

SEND Innovation & Improvement Programme Update

Ming Zhang – WBC Director of Children’s Services (Interim)

Jamie Conran – WBC Head of SEND

Jonathan Wilding - SEND Consultant for WBC

Miranda Walcott – Designated Clinical Officer for SEND & Clinical Advisor for CYP Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire Integrated Care Partnership

Apologies from Helen Watson (WBC Interim Director of Children’s Services) and Kelli Scott (Service Manager for WBC children with Disabilities team) who were unable to attend due to the OFSTED ILACS Inspection which is currently ongoing.

Jonathan and Jamie shared a presentation on the SEND Innovation & Improvement Programme (this presentation is also available on our website’s What We Do/AGM section) here: [SEND Innovation Update March 23](#)

Q&A’s

The following Q&As were raised during the evening.

Answering the questions were:

[Responses from Wokingham Borough Council \(WBC\)](#)

[Responses from Health](#)

[Responses from SEND Voices Wokingham](#)

New Education places

- Is there a contingency plan if Oaktree doesn't open as planned this September?

There is a high level of confidence that this will happen. There have been a range of planning meetings with the setting and the Current plan is for 4 year 7 classes to open in September 23. Allocations have now been finalised and Wokingham are placing 24 pupils for the September 23’s cohort.

- How will having 4 year 7 classes balance out with need for other years going forward?

The intake will progress in as a phased build up over a number of years. This will be monitored closely, and future years planned for accordingly.

- How do we know if Oak Tree will be right for our child? We only just had specialist agreed at panel so we now have no school named for September and everything has been handed out already to the other children that already had specialist agreed.

Any family that currently has ‘type’ named in their child’s EHC Plan for September 2023 can contact the SEND Team directly and copy Jamie Conran Head of SEND in (email address below) to have a discussion as to the next steps / plan moving forward.

- Re the Oaks will it take children with combined needs? E.g. ASC and ADHD?

YES - Oak Tree School is for children presenting with speech language and social communication needs who may or may not have a diagnosis of ASC (although are likely to be on the diagnosis pathway). It is likely that these pupils will also have other needs requiring support e.g. ADHD, mental health conditions including anxiety and associated behaviour or attachment issues, and adverse childhood experiences (ACE).

- What is the net increase to Resource Base places with the new plans?

There is a net increase of around 100 places. Some Resource Base places are currently not used. There is a lack of capacity and gaps in provision across the Borough. We are pleased that we have a high level of children attending mainstream settings and want to maintain this but also recognise there is the need for a wider range of specialist provision.

Where will the Resource Bases and SEND Units be?

This is yet to be confirmed. There is a tendering process to be followed, and the Council has been in discussions with settings that have expressed an early interest.

The plan is for:

3 x Resource Bases

4x SEN Units (2 primary and 2 secondary) 1st Phase is due to open September 24 with 20 places.

We recognise that families want to see more information in relation to these developments. There is currently a live consultation on SEND Sufficiency that families are invited to respond to, and we will be providing more detailed information will be available late April/May once all the bids have come in and been assessed. We will keep families updated on the plans.

- Will the new resource bases & SEND units need an autism diagnosis?

No. Places will be allocated by need as specified in the child's EHCP.

What is Happening to support children in schools now?

- It is great that there are several new schools/ resource units opening. But what happens now for children and young people that need specialist placements there is a lack of placements to meet their need? What plans are being put in place now?

For children currently attending mainstream settings but require more specialist provision WBC (SEND Team) will continue to work closely with these schools and families regarding the consultation process and next steps. Where additional wrap around support is required whilst a specialist setting is identified and placement secured, this will be considered at the relevant forum (SEND Panel is usually the right place to consider these requests). Families can link in with their SEND Case Officer for further discussions.

- What is the plan for children who can cope in mainstream but need extra support that will be starting secondary before the new resource units in 2027? If the secondary they start at can't support until yr 11, are they expected to change school to one that will get a resource unit later?
- Our senco works 2 days a week and in one class alone there are 4 children with ASD plus EAL and therefore the senco doesn't do their job in supporting the children. Schools need more information on masking, EBSA and ASD
- My child is in mainstream in a class with 40% SEND needs. The senco is part time.

WBC are currently engaged in a really exciting development, with plans to create a SEND Support Service to support schools and complement existing Outreach offers, whilst strengthening to support schools where they have a child who has a greater level of need.

Health now has a Senior Responsible Officer for SEND (Rachel Corser) within the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board. Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust are attending EHCP panels to support the EHCP process. CYPIT are training SENCOs on what is Ordinarily Available in terms of Speech & Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy.

- CYPIT are also not interested. No reviews of whether the provision works.
It would be good to have examples of this – please let SEND Voices Wokingham know and they will forward the information (anonymously if necessary to Miranda)
- How will you ensure the SEN support service doesn't get overwhelmed like the Emotional Wellbeing Hub has?

This will certainly be a challenge considering the gap that exists at the moment. The 'level of demand' for this service will be considered as part of the development of the SEND Support Service, to ensure there is sufficient capacity in place to best meet the needs of this cohort that require early intervention and timely support.

- What is Specialist Outreach? Is it things like JAC, Wellness Hub?

Specialist Outreach is a service offered by Addington School to mainstream schools to help support the child in their mainstream setting. There are other 'outreach' offers that provide support to mainstream schools (Foundry for example). These offers will be considered alongside the development of the SEND Support Service.

- Is it too late to apply for mainstream schools for Sep 23? As we haven't been able to secure anything specialist

(Assuming this is for children with EHC Plans?) See advice above- if LA have named type on EHC Plans, get in touch.

Communication with the SEND Team was highlighted as an issue for some.

- We have not had a great experience with Wokingham SEND for our child. School provision has been poor, and their excuses are accepted by Wokingham SEND.
- We're also currently still chasing a response from Wokingham as to how the place we would like to apply to will meet need. So far two emails have been ignored so we cannot make a decision for the EHCP placement.
- SENDPfa continually ignore emails and ignore personal budget/direct payment requests.
- Communication is vital for parents!
- Trying to communicate with SEN is like smashing your head off a brick wall! Generic email to say send email to one of the many new email addresses, which are then NEVER responded to. You call and then no one is available or doesn't know the answer, and you're told a callback request has been processed.....yet no callback!
- We have complaints at the moment as we are constantly ignored. It's not for us. It's for our child who Wokingham are ignoring their responsibility toward
- Yes agreed, WBC are letting our children down, and the system is totally broken.

Whilst we have developed processes within the SEND Team to improve communications, we know this isn't the experience of all families and we are working hard to further develop this area. We want a culture where

SEND Innovation & Improvement Update/ SEND Voices Wokingham AGM 8th March 2023

proactive communication with families (not simply responding to queries or complaints) is the norm. We also want open, honest and regular discussions with families, and there will be ongoing SEND Drop-ins (hosted by SEND Voices Wokingham) to support this.

Both Ming and Jamie said they would be happy to hear directly from families too their email addresses are:

Ming Zhang - ming.zhang@wokingham.gov.uk

Jamie Conran - jamie.conran@wokingham.gov.uk

- What is the MHST support?

the Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust has launched a new Mental Health Support Team (MHST). The team will support children and young people with emerging, mild or moderate mental health difficulties which may be affecting day to day life.

- Is the MHST support something that has already been offered to schools?

Yes, this has been offered within the following mainstream schools. It is available to children and young people who attend or are on roll at one of the following schools: Primary Schools: All Saints, Hawkedon, Hawthorns, Keep Hatch, Loddon, South Lake, Winnersh, Foundry (primary) Secondary Schools: The Forest, Foundry (secondary), The Holt, Maiden Erlegh, St. Crispin's.

- MHST said 4 weeks wait before they even get in contact to acknowledge - would appreciate thoughts on that.

It would be useful to find out what school this young person attends, and I can discuss it further with our mental health commissioner for CYP. Please forward information to SEND Voices Wokingham and they will send it to Miranda (anonymously if required).

- Is it being rolled out to other schools with the new team? If so who and when? List above taken from Local Offer

There is no definite list of schools they are planning to extend to, the list is due in November.

- If MH has been offered to schools, I wonder why our daughter who is unable to access any education due to anxiety and school trauma hasn't been offered this?
- I also wonder what WBC are doing to support EBSA as it tends to get worse as children get older not better? The council ran an EBSA workshop, but the parents knew more than the deliverers and nearly everyone there had issues with children's needs not being met in school.
- Is there anything planned to support families with EBSA?

Our Mental health commissioner for CYP is seeking this information.

The EHCP and Annual Review Data was presented.

- Maybe you should track EHCP application responses rather than EHCPs issued.

Yes, this data is also being tracked.

- I also wonder how many EHCP requests are looked at applying to the law.
- As I was told earlier this week that it was denied due to less than £10,000 being spent on my child, which is not the law. Interesting OFSTEAD are in and the lawful reasons aren't being checked.

- Not all applications result in an EHCP being issued and your delays delay parents being able to apply for mediation or appeal. I would also suggest tracking time to arrange Way Forward meetings as this just adds more delay.
- How many EHCP applications were rejected?
- We had a new EHCP only after an appeal to SENDIST. Prior to that, we had the same EHCP for at least 5 years. Currently dealing with the same issue again with refusals to assess and update.
- With the AR are the team able to keep to the 12-week timeline to finalise plans?
- It would be interesting to know the spread of EHCPs issued by year group?
- Would be interesting to see stats about the number of tribunals with outcome info.

We are committed to be an open and transparent as we can with where we are in terms of EHCP / Annual Review data (with respect to GDPR / confidentiality of children and young people) and are currently working on a format to provide this to families in Wokingham.

- I got no feedback on why an EHCP was rejected. It would be good to get feedback on this routinely. 3 emails asking were ignored.

When we say no to assess or issue a plan we write to families and explain the reasons why. We also offer 'way forward' meetings and there is also a parents right to Appeal.

- My son's EHCP did not get issued within 20 weeks, which was a disappointment, but it was a bigger disappointment that the SEND team did not conduct parental consultation properly. The SEND team ignored our representation in its entirety and rushed to issue the plan as originally drafted to minimise the delay.
- Parents' views are totally ignored during annual review. That's my experience.
- It feels like WBC push parents to SENDIST tribunal to delay funding support as the delay for tribunal is 50+ weeks.

This is definitely not the case, however this isn't to dismiss the feeling that families have in this area. WBC is committed to working with families, where there is a disagreement in relation to an appealable decision, to resolve well in advance of a tribunal hearing date. This could be informally (Way Forward), prior to Tribunal (formal Mediation), or during appeal proceedings but prior to a hearing.

- It's important to remember as a result of delays, lack of support, lack of options, contact etc. children are suffering. It's the children who end up not getting their needs met and being impacted as a result.
- The system is broken, and the children are suffering, and families are being broken and the SEND staff can't keep up with demand
- Wokingham appears to be playing the waiting game of having our children age out of the EHCP.
- I think families need to know what is happening on the ground not what is happening at a strategic level. There is still a lack of cohesion across services. What is happening now to support? We can't just be told that it will happen now.
- We were told a 2 year wait for OT 3 years ago, but we ended up going private, but many people are unable to do that. Colleagues have also been told and OT won't assess their child in an EHCP but will read information others have said?
- It's almost a full-time job trying to get the support that our children need and deserve from WBC - we have to find the time and energy to chase WBC, learn the law, respond to WBC decisions etc...and on

- top of that we have jobs to do, children to care for etc. - the pressure and stress on families is immense.
- Because they'd rather spend the money putting children in care and blaming parents

Quality must go hand in hand with timeliness. Jamie would like to pick up with parent around the EHCP process quality vs timeliness. Please confirm the SEND Voices Wokingham if you would like anything followed up by Jamie & Ming. Email: info@sendvoiceswokingham.org.uk

Short breaks

- WHY ARE THERE STILL NO SUITABLE RESPITE PROVISIONS FOR SEMH CHILDREN?!!!!!!! 10 years and waiting!!!

Whilst being unable to offer a more detailed response without knowing the specific circumstances of those who have raised the question, there are children with SEMH who are being supported via short breaks provisions in Wokingham, ranging from universal through to more specialist provision, dependent upon presenting need.

- Cherish Matic told me last week in our Short Breaks annual review that her and her colleagues share our frustrations with lack of suitable provision.

A Short Breaks Sufficiency Review is underway, however further work is required to draw the information together into a cogent plan, with a view to increasing the range and type of short break provision across the Borough.

- How do we even access short breaks?

Information on Short Breaks, eligibility and how to apply are here: <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/local-offer-for-0-25-year-olds-with-additional-needs/health-and-social-care/social-care/short-breaks-and-respite-services/>

Speech & Language and Occupational Therapies

- We waited for 2 years for the OT assessment. Part of outcome was to review 6 months later but no OTs available to do this so EHCP not being met.
- What about older children and young people? The lack of SALT and OT for our child has resulted in high anxiety and undiagnosed selective mutism, no therapy in school despite being ordered by a judge. it's a joke.
- Also, SLT not being provided as stipulated by EHCP.
- Very disappointing about no therapies support, SLT doesn't even visit school even though on EHCP
- My case officer clearly told us that the SEND Team would not consider private reports because 'it would not be fair to the parents who cannot commission private professionals' - which I am planning to complain to Wokingham for. The team did not involve NHS SaLT in my son's EHC needs assessment but refused to consider a report by a private SaLT we paid for. Thus, my son's EHCP does not recognise my son's language needs.

- Well, that's a joke as CAHMS hinted strongly it would be better to go private due to the wait and her sensory needs!!!

I am happy to speak to families individually regarding these concerns to take them further if needed. Please contact SEND Voices Wokingham and we will put you in touch with Miranda (anonymously if required).

- Our private reports were included.... eventually.

The review and commissioning of SALT and OT is currently ongoing and there are early-stage conversations ongoing with Oaktree to ensure that these services will be in place.

Information for Families

- There is no help or information on what is available to families. I currently pay for tutors and have no respite.

Information for families is available on the Local Offer: <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/local-offer-for-0-25-year-olds-with-additional-needs/>

There is also a project planned to improve the Local Offer and make information available to families easier to find. For respite information on Short Breaks is here: <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/local-offer-for-0-25-year-olds-with-additional-needs/health-and-social-care/social-care/short-breaks-and-respite-services/>

SEND Voices Wokingham have also produced a SEND Local Offer Guide available on our website (Information section) :

[https://www.sendvoiceswokingham.org.uk/uploads/U1025%20SEND%20VOICES%20BOOKLET%202022%20\(2\).pdf](https://www.sendvoiceswokingham.org.uk/uploads/U1025%20SEND%20VOICES%20BOOKLET%202022%20(2).pdf)

GP Annual Health Checks

- What happens to children that are not at school?

If your child is not in school if please contact info@sendvoiceswokingham.org.uk and we can get the letter from Health to you (GP 14+ annual Health checks)

What is going to change? We hear the same every year!

Whilst WBC has made a range of improvements (particularly since the SEND Inspection 2019), we know this still isn't the experience of all families within Wokingham and we are committed to further improvement so we can reach a stage where we are all extremely proud of the offer and achievements we have made in Wokingham. We know stability of staffing has been an issue and are recruiting permanent staff in key areas to support our aspirations for an outstanding SEND service (in its broadest sense). However, a successful system is not reliant on people, but the processes that are in place and this is a gap at the moment. There are plans behind all workstreams and we know that we have to work at pace to improve things for those children and young people now.

SEND Innovation & Improvement Update/ SEND Voices Wokingham AGM 8th March 2023



We will be holding regular sessions to hear from families and update them on the work that we are doing to improve the SEND system in the Borough.

There is a huge amount of hard work required to achieve our goals to support best outcomes for children and young people with additional needs and / or disabilities in Wokingham, but it's an exciting time and we look forward to going on this journey alongside families!