

Schools SEND

1. Background

The education system across England is approaching a crisis in its funding for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND); last year the accrued deficit in SEND budgets across English local authorities was £2.4bn and this continues to increase. Wokingham borough reflects this wider picture with a Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit currently sitting at around £17 million and increasing, which has been caused by overspends within the High Needs Block (HNB).

The increasing demand for Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP's) is at unprecedented levels and if something is not done soon, the consequences will be dire, significantly impacting every child and every school in the borough.

In March 2023 we were awarded funding from the Department for Education's Safety Valve initiative, which is targeted at local authorities with large DSG deficits. As part of that agreement, we have made a commitment to reach a positive in-year balance on our DSG account by the end of 2028-29. In return the DfE will contribute around £20m towards the deficit.

In order to deliver these changes, we have developed a plan that sets out a range of measures and interventions requiring significant investment.

This consultation exercise is to gather feedback from schools as to these proposals for improvement and investment in SEND services. The feedback gathered will inform and shape the proposals, which will lead to a final consultation in September when we will set out detailed proposals for 2024/25 and seek views on the transfer 1% of the funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block in 2024-25 to contribute towards the required investment.

The outcome of this consultation will be presented to Wokingham's Schools Forum in October 2023 and will inform the decision regarding the proposed 1% transfer.

Our vision for change, priorities for SEND Improvement, plans for spending and sources of investment to fund this are set out in our information pack, [Right Spaces, Right Places: Working Together to Improve SEND Education](#).

Please view this information before you answer the questions below.

There is additional detail regarding the individual projects making up the Safety Valve Programme in the [Safety Valve Briefing Pack for schools](#).

If you require more detailed information on particular projects or proposals, please refer to this Briefing Pack document.

Schools Consultation

This consultation document is seeking school's views about Wokingham's priorities and the proposals to deliver the significant change that is required. This includes the following:

- School Priorities for SEND Improvement
- Proposals for Investment to address identified priorities [summarise SEND Support Service and additional specialist outreach, AP Review, post-16, etc...].
- Sources of investment for SEND Improvement
- Requesting feedback from Schools regarding existing specialist Outreach Services

Please note that although the survey can be taken on a mobile or tablet, it will be easier on a laptop or desktop computer.

You can save and come back to the consultation at any point, using the button at the bottom of each page.

1. Which school are you answering on behalf of?

2. What is your role in the school?

2. SEND Strategy 2021-24

Wokingham's current SEND Strategy was developed in response to the poor outcome of the SEND Local Area Inspection in 2019 and identified a number of key issues that needed to be addressed as part of the Written Statement of Action:

Key issues identified in 2021	Our summary of current status in 2023
Growing demand, particularly acute in early years	Remains relevant; demand in the early years particularly has continued to increase
Insufficient specialist provision, particularly acute within certain categories of need (Autism, SEMH)	Remains relevant – BUT new schools and other SEND provision is now in the pipeline
Co-production at the strategic level is lacking	This has improved with SEND Voices (Wokingham's Parent Carer Forum), schools and health partners involved at every level on our SEND Partnership Board
The quality of management information needs to improve	Remains relevant
Need to strengthen inclusion in mainstream education – increased focus on early intervention	Remains relevant
Timeliness and quality of EHCPs needs to improve	This has improved BUT remains an issue. Timeliness and quality of annual reviews is a key focus.
Joint working and joined up thinking and delivery between professionals across education, health and social care needs to be strengthened	This is improving BUT remains an issue

Lack of funding for investment in key areas has prevented some of the above priorities being addressed previously, but the new plans, which come with new investment, remains focused on addressing these issues.

We want to understand from a school's perspective whether the landscape has changed or whether these remain key issues. This will inform the development of the new SEND Strategy.

3. Do the issues summarised above in the 2021-24 SEND Strategy remain relevant?

Yes
No

Comments:

4. Do you agree with the summary of the current status of these issues in 2023?

Remains a significant issue for schools	Not a key priority for schools
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Growing demand, particularly acute in early years:

We think this remains relevant; demand in the early years particularly has continued to increase

Insufficient specialist provision, particularly acute within certain categories of need (Autism, SEMH):

We think this remains relevant – BUT new provision Schools and other SEND provision is now in the pipeline

Co-production at the strategic level is lacking

We think this has improved dramatically with SEND Voices (Wokingham's Parent Carer Forum), schools and health partners involved at every level on our SEND Partnership Board

The quality of management information needs to improve

We think this remains relevant

Need to strengthen inclusion in mainstream education – increased focus on early intervention

We think this remains relevant

Timeliness and quality of EHCPs needs to improve

We think this has improved BUT remains an issue

Joint working and joined up thinking and delivery between professionals across education, health and social care needs to be strengthened

We think this is improving BUT remains an issue

Comments:

5. Are there any significant changes or new issues that have increased in priority in recent years (thinking particularly about the impact of the pandemic) that need to be a focus in the next SEND strategy?

Yes

No

6. What significant changes or new issues do you think need to be a focus in the next SEND Strategy?

4. School priorities for SEND improvement

Through our regular and ongoing engagement with schools, they have told us that the following are the key priority issues for mainstream schools regarding SEND:

1. Easier access to specialist provision for pupils who struggle in mainstream classrooms (AND raising awareness of entry criteria for these)
2. Easier access to local special school places
3. Easier access to quality assured and cost-effective Alternative Provision
4. Easier access to advice and support – need support to improve early identification of need
5. There have been consistent calls for improved access to advice and guidance regarding the following categories of need:
 - i. Social Emotional and Mental Health difficulties – including high levels of anxiety in the pupil population / Emotionally Based School Avoidance / attachment disorders
 - ii. Speech and language difficulties
 - iii. Autism
 - iv. Cognitive needs / learning difficulties
6. Improving communications between schools and the SEND Team and timeliness of statutory processes
7. Addressing waiting times for access to therapies and related assessments
8. Addressing lack of capacity in the Educational Psychology Service – schools have identified challenges in accessing EP time.
9. Ensuring consistent standards are applied regarding expectations as to what every school provides in its 'ordinarily available' SEND support and provision

7. Are these the right priorities from your perspective?

Yes

No

8. Are there any gaps that should be on this priority list?

Yes

No

5. School priorities for SEND improvement

9. What gaps have you identified from the priority list?

6. School priorities for SEND improvement

10. Please choose your school's top five priorities.

Easier access to specialist provision for pupils who struggle in mainstream classrooms (AND raising awareness of entry criteria for these)

Easier access to local special school places

Easier access to quality assured and cost-effective Alternative Provision

Easier access to advice and support – need support to improve early identification of need

Improved access to advice and guidance for Social Emotional and Mental Health difficulties

– including high levels of anxiety in the pupil population / attachment disorders, Speech and language difficulties, Autism, Cognitive needs / learning difficulties

Improving communications between schools and the SEND Team and timeliness of statutory processes

Addressing waiting times for access to therapies and related assessments

Addressing lack of capacity in the Educational Psychology Service – schools have identified challenges in accessing EP time.

Ensuring consistently applied standards are applied regarding expectations as to what every school provides in its 'ordinarily available' SEND support and provision

7. Proposals for investment to address identified priorities

The Safety Valve programme is made up of 15 individual projects across four workstreams. We are consulting only on those priorities of particular relevance to our school partners and these are set out below.

Detail regarding individual projects is provided in the [Safety Valve Briefing Pack](#).

The budget and funding source for these proposals is set out beneath in a table.

Summary

- Design and implement a new SEND support service - co-produced with schools to ensure it is fit for purpose - to provide prompt access to specialist advice, training and support and improved coordination of peer support and moderation. This will be coordinated by a new Area SENCO role employed by the Council supported by a team of three part time Deputy Area SENCOs seconded from local schools

- Increase investment in specialist outreach focused on priority areas including speech and language, social emotional and mental health needs, autism, and cognition and learning difficulties
- Invest in an increased range of specialist provision - Expanding existing and developing new Special Schools, re-configuring existing and developing new Resource Bases and SEND Units, and developing and implementing new Post-16 provision and a Preparation for Adulthood Strategy
- Invest in commissioning capacity to review and improving the way we commission Alternative Provision – improving quality assurance, choice and financial control Invest in commissioning capacity to improve quality assurance, contract management and financial control over Independent and Non-Maintained Special School (INMSS) usage
- Invest in SEND Team capacity to improve communications with schools and the timeliness of statutory processes including Annual Reviews with a focus on key transitions
- Improving joint commissioning with health – with a focus on Ordinarily Available Health Provision, Therapeutic Services, CAMHS and multi-agency involvement in Panel Decision Making
- Implement Early Years Strategy - Ensuring children with SEND in the early years have their needs identified as soon as possible and receive appropriate support
- Invest in commissioning capacity to review and improve commissioning of Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) – improving quality assurance and financial control
- Invest in improving access to information advice and guidance - redesign and improve Local Offer website and support Developing a new High Needs Financial Banding system to ensure a transparent, fair and sustainable system Invest in improving our data systems and ensure this better informs our decision making

This table reflects the projected position as agreed with the DfE in the Safety Valve bid, but there have been a number of additional costs since, including those related to special school development and expansion, additional expenditure on the CYPIT contract and growth in spend on EHCPs in mainstream.

The proposed budget remains subject to Schools Forum approval of the 1% schools block transfer, which would contribute towards these additional costs

Additional Revenue Investment	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
DSG – High Needs Block:						
Sub Total – New SEND Support Service, Specialist Outreach, Vulnerable Learners Support	1,030,000	1,051,000	1,072,000	1,093,000	1,115,000	1,137,000
Special School Expansion	300,000					
Post-16 / AP / EOTAS	50,000	51,000	52,000	53,000	54,000	55,000
Sub Total High Needs Block	1,380,000	1,102,000	1,124,000	1,146,000	1,169,000	1,192,000
DSG Equalisation Fund (from 1% Council Tax levy)						
Enhanced Local Offer	125,000	128,000	130,000	133,000	135,000	138,000
New SEND Support Service	150,000	153,000	156,000	159,000	162,000	166,000
Transitions & Reviews Quality	80,000	82,000	83,000	85,000	87,000	88,000
Additional Capacity – SEND Team / Finance / SEND Commissioning / PMO and Change Capacity*	700,000	712,000	729,000	743,000	758,000	773,000
Sub Total Equalisation Fund	1,055,000	1,076,000	1,098,000	1,120,000	1,142,000	1,165,000
WBC Transformation Reserves						
ICT Systems & Digitalisation	450,000	300,000				
TOTAL	2,885,000	2,478,000	2,222,000	2,266,000	2,311,000	2,357,000

11. Do you support these proposals for investment?

Yes
No

12. Are there any other areas or proposals that should be prioritised for investment?

Yes
No

8. Priorities for investment

13. What other areas do you think should be prioritised for investment?

9. Priorities for investment

14. If financial resources are insufficient to invest in every proposal identified above, which would you deprioritise for investment? I.e. which activities should be removed from the list or have their proposed budgets reduced?

Prioritise Reduce Remove

Design and Implement A new SEND support service - co-produced with schools to ensure it is fit for purpose - to provide prompt access to specialist advice, training and support and improved coordination of peer support and moderation. This will be coordinated by a new Area SENCO role employed by the Council supported by a team of three part time Deputy Area SENCOs seconded from local schools.

Increase investment in specialist outreach focused on priority areas including speech and language, social emotional and mental health needs, autism, and cognition and learning difficulties

Invest in an increased range of specialist provision - Expanding existing and developing new Special Schools, re-configuring existing and developing new Resource Bases and SEND Units and developing and implementing new Post-16 provision and a Preparation for Adulthood Strategy

Invest in commissioning capacity to review and improving the way we commission Alternative Provision – improving quality assurance, choice and financial control

Invest in commissioning capacity to improve quality assurance, contract management and financial control over Independent & Non-Maintained Special School (INMSS) usage

Invest in SEND Team capacity to improve communications with schools and the timeliness of statutory processes including Annual Reviews with a focus on key transitions

Improving Joint Commissioning with health – with a focus on Ordinarily Available Health Provision, Therapeutic Services, CAMHS and multi-agency involvement in Panel Decision Making

Implement Early Years Strategy - Ensuring children with SEND in the Early Years have their needs identified as soon as possible and receive appropriate support

Invest in commissioning capacity to review and improve commissioning of Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) – improving quality assurance and financial control

Invest in improving access to information advice and guidance - redesign and improve Local Offer website and Support

Developing a new High Needs Financial Banding system to ensure a transparent, fair and sustainable system

Invest in improving our data systems and ensure this better informs our decision making

10. Requesting feedback on current specialist outreach services

Current specialist outreach services are commissioned with High Needs Block funding from Addington School, The Foundry and the Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service. We want to gather feedback on the High Needs Block commissioned services on offer.

11. Addington Outreach and Inclusion Service (AOIS)

Overview

The service is operated by the Outreach Team employed by and based at Addington School

The service is for all learners 5-19 years with learning difficulties including those with ASD or associated behaviour difficulties.

Objectives

Enhance SEND provision and improve outcomes for learners with SEND in mainstream settings

Support effective inclusion in mainstream schools

Reduce time and costs spent in specialist provision by increasing time spent in mainstream provision

Increase capacity of teachers in mainstream through training to embed SEND strategies into Quality First Teaching Budget

This service is allocated funding from the High Needs Block; last year the spending on this service was £68,000.

15. Are you aware of this service?

Yes
No

12. Addington Outreach and Inclusion Service (AOIS)

16. Has your school ever accessed this service?

- Yes
- No

13. Addington Outreach and Inclusion Service (AOIS)

17. Is there a reason why you've not used the service?

14. Addington Outreach and Inclusion Service (AOIS)

18. If you purchased any additional support services or training for your school, did this service offer good value for money?

19. Did this service deliver good outcomes for children?

20. Does this service deliver the SEND-related support that your school wants / needs?

21. Would you use the service again?

- Yes
- No

15. Addington Outreach and Inclusion Service (AOIS)

22. If you were redesigning this service, how would you change what is offered? For example, are there any critical gaps in the services on offer?

23. Any other comments about this service?

16. Foundry College Outreach Service

Overview

Operated by the Outreach Team employed by and based at Foundry College

The service is peripatetic working with settings for pupils from reception to year 11 in some instances, either in an advisory capacity with the setting or directly working with pupils.

Objectives

To support mainstream schools to identify and meet the needs of pupils who have SEMH difficulties, providing specialist advice, strategies and interventions and robust monitoring and review

To build capacity in schools to meet the needs of pupils with SEMH and those at risk of permanent exclusion

To remove barriers to learning for this group of vulnerable learners at SEN Support or with an EHC Plan

To maintain placement in mainstream school setting

Budget

This service is allocated circa £450k from the High Needs Block BUT has an income target of £250k leaving a balance of £200k

24. Are you aware of this service?

Yes
No

17. Foundry College Outreach Service

25. Has your school ever accessed this service?

- Yes
- No

18. Foundry College Outreach Service

26. Is there a reason why you've not used the service?

19. Foundry College Outreach Service

27. If you purchased any additional support services or training for your school, did this service offer good value for money?

28. Did this service deliver good outcomes for children?

29. Does this service deliver the SEND-related support that your school wants / needs

30. Would you use this service again?

- Yes
- No

20. Foundry College Outreach Service

31. If you were redesigning this service, how would you change what is offered? For example, are there any critical gaps in the services on offer?

32. Any other comments about this service?

21. Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service

Overview

The Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service (BSCS) delivers the specialist teaching and advisory support for children and young people aged 0-25 who have a sensory impairment (SI) across the six Berkshire Local Authorities. The support is available for pupils both in mainstream and special school settings.

BSCS offers two types of specialist programmes which deliver a different package of support from our Qualified Teachers alongside our specialist Teaching Assistants (QESTAs).

Both delivery programmes use the BSCS Quality First Teaching documents

All new referrals come to the Service via Health for preschool children and for school age pupils directly from schools, colleges and occasionally from the LAs when a pupil moves into the area.

Objectives

The Service continues to focus on building the capacity of schools, settings and parents through coaching, training, and advice alongside direct teaching visits.

Every school and setting have an offer of training as part of the core provision.

The training is bespoke to the needs of each setting and is delivered as whole setting, key stage, and subject area or for individual teachers and teaching assistants.

Quality First Teaching documents are routinely given to all schools and are available on the BSCS website as a tool to highlight the responsibilities of the mainstream teacher to provide an inclusive learning environment which meets the needs of SI learners.

Budget

In 2023-24 the Sensory Consortium's estimated budget is £326k – funded from High Needs Block funding.

33. Are you aware of this service?

- Yes
- No

22. Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service

34. Has your school ever accessed this service?

- Yes
- No

23. Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service

35. Is there a reason why you've not used the service?

24. Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service

36. If you purchased any additional support services or training for your school, did this service offer good value for money?

37. Did this service deliver good outcomes for children?

38. Did this service deliver the SEND-related support that your school wants / needs?

39. Would you use this service again?

- Yes
- No

25. Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service

40. If you were redesigning this service, how would you change what is offered? For example, are there any critical gaps in the services on offer?

41. Any other comments about this service?

42. Are you happy for us to contact you about your answers?

Yes
No

43. How can we get in touch?

	Contact
Email address	<input type="text"/>
Telephone number	<input type="text"/>