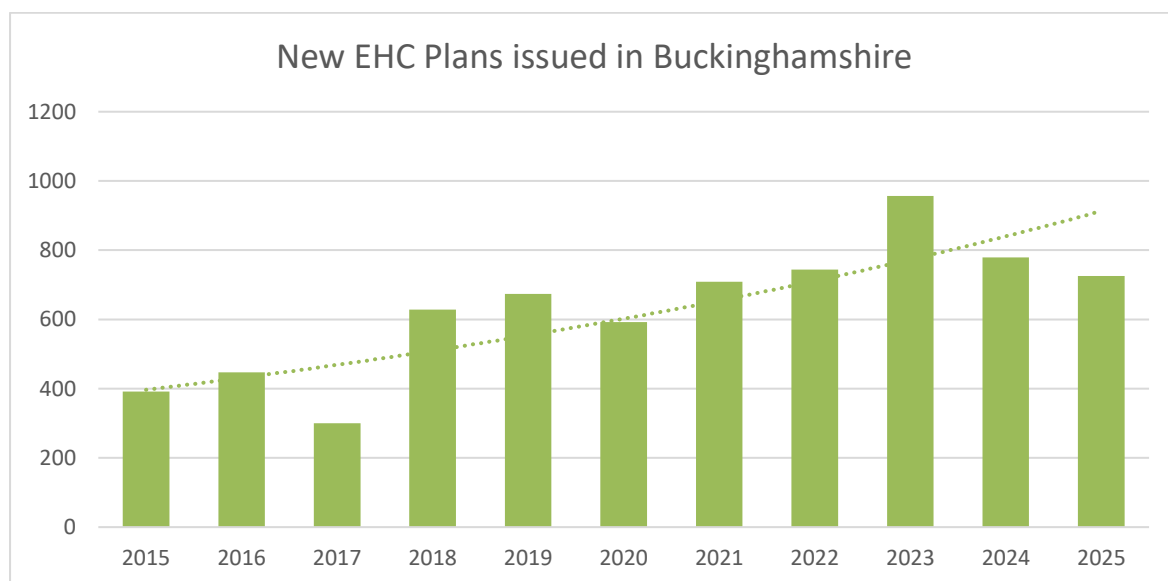
The proportion of new plans issued within the 20-week statutory deadline by Buckinghamshire has now dropped from a high of around 80% in 2021 to 8% in 2025, below the national and regional averages which have stayed around 40% to 50%



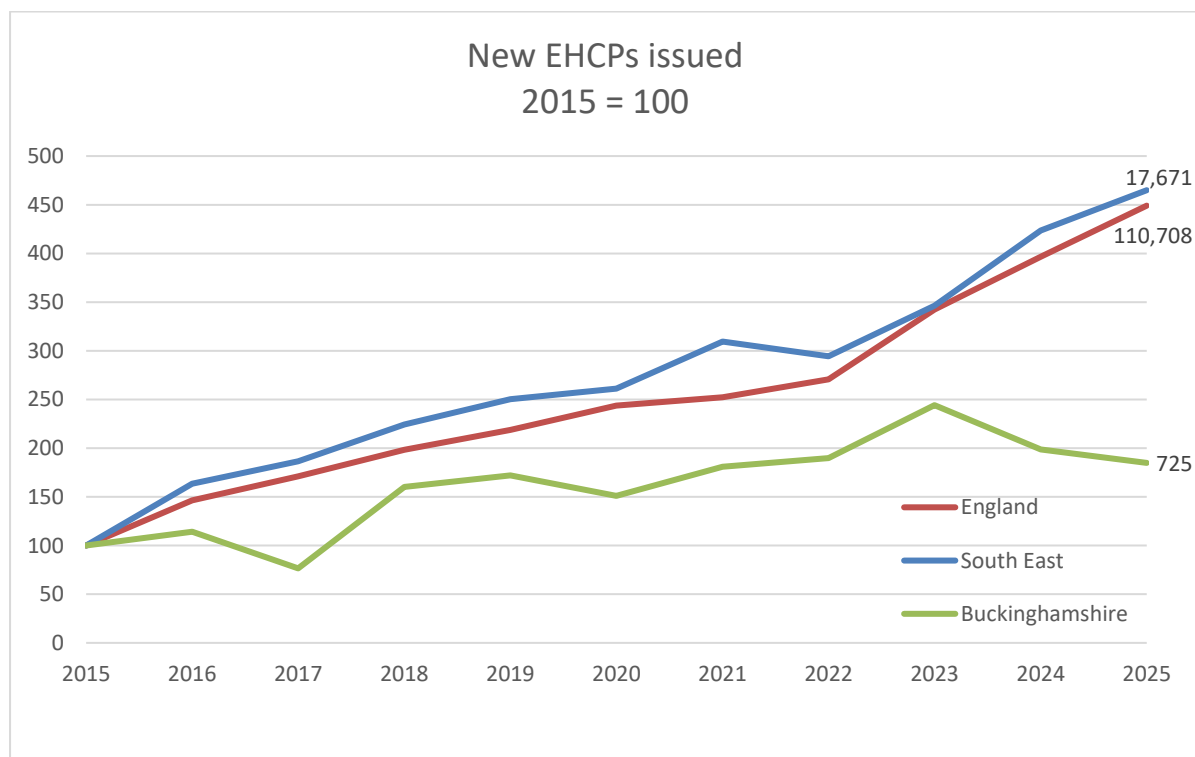
For the last three years data has been collected on the proportion of plans issued between 20 and 52 weeks. This shows that Buckinghamshire's issue rate within 52 weeks in 2025 dropped to below the national and region issue rates within 20 weeks.

New EHCP Plans

New Plans issued over time

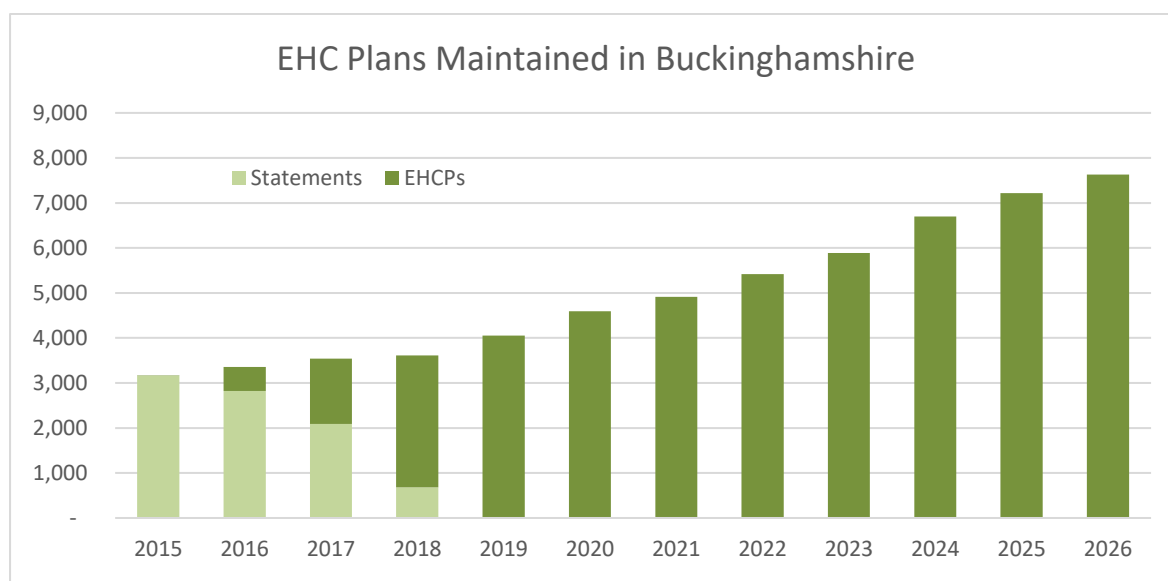


The 725 new plans issued in Buckinghamshire in 2025 was the second consecutive year of falling numbers. However the data does not reveal the extent to which the drop in numbers issued during the year was due to an increased backlog of agreed EHC Plans which have not been issued because of the delays referenced above.

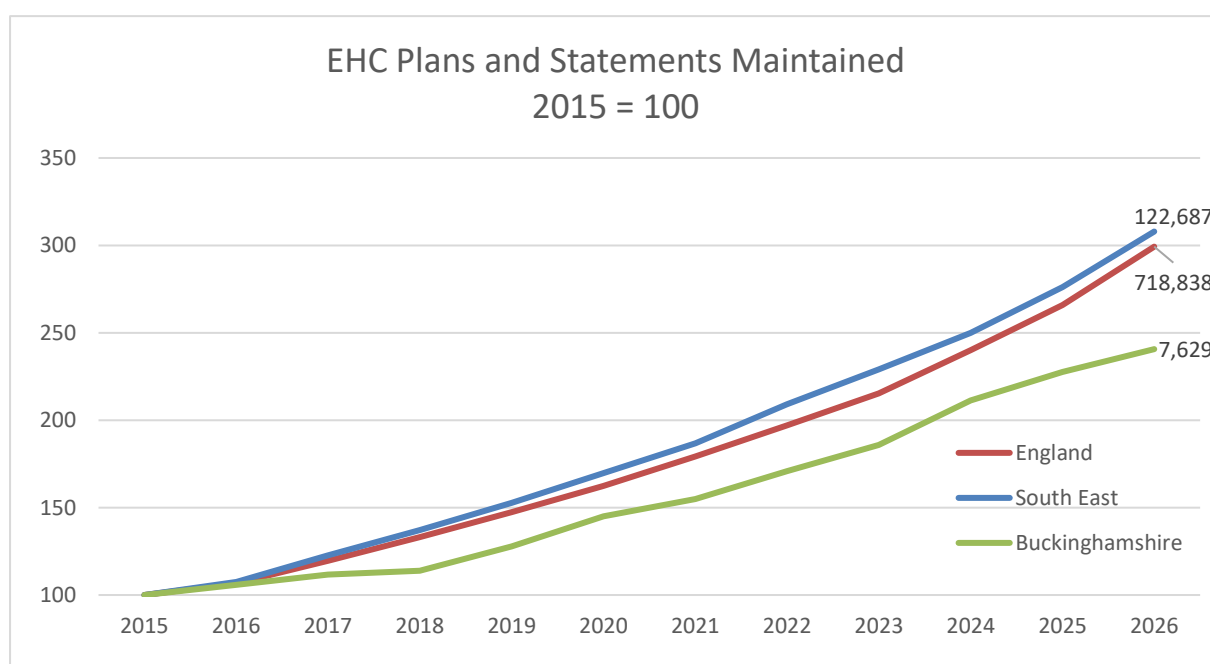


The long term trend rate of growth is approximately 8.7% per annum, below the national and the regional trend (both between 13.5% and 14.0 %p.a.).

Total Plans (and statements) maintained



The number of EHC plans maintained has increased as new plans issued outnumber those ceased.

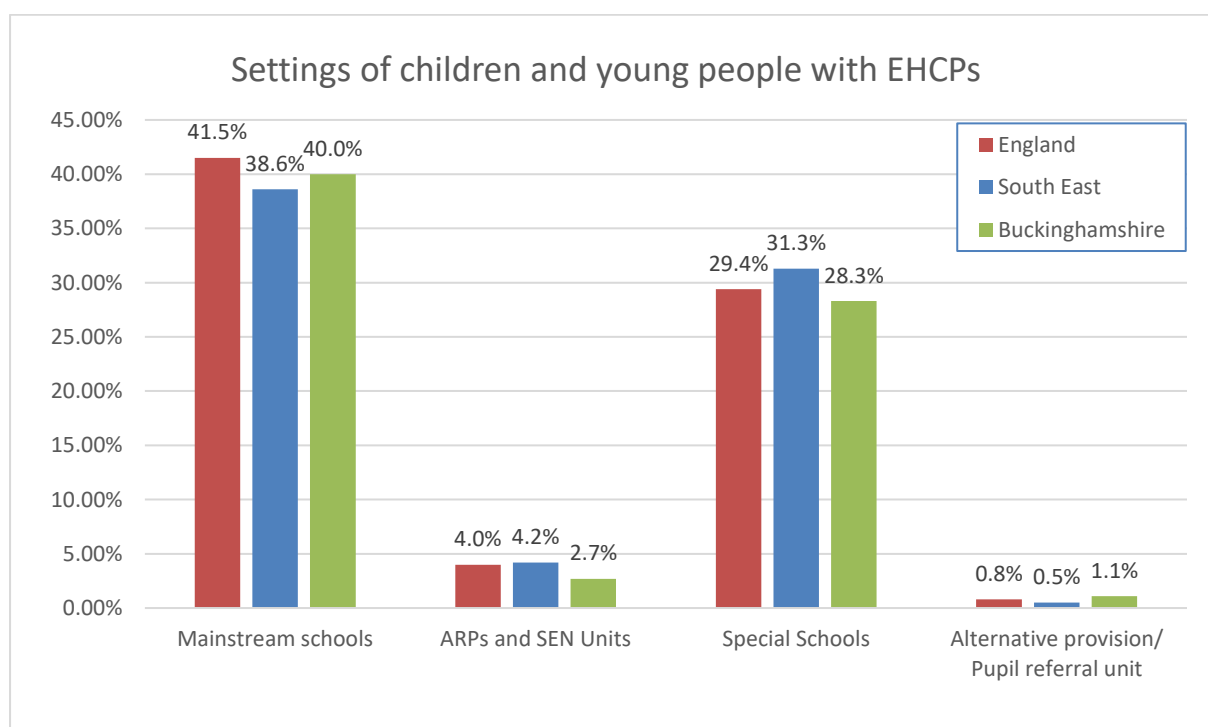


The relatively slower growth in new EHC plans issued in Buckinghamshire is evident when the total number of EHC plans is compared to national and regional figures

EHCPs by setting

Types of Setting

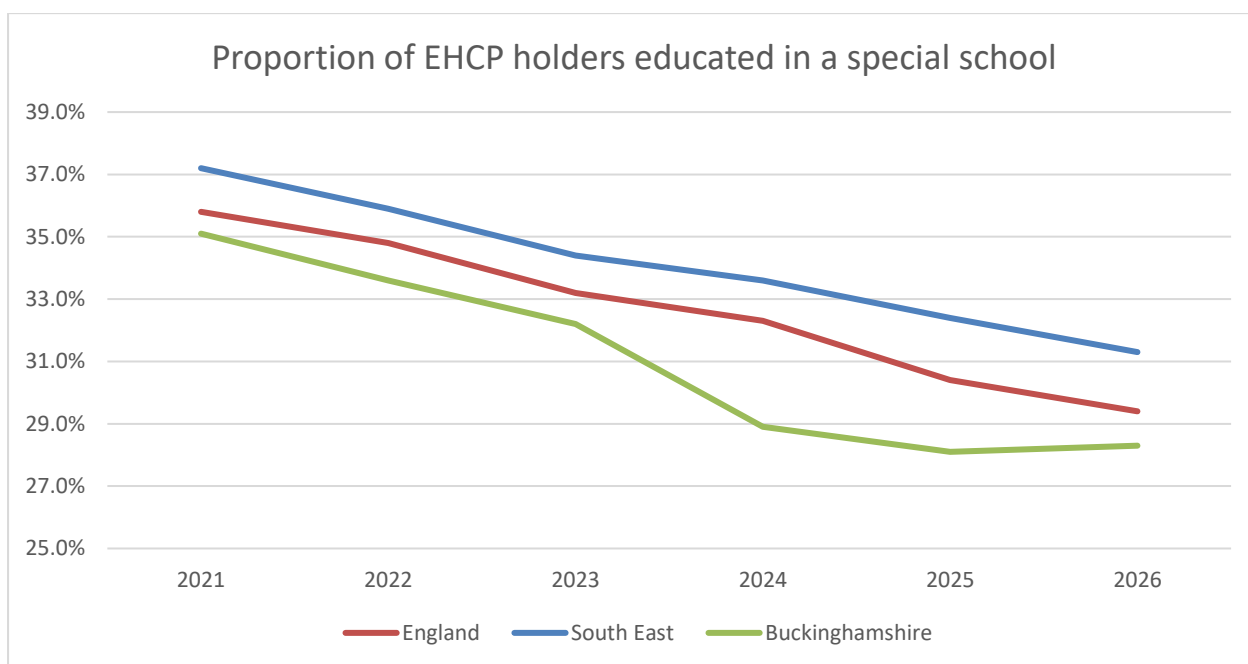
2026 (2025)	England	South East	Buckinghamshire
Mainstream schools (excl. ARPs and Units)	41.5% (39.9%)	38.6% (38.4%)	40.0% (42.4%)
ARPs and SEN Units	4.0% (3.8%)	4.2% (4.1%)	2.7% (3.4%)
Special Schools	29.4% (30.5%)	31.3% (32.4%)	28.3% (28.1%)
Alternative provision/ Pupil referral unit	0.8% (0.8%)	0.5% (0.5%)	1.1% (1.2%)
Other settings	0.9% (0.9%)	1.0% (1.0%)	0.1% (0.2%)
EOTAS	2.2% (1.8%)	2.2% (1.8%)	4.9% (3.3%)
EHE	1.3% (1.1%)	1.3% (1.3%)	0.7% (0.9%)
Further education	14.0% (14.1%)	15.1% (15.0%)	16.1% (16.1%)
NEET	4.3% (4.0%)	4.7% (4.2%)	5.9% (3.8%)
Non-maintained early years	0.7% (0.7%)	0.7% (0.8%)	0.4% (0.6%)
Unknown	1.0% (2.4%)	0.2% (0.5%)	0.1% (0.2%)



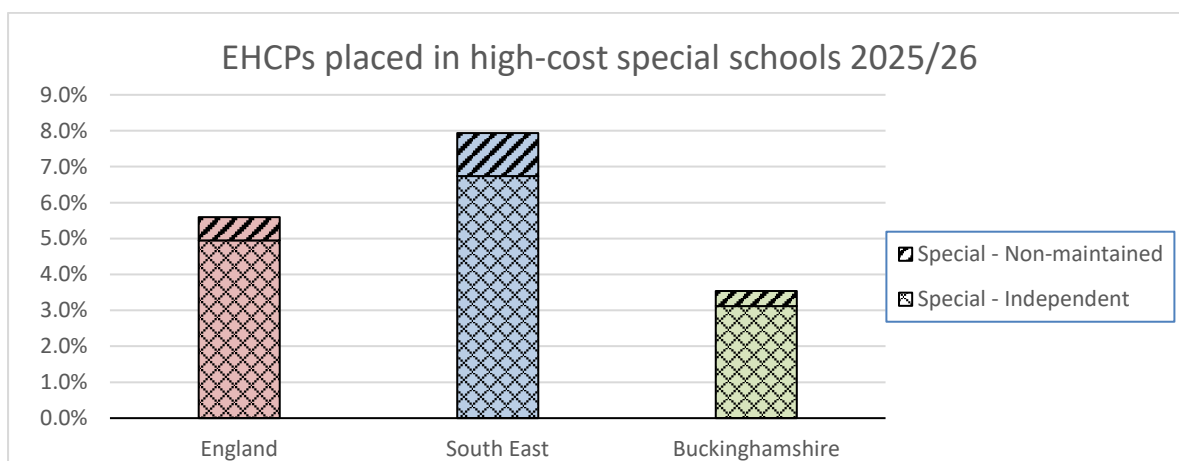
Bucks has a relatively low proportion of children with EHCPs educated in ARPs and special schools.

EHCPs in special schools

2026 (2025)	England	South East	Buckinghamshire
Special - Independent	4.9% (4.7%)	6.7% (6.4%)	3.1% (2.60%)
Special - Non-maintained	0.6% (0.70%)	1.2% (1.20%)	0.4% (0.4%)
Special - Academy, Free School and Maintained	23.8% (25.2%)	23.4% (24.80%)	24.7% (25.0%)

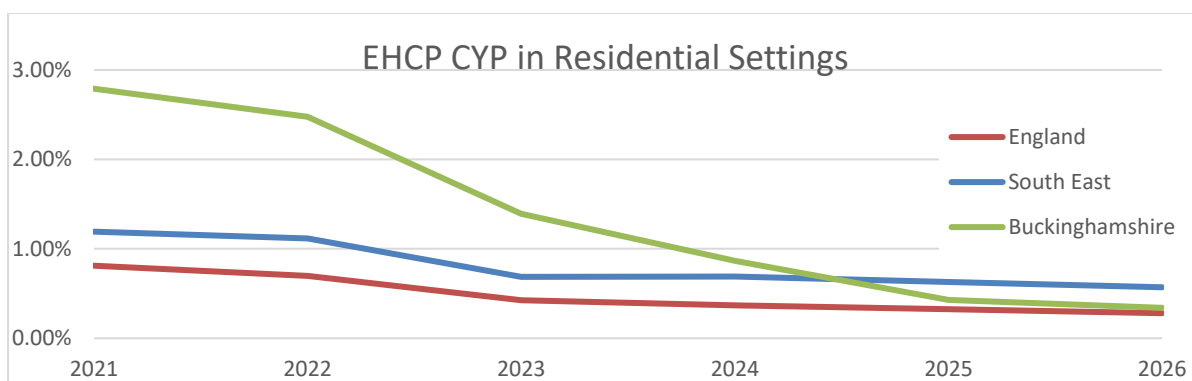


The trend away from specialist placements for children and young people with EHC Plans is consistent in time and across areas.



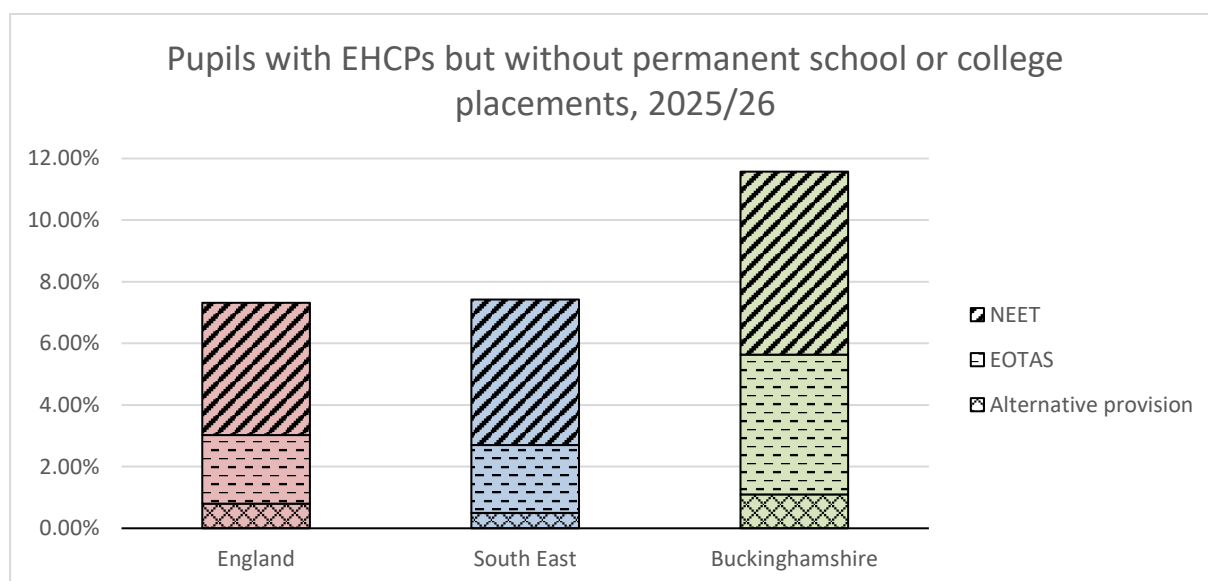
Bucks has a low proportion of children with EHCPs attending high cost independent and non-maintained schools.

EHCPs in Residential settings



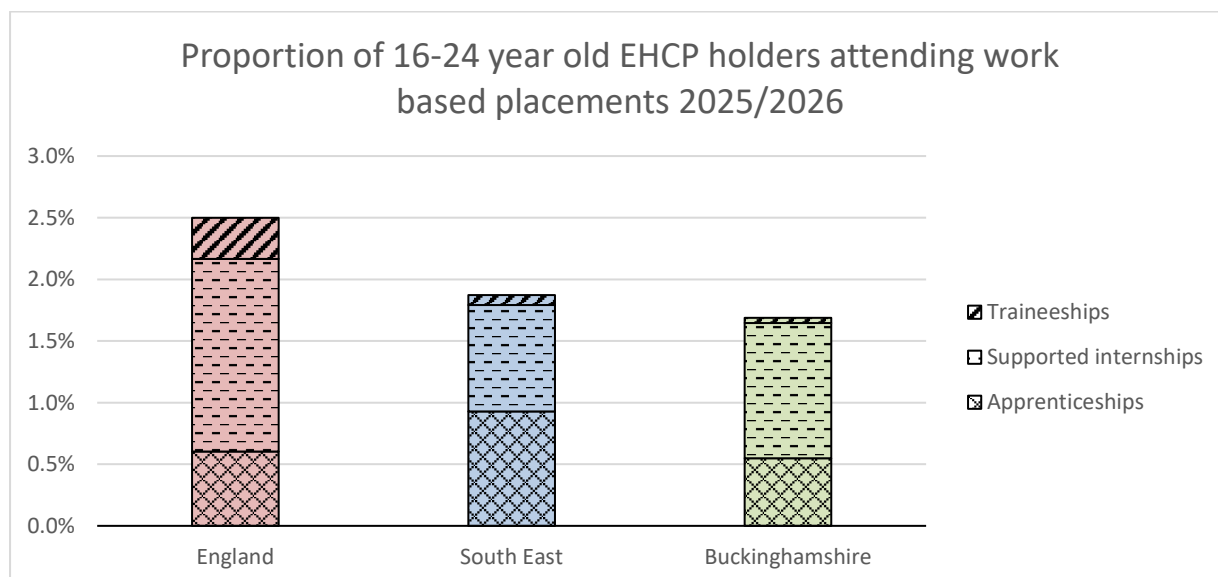
Bucks historically had a high proportion of children with EHCPs placed in residential settings, but that has reduced sharply over the past five years to national and regional norms.

ECHP Pupils without permanent school or college placements



The data shows that a larger proportion of young people with EHC plans are without permanent school or college places in Buckinghamshire than National or regional averages, with higher numbers in Alternative provision, Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) and Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

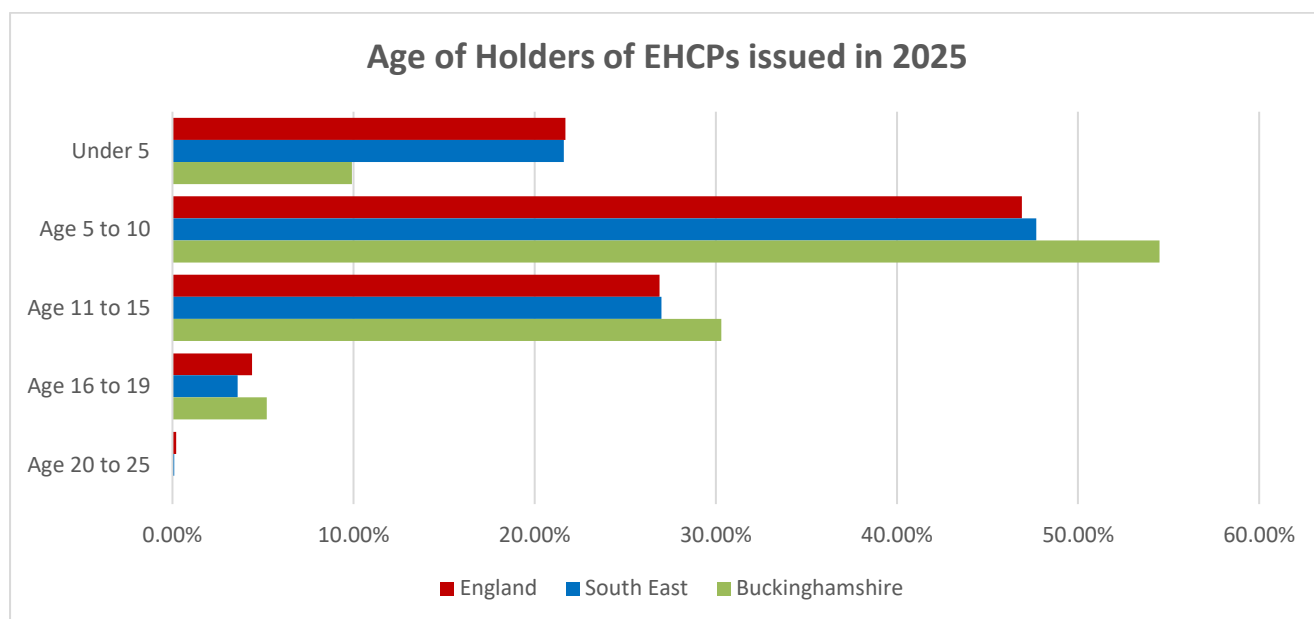
ECHP Pupils with work-based placements



For the first time in 2026 data was included about young people with EHC plans who are on work-based placements, including Apprenticeships, Traineeships and Supported Internships. In Buckinghamshire the proportion of 16-24 year olds, at 1.7% is two thirds of the national average of 2.5%.

EHCPs by age:

Age Profile of New EHCPs



N.B. These figures are not adjusted for any differences in age distribution among the general population.

Buckinghamshire continues to issue fewer EHC plans for the youngest age group, as can be seen when the numbers of ECHPs issued in 2025 are grouped by age. During 2025 fewer than 10% of the EHCPs issued in Buckinghamshire went to children under 5, compared to more than 20% on average nationally and regionally.

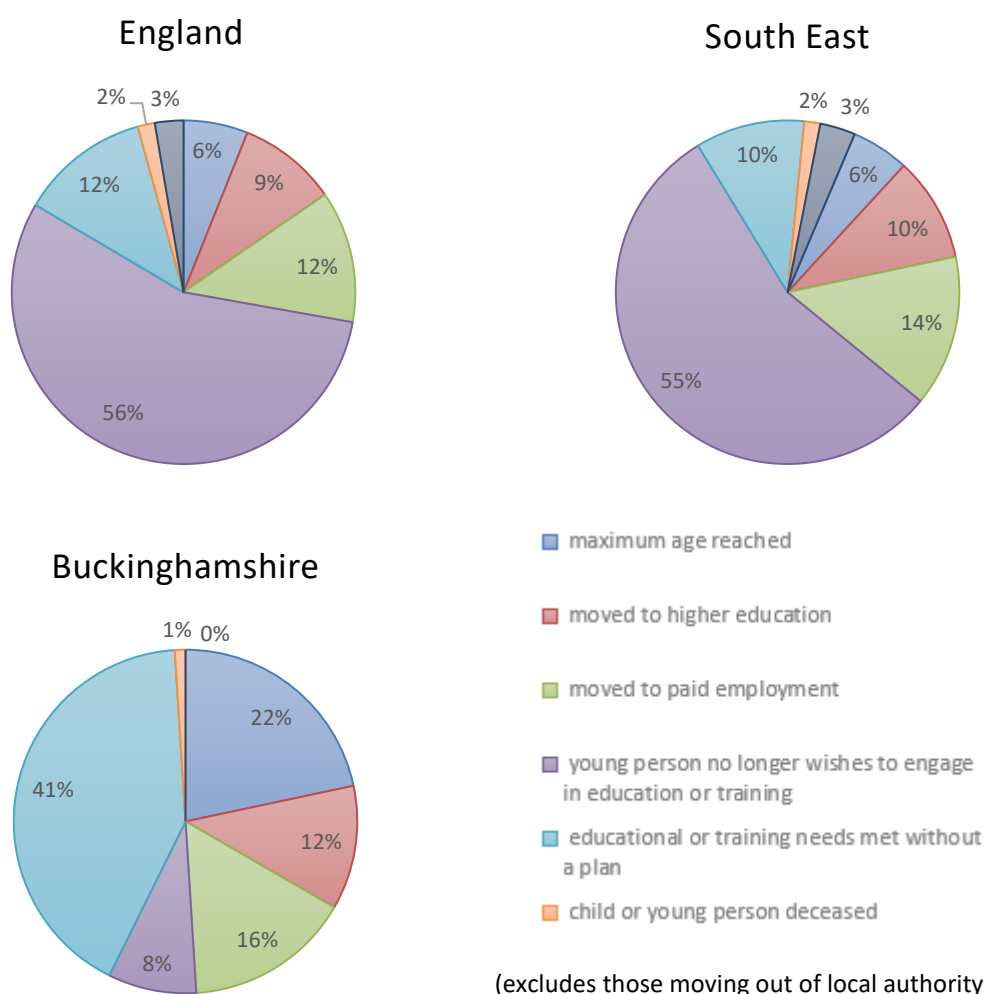
These suggest that in Buckinghamshire children's needs are developing, or are being identified, later.

When all EHCP holders are considered, rather than just new EHCP holders, Buckinghamshire is closer to national and regional averages implying that the later issuing of new plans was less pronounced in the past.

All EHCPs by age at issue of first ECHP	England	South East	Buckinghamshire
Under 5	24.6%	25.6%	20.2%
Age 5 to 10	49.1%	49.0%	51.4%
Age 11 to 15	23.0%	22.6%	25.5%
Age 16 to 19	3.2%	2.7%	2.8%
Age 20 to 25	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%

Ceasing EHCPs

Reasons for Ceasing EHC Plans



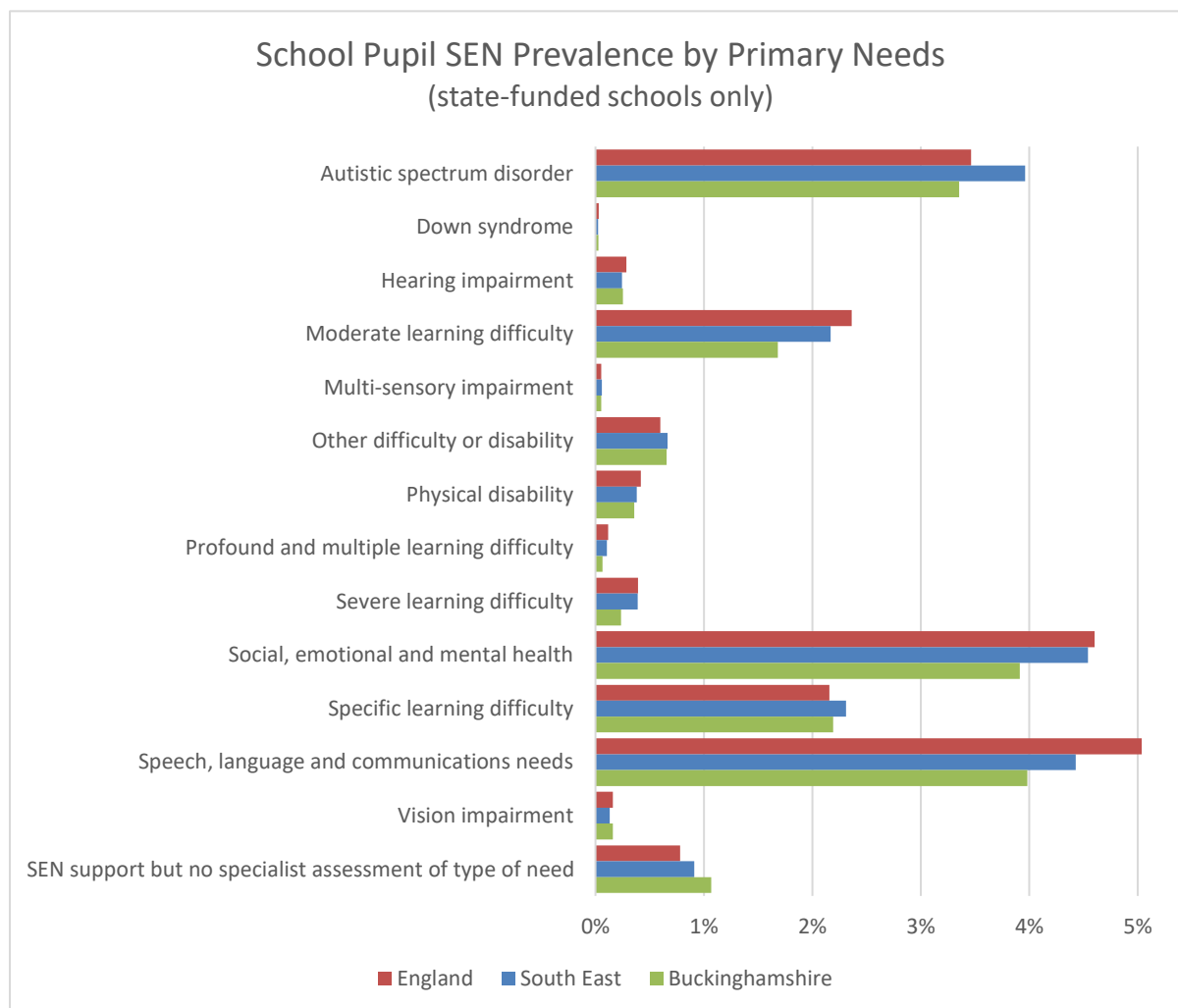
Buckinghamshire is an outlier in the reasons given for the ceasing of plans. Nationally and regionally more than half of plans that are ceased are explained as “young person no longer wishes to engage in education or training”: in Bucks this is less than 10%. In Bucks however 41% of plans are ceased because the maximum age has been reached.

This pattern is reflected in the ages of those whose plans are ceased.

EHCPs ceased by age group (excluding moving out of area)	England	South East	Buckinghamshire
Under 16	2.9%	3.0%	1.4%
Age 16 to 19	41.4%	45.0%	27.1%
Age 20 to 24	49.6%	46.6%	49.5%
Age 25	6.1%	5.4%	22.0%

Designated Primary Needs

Primary needs are reported by schools in the school census for pupils with EHC Plans or who receive SEN support.



Prevalence of moderate learning difficulties, social, emotional and mental health needs, and speech, language and communication difficulties each seem to be lower in Buckinghamshire schools than regionally or nationally.

ⁱ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england>. Most recent release: 11th June 2026.

ⁱⁱ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/education-health-and-care-plans>. Most recent release 25th June 2026.

ⁱⁱⁱ South East Region includes: Bracknell Forest, Brighton and Hove, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Kent, Medway, Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire, Portsmouth, Reading, Slough, Southampton, Surrey, West Berkshire, West Sussex, Windsor and Maidenhead, Wokingham