

Safety Valve Programme Overview & Update



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

The Department for Education's Safety Valve programme is targeted at local authorities with large Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficits, which are driven by spend in SEND pupils from the High Needs Block.

The Safety Valve programme has targeted the 'Top 20' areas in the country with the highest DSG deficits. The programme commenced with Wave 1 in 2021/22.

Wokingham was invited to participate in Wave 2 of the programme and secured its agreement with the DfE in January 2023.

WBC and partners need to demonstrate plans that will reduce the 'in year' DSG deficit to £0 by the end of the programme.

In return, the DfE will provide funding to remove the balance of the reduced cumulative deficit (10% of the total DSG) at the end of the Safety Valve programme. In Wokingham this amounts to £20.1m

- There have been rumours on social media that targets have been set to reduce the number of EHC Plans in England.
- I cannot comment on what has been agreed in other areas BUT I can confirm that in Wokingham we are NOT planning nor expecting to reduce the number of EHC Plans
- We ARE planning to provide earlier and better support so that the high rates of increase we have seen in the past 12-18 months does not continue.
- If we are successful with these plans, the number of EHCPs is projected to increase from 1,796 at the end of 2022 to 2,192 at the end of 2027
- If we continue at the current rate of increase this could bankrupt the entire Council within the next few years

What has been agreed under Safety Valve?

The Safety Valve programme comprises four main workstreams – linked to the overarching principles – with 14 individual projects across those workstreams.

Early Intervention

1.1 Redesign and Improve Local Offer Website and Support Offer

1.2 Implement Early Years Strategy

1.3 Implement New SEN Support Service and enhanced specialist outreach

SEND Sufficiency & New Provision

2.1 Resource Base Re-Configuration and New SEND units

2.2 Addington Special School Expansion

2.3 Implement New Special Schools - Oak Tree Special School

2.4 Implement New Special Schools - Free School Bids

2.5 Implement Alternative Provision and EOTAS Review

2.6 Implement Post-16 and Preparation for Adulthood Strategy

SEND Commissioning

3.1 Joint Commissioning of Therapeutic Services

3.2 INMSS Commissioning, QA, and Contract Management

Data Systems & Operational Improvement

4.1 Revise Banding Framework

4.2 Digital Improvement

4.3 Strengthen Multi-Agency Panel Decision Making

**What will these projects
deliver for children and
families?**



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Through this workstream, we want to improve access to early intervention, advice and support thereby reducing escalation of need and reducing requests for statutory assessment as follows:

PROJECT	OBJECTIVES	PROGRESS UPDATE	NEXT STEPS / MILESTONES
Early Years Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of need for children under 5 with SEND at the earliest opportunity. • Development of a range of interventions to meet needs more consistently across mainstream early years settings. • Targeted work to provide training and support to private, voluntary and independent settings. • Provision of the right support to meet need, including appropriate use of specialist early years provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is now a team of 4 specialist early years advisers in post whose job it is to work with private voluntary and independent sector nursery-age settings to identify needs early and ensure the right support is provided. • The team are working to assess the quality and inclusivity of individual settings • Early Years settings have easier access to support and training including weekly SENCO Drop-Ins and Bitesize training • We are also forecasting levels of need for specialist support so we know how much specialist provision we need going forward; we are in discussion with our providers to prepare for this growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment and onboarding of remaining EY Staff • Complete evaluation of quality and inclusivity in individual settings • Formal Portage training complete • Pilot of Quality Assurance document/framework, ready for rollout to all settings at the beginning of next term • We will be commissioning new early years provision to meet local needs – details to be announced

PROJECT	OBJECTIVES	PROGRESS UPDATE	NEXT STEPS / MILESTONES
Local Offer Website & Support	<p>To improve access to information and increase parental confidence in services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Local Offer Coordinator now in post - currently reviewing layout and content of Local Offer website • Re-launch of Local Offer website Jan 2024 • There will be a particular focus on improvements to the Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) section of the website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Offer parent support & helpline – target date is to be set up by Jan 2024 • Developing a user testing template and programme to use so that users of the site can influence changes and improvements in future. • Completing an update of PfA section of Local Offer • Make contact with the Council’s Digital Inclusion Lead to discuss how we overcome barriers to accessing the Local Offer
Implement New SEN Support Service and enhanced specialist outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve access to specialist advice and support for schools / SENCOS – thereby supporting (and challenging) schools to meet needs earlier • Improving consistency of the ‘ordinarily available’ offer across every local school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Area SENCO was appointed on 20/10/23 and will take up the role in January 2024. • WBC has also jointly commissioned a speech and language outreach service in partnership with local health commissioners providing outreach support from Highwood Primary School who have a trained specialist teacher. • Improved access to Addington Special School outreach • Increased investment in the Foundry outreach offer for SEMH (Social Emotional and Mental Health) in local mainstream secondary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruiting a team of 3 seconded part-time SENCOs from local schools to create the Area SENCO Team in Spring 2024 • Update Graduated Support / Ordinarily Available framework for all schools so everyone is clear what is expected from every school • Co-produce revised specialist outreach model for recommissioning to make sure we address all types of SEN • Tendering process for specialist outreach to be complete April 2024, new model to launch September 2024

The vast majority of Wokingham's children and young people with Education Health and Care Plans will continue to be educated in mainstream schools as this provides the best outcome for the majority of learners, and we remain focused on inclusion being the preferred option wherever this is achievable BUT the area recognises that this is not suitable for all children and young people.

There are identified gaps in our local specialist provision, which is leading to increased use of expensive independent special schools. We believe we can better meet these needs closer to home within our own school system and the Council has been working to fill the gaps.

The Council had already invested in new specialist provision, which has begun to open this term and in 2023 Wokingham was allocated an additional £6.3 million of high needs capital funding to address the remaining gaps in the local system; this will fund more places over the coming months and years.

These new developments are set out below.

PROJECT	OBJECTIVES	PROGRESS UPDATE	NEXT STEPS / MILESTONES
Indigo Resource Base - Maiden Erlegh School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Spring of 2021, WBC commissioned Maiden Erlegh Trust to deliver a new 25 place secondary SEND resource base for pupils with ASC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phased opening of the new provision began in September 2021 when 5 pupils were admitted to the school and the resource base operated from existing school capacity on a temporary basis. WBC provided capital funding to redevelop the Silverdale Centre for the pupils to benefit from a dedicated resource space, therapy room, sensory room and specialist SEN classrooms The new premises (renamed 'The Hub') opened in September 2023 with 15 places. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The resource base is scheduled to grow annually by another five year 7s until they reach capacity, 25 children in total between years 7 – 11 by September 2025.
Oak Tree Special School	<p>Create a new all-through special school for pupils with ASC</p>	<p>Oak Tree opened its doors in September 2023 with 52 pupils in its first intake. The school will ultimately provide 150 places shared between Wokingham and Reading (although inevitably there will be some placements from other areas).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school will continue to grow over the next two years until it reaches full capacity

SEND Sufficiency & New Provision

PROJECT	OBJECTIVES	PROGRESS UPDATE	NEXT STEPS / MILESTONES
Addington Special School Expansion – Farley Hill Satellite Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand Addington Special School capacity by 40 places to address growing demand. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WBC provided capital funding to redevelop the former Farley Hill Primary School premises to a very high standard for younger pupils to benefit from a properly equipped specialist site. The redeveloped site started a phased opening after October half term 2023 with 16 pupils in attendance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ultimately the site will provide 40 additional places by September 2025
Develop new Resource Base and SEND units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the range of local specialist provision attached to and managed by mainstream schools The focus is on pupils with needs related to Autism and social emotional and mental health (SEMH) This builds on an existing range of resource base provision that cater for a range of different needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposals were received from primary schools; these have been scored and a decision reached (with input from SEND Voices) We will be working with two primary schools to develop a resource base (lower tier needs) and a SEND Unit (higher tier needs) and we are on course to open these bases in September 2024. These will provide 21 places each when full 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans are in place to develop a secondary SEN Unit for 25 pupils with ASC and to open this by September 2025 There are also plans to develop two smaller additional SEN Units for pupils with SEMH – one each in primary and secondary (8-10 places each) and to open these by September 2025 By 2027 all the bases listed should be at full capacity providing a total capacity of around 164 places – which is 100 more than are currently in use.

SEND Sufficiency & New Provision

PROJECT	OBJECTIVES	PROGRESS UPDATE	NEXT STEPS / MILESTONES
Two New Special Free Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create additional capacity for pupils with social emotional and mental health difficulties, and for pupils with learning difficulties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2022 WBC successfully applied for two new special free schools, one for pupils with SEMH, the other for pupils with learning difficulties; these will provide 120 places each • The site for both schools will be Rooks Nest Farm outside Finchampstead • The DfE has launched the initial competitive process and has received proposals from five academy trusts to operate the school (or schools) • WBC is in discussion with the DfE to seek agreement that the Council will lead the capital development process, which is the preferred option 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both schools are scheduled to open in September 2026; we have been assured by a number of potential contractors that this is achievable
Post-16 and Preparation for Adulthood Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address gaps in provision for students aged 16+ with SEND 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WBC is currently developing a needs assessment and gap analysis to inform the development of additional post-16 provision • We are looking at the whole spectrum of provision including Supported Internships and other routes into employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBC in spring 2024

SEND Sufficiency & New Provision

PROJECT	OBJECTIVES	PROGRESS UPDATE	NEXT STEPS / MILESTONES
Joint Commissioning of Health & Education Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the range of therapeutic services can best meet the needs of those at SEN Support and EHCP level, as part of a multi-agency wraparound offer • Improving outcomes, and managing demand and cost • Increase confidence (and reach) in Occupational Therapy & Speech & Language Therapy (OT and S&LT) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In April 2023 the new Children and Young People's Integrated Therapies "CYPIT" contract for OT and S&LT launched • This was commissioned in partnership with Brighter Futures for Children Reading and West Berkshire • WBC increased expenditure on therapies by over £230k p.a. under this contract • WBC has also recently jointly commissioned a new speech and language outreach service from Highwood Primary (mentioned above under Early Intervention) which is being part-funded by BOB Integrated Commissioning Board – our local health commissioning board. 	<p>We are awaiting the outcome of BOB ICB's review of their own 'Ordinarily Available' Therapies and will be exploring more opportunities for jointly commissioned or more closely integrated area of service delivery.</p>

Do you have any questions?

