

Safety Valve Programme & SEND Improvement

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*- Update for Children Services
Overview and Scrutiny*

20th March 2024



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Agenda Item 78.

The presentation provides updates on the following areas:

- **Safety Valve Programme Update**
- **SEND Strategy Update**
- **Financial Analysis and Benchmarking of High Needs Block spending**

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Safety Valve Programme Update



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Early Intervention & SEN Support

- ✓ Co-designed and launched new Area SENCO Service
- ✓ Launched new outreach model for SLCN
- ✓ Increased investment in outreach for SEMH, and ASD
- ✓ Recruited additional capacity in Early Years
- ✓ Launched new inclusion training
- ✓ Recruited new Local Offer Coordinator
- ✓ Completed Vulnerable Learners Panel Pilot

Sufficiency and New Provision

- ✓ Additional interest secured from schools for resource bases, with awards made to two primary schools for first cohort – to open Sept 2024
- ✓ Opened additional capacity at Addington Special School satellite
- ✓ New Oak Tree Special School opened
- ✓ Agreed specification for two new Free Schools, ultimately providing 240 places
- ✓ Developed new Preparation for Adulthood checklist, tracker, guide, and webinar series
- ✓ New PfA Coordinator appointed

Commissioning and Quality Assurance

- ✓ New Alternative Provision model designed, working group established and HT seconded to lead work
- ✓ New targeted approach to quality monitoring of providers
- ✓ Successfully contained independent sector provider uplift requests at lower inflation than neighbours
- ✓ Identified joint funding opportunities for complex placements

Also...

- ✓ Reviewed and strengthened panel processes and decision-making
- ✓ Recruited additional data analysis capacity and created new performance dashboards
- ✓ Agreement from Schools Forum for 0.5% High Needs Block transfer

And much more!

End of year Headlines - *what has been achieved in the first year?*




SEND Strategy Update

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Structure of the workshops

Workshop 1 	Workshop 2 	Workshop 3 
<p>Priority 1 – Inclusion, Access and Early Intervention</p> <p>54 Priority 2 – SEND Sufficiency</p>	<p>Priority 4 - Effective Transitions</p> <p>Priority 5 – Communication and Co-Production</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bringing together outputs from work thus far and agreeing concrete next steps.• What will be added to strategy document or action plan?• What are key next steps?• How will this work be structured and who needs to be involved?
<p>Priority 3 – Consideration of joint commissioning to be taken forward outside of these workshops by the relevant parties.</p>		

SEND Strategy – Priorities and Principles

Priorities

Inclusion,
access, and
early
intervention

Sufficiency of
services and
support

Joint
commissioning

Effective
transitions

Communication
and co-
production

Principles

Co-Production is central - We will ensure that the voices of children, young people and their families shape our services

Ensure that children and young people with SEND are valued, visible and included in their communities

Early support and prevention

SEND is everyone's business

We are ambitious for Children and Young People with SEND

Support will be needs-led NOT diagnosis-led

Honesty, integrity and trust will be hallmarks of the local system

SEND Strategy – Timetable

- Final Co-Production Workshop – 28th March
- Write up and circulation of final draft for Approval – April
- Submitted to CLT for approval on 24 May
- CS O&S - 20th March and 26th June (the day before Exec)
- Executive - 27th June – (Needs to finalised and released by 17 June)

Summary of Financial Analysis and Benchmarking



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Aim

- Schools and LA to work in partnership to co-produce High Need spending plans with shared knowledge of current funding level and the priorities agreed for the finite resources.

Current position

- Need for EHC Plans on course with projections
- BUT Financial pressure is not reducing as fast as expected – remains unsustainably high (in keeping with national trends)
- Particularly acute pressure from placement in Independent and Non-Maintained sector (INMSS) and increased placement and costs in mainstream and Alternative Provision
- We have carried out more detailed analysis of the position to understand the drivers for this – this is summarised below.

Observations and analysis

- Fewer EHCPs (per head of population) than comparators but higher spend per head
- Low levels of pupils at SEN Support indicates that system is intervening late
- Uneven distribution of EHCPs between schools – whole system is heavily reliant on small number of schools with high levels of funding. Whilst these schools are very inclusive they are in a dominant position, which creates system-wide vulnerabilities
- Top up funding bands starts at a very high rate – there is no lower tier for less complex needs
- ⁵Top up funding across the board seems to be very ad-hoc – some schools are in strong position to negotiate special terms for individual cases.
- BUT we now have high % of EHCPs in mainstream, which is welcomed as the hallmark of an inclusive system, so we need to proceed with caution
- Comparative spending on SEN Support and Inclusion is **very low** – we are investing money at too late a stage and it is costing the system more. Recent additional investment still leaves WBC in a relatively low-funded position in this area.

Proposed actions to address this position

- **Recommendation from high-performing areas with more sustainable HN spending** – “Create a simple banding framework”
- **Review of Banding Framework** will address some of these anomalies
 - Re-established the review team: SEND leads, Commissioning, Finance and Data team.
 - Refined scope to clearly outline the specific goals, objectives.
 - Reviewed existing data for As-Is position and assessment of current system issues to be addressed
 - Conducted initial stakeholder consultations: Engaging with key stakeholders, including educational professionals, and LA colleagues in Wokingham and wider region, to gather their perspectives and input.
 - Piloted a draft banded funding formula with Oak Tree (recently opened Special School) & developed a critical analysis of that banded funding matrix: Assessing the effectiveness, equity, and fairness of the current funding structure. Identify areas for improvement and potential areas for reform.
- Need to **build greater consistency across the system at every level** – a review of our **guidance on our Ordinarily Available offer** and **Peer Moderation** led by new Area SENCO will begin to address this at SEND Support level
- Investing in early intervention at SEND Support as part of Ordinarily Available Offer, including Area SENCO Team, new AP model of multi-agency support for schools and pupils, as well as specialist outreach