

This document is not exhaustive; it is intended as a quick overview and was produced for our SEND events in March 2026 where we talked about the issues in more detail.

At a glance...

March 2026

Changes to health systems: ICBs - Integrated Care Boards

What is it

Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) are organisations within the NHS that are responsible for planning and commissioning local services, such as hospitals and community care.

They manage a lot of the budget for their area and are responsible for making services meet local need.

NHS Sussex and NHS Surrey are merging. Whilst the ICB area is getting bigger, there is a shift to more local decision making.

What we know

- NHS Sussex covers the areas of East Sussex, Brighton & Hove, and West Sussex.
- From 1st April 2026, NHS Sussex and NHS Surrey Heartlands are merging. They will become NHS Surrey and Sussex.
- This is being done to meet national targets of cutting running costs by 50%. (This 50% cut is to the ICB running costs, **not** to the actual services they arrange.)
- Care continues as normal; the new ICB will plan and fund services, and monitor the organisations that provide services.
- The NHS is shifting more towards prevention and community-based care. However, we know SEND cannot be 'prevented', and the law protects it from being overlooked.
- The ICB still has legal responsibilities for some key areas affecting children and young people with SEND. This includes health advice and provision in EHCPs, continuing care, and support for learning disabilities and autism.
- There will be significant cuts to ICB staffing.

What we don't know

- This new structure might shift how commissioning decisions for children's community health services, mental health support, and specialist SEND health services are planned and delivered across the wider area. We don't know what this will look like, or how decisions will be made where some ICB functions are being shifted to regional teams or neighbourhood providers.
- How quickly services will become more consistent and operating effectively across Sussex and Surrey.
- Where some services and responsibilities will eventually sit in the long term.
- How quickly the new ICB can realistically deliver changes. It depends on staffing changes, new regional working, and digital/data restructuring still to come.

What do you think?

Share your views, concerns, and hopes here

