

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Update on HNB &amp; SEND Innovation &amp; Improvement Programme</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Schools Forum on 16 March 2022
<b>WARD</b>	None Specific
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	Director of Children's Services - Helen Watson

**OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

This reports forms part of regular reporting to Schools Forum, informing areas of statutory decision making and improving visibility and consultation on wider Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) financial matters.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Schools Forum is asked to note the update on key programme actions and the Safety Valve Programme.

**SUMMARY OF REPORT**

The report provides Schools Forum with an update on the High Needs Block, SEND Innovation & Improvement Programme and associated deficit management plan.

### **Update on the High Needs Block & SEND Innovation & Improvement Programme**

#### **.01 Purpose of the Report**

To provide Schools Forum with an update on the High Needs Block, SEND Innovation & Improvement Programme and deficit management plan.

#### **.02 Recommendation**

Schools Forum is asked to note the update on key programme actions and the Safety Valve Programme.

#### **.03 Background**

As with many other local authorities, Wokingham continues to face significant challenges in balancing available High Needs Block resources with meeting the needs of local children and young people with SEN.

An in-year deficit of £4.1m is forecast for the 2021/22 financial year, with a cumulative deficit of £10.6m forecast by the end of March 2022.

Under the governance of the SEND Innovation & Improvement Programme the local authority seeks to work in partnership with schools, families and a range of stakeholders to identify and deliver a sustainable approach to SEND within the borough.

This report provides an update on the significant programme of work ongoing, the focus of the SEND Improvement Board over the coming months, and Wokingham's participation in the Department for Education's Safety Valve Programme from September 2022.

#### **.04 Children & Young People with SEND in Wokingham**

As previously reported the number of children and young people in Wokingham with an EHCP has risen significantly over recent years with the rate of increase yet to slow.

Projections for the coming years through to 2025 show a continued rise in numbers, particularly within key primary need categories, providing significant challenge to ensuring sufficient good quality, local provision.

Modelling undertaken in the autumn projected 1,466 funded EHCPs in 2022. Actual data shows that this calendar year started with 1,488. While growth and demand continues, benchmarking indicates that Wokingham remains below the national picture.

Further information is available in Appendix A & B.

## .05 **Update on Key Programme Actions**

### **SEND Innovation & Improvement Programme**

1. **SEND Service (ADMIN)** see Appendix C for SEND team performance data.
2. **Ordinarily Available** see Appendix D.
3. **Sufficiency, Resource Base and Local Area Need**
  - The sufficiency work, resource base review, and local area need data being looked at under the governance of the IIP are being pulled into one paper with several proposals.
  - The work has highlighted several issues historically around data, lack of SLA's and clarity and provision in the local area.
  - The paper will cover the current landscape and need focused on resource base provision, possible SEND Units, Specialist Provision and pressures and recommendations to be taken to Children's Leadership Team and the Borough Education Partnership to agree steps forward.
4. **Transport (SEND)** SEND Transport Panel is in action and all processes are now in place following transport review and need.

#### **Actions already taken:**

1. Commissioning capacity to start SLA process with all specialist provision, starting with Foundry College.
2. Support Service proposal to focus on K coded children with all mainstream settings
3. Ordinarily Available roll out
4. Annual Review and PFA / Transitions Process and changes
5. Projection and Provision investment (at business case stage)
6. SFA / DFE joint working on HNB

### **Education Other Than At School**

A significant rise in EOTAS packages has been seen, along with an increase in the complexity of children requiring those packages, linked to individual needs.

Historically the number of EOTAS has been very low however this has now risen to 14 with a cumulative cost of £400,000 + to the HNB.

Increase due to lack of provision.

## **Foundry Review**

Review approach in partnership with Foundry College has been progressing well with stage 1 now completed. Through the IIP, with support from commissioning and Foundry a one-year SLA will be in place by early summer. This will then further develop into a new SLA with ongoing work to develop a five-year strategic plan and budget setting around need based on the four key deliverables.

Permanently Excluded, Medically Vulnerable, Alternative Provision, and Outreach.

### **.06 Safety Valve Programme**

In 2020/21, the Department for Education introduced the 'safety valve' intervention programme for those local authorities with the very highest percentage DSG deficits, recognising that help would be needed for these authorities to turn things around in a short space of time.

The programme required those local authorities to develop substantial plans for reform to their high needs systems and associated spending, with support and challenge from the department, to rapidly place them on a sustainable footing.

*Above extract taken from [‘Sustainable high needs systems: learning from the ‘safety valve’ intervention programme’](#).*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/creating-sustainable-high-needs-systems/sustainable-high-needs-systems-learning-from-the-safety-valve-intervention-programme#:~:text=In%202020%2D21%2C%20the%20Department,a%20short%20space%20of%20time>.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> February 2022 the DfE wrote to Wokingham Borough Council to confirm that the LA will shortly be invited to take part in the 'safety valve' intervention programme during the 2022/23 financial year. The aim of the programme is to agree a package of reform to the high needs system that will bring the DSG deficit under control.

The DfE will run two rounds of the programme over the coming 12 months with Wokingham taking part in the second round from September 2022.

Delivery of the programme to date has focussed on two principal goals, viewed as critical for local authorities' to reach financial sustainability:

- appropriately managing demand for EHCPs, including assessment processes that are fit for purpose;
- use of appropriate and cost-effective provision. This includes ensuring mainstream schools are equipped and encouraged to meet needs where possible, whilst maintaining high standards for all pupils.

Learning from previous safety valve interventions challenges across 5 key headings in meeting the above goals:

- Early Intervention Focus
- Increased SEN Support Offer
- Review EHCP assessment process and thresholds

- Culture change and work with school leaders
- Appropriate and thorough provision mapping, with potential development of more local provision

In preparation for the programme starting in September work will continue to refresh the local DSG Management Plan, assessing local circumstances and progress through the SEND IIP against the goals and key areas above.

A copy of the letter is provided in Appendix E, and Schools Forum will be kept fully updated as further information becomes available.

## .07 **Summary**

As with many other local authorities, Wokingham continues to face significant challenges in balancing available High Needs Block resources with meeting the needs of local children and young people with SEN.

An in-year deficit of £4.1m is forecast for the 2021/22 financial year, with a cumulative deficit of £10.6m forecast by the end of March 2022.

While good progress continues to be made through the governance of the SEND IIP, the number of local children & young people with an EHCP continues to rise. It remains clear that a significant increase in local specialist provision provides the longer term solution to financial sustainability.

The local authority has recently been informed of its participation in the DfE's safety valve programme from September 2022, providing an opportunity for local reforms to be supported and challenged by the Department's expert team.

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