

## **Zoom Update for families with Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) and Health**

**19<sup>th</sup> January 2026, 7-8.30pm via Zoom**

### **Attendees:**

Emma Cockerell, WBC Director of Children's Services  
Ming Zhang, WBC Assistant Director Education & SEND  
Jonathan Wilding, WBC Children's Services Consultant  
Oliver Gill, WBC Head of Education Access & Sufficiency  
Miranda Walcott, Designated Clinical Officer for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (0-25) Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB)  
Helen Alderman, Service Director for Universal and Specialist Children's, Family and Neurodiversity Services, Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust  
Jamie Conran, WBC Head of SEND (part)  
David Green, WBC Manager Short Breaks and Early Help Teams for Children with Disabilities  
Carey Tulloch, WBC Senior Specialist Children's Strategy and Commissioning Service

Sarah/Terri, SEND Voices Wokingham (SVW)

### **Apologies:** None

Attended by 28 parent carers

Welcome, housekeeping and introductions from SVW

**Q&As** - Colours indicate which organisation the response was from

Wokingham Borough Council

Health

SEND Voices Wokingham

### **Jonathan Wilding – Family Hubs presentation**

See slides for additional information

No Questions raised after the presentation.

### **Post 16 Hub – Carey Tulloch and Oliver Gill – presentation**

See slide (at the end of the Family Hub slides) for additional information

Q – Where will the hub be.

A – the old library in central Wokingham

Q – What are the three pathways / areas?

A – Carey to provide more information about this including the academic levels for each pathway. We will share with families as soon as it is available.

Learners follow one of three pathways:

- » Engagement – supporting them to re-engage with learning
- » Employment – providing work experience and Supported Internships with partners
- » Academic – opening routes into further education or training

### **BOB ICB update – verbal update only – Neurodiversity Transformation work – Miranda Walcott**

First draft the ND plan for Wokingham area has been produced following an interactive Local Area Workshop. Work will be ongoing for the next 12 months to develop plans for the Wokingham Area.

Wokingham Multi-Disciplinary Team design meeting will be held on 25th February with representatives from the LA, education, social care and SEND Voices Wokingham.

More details about the Neurodiversity Transformation work can be found on the SEND Voices Wokingham website here: [Rethinking Early Support for Neurodivergent Children & Young People](#)

No questions raised.

### **Oliver Gill – Update on the new special schools**

See slides for additional information. All school options are being assessed and will be subject to WBC internal governance approval ahead of decision being sent to the DfE at the end of February.

### **Joint statement – Wokingham Borough Council and the Ascendency Partnership Trust**

Following the [recent announcement from the Department for Education](#) regarding investment in SEND provision and local reform plans, we want to share what this means for our community.

Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) and the Ascendency Partnership Trust (APT) are working together, and with the wider Wokingham Borough Education Partnership, to address the current shortage of specialist places for children and young people with SEND.

To see if places can be provided more quickly, plans for Wokingham Borough are being reviewed following the Government's announcement.

All options are now being looked at, including expanding existing specialist schools and creating specialist units in existing mainstream schools, as well as the plans to open new schools.

APT and WBC remain fully committed to working in collaboration to help provide more spaces for SEND pupils.

The shared focus is to give every child access to the right support, in the right setting, as quickly as possible, making sure young people in our area get the school place they need closer to home.

While these decisions may lead to changes in how future places are provided, please be assured that there will be continuity of support for all current students.

The council will provide its response to Government by the end of February.

Q – do any of these options have additional post 16 provision?

A – Yes, the proposed new special school would be all through to include post 16. The refurb option will be dependent on the site, our aspiration is that it would be all through and with post 16 as well.

Q – option 2 – would this be achievable before September 2028

A – Yes, we believe this achievable however the timelines are tight.

Q – would these be staggered opening or phasing opening?

A – Opening is likely to be phased over 3 years, at the different stages. If there is the demand for post 16 and capacity from the sponsor to deliver, we can look at making this a priority for year 1.

The post 16 SEND Hub is also opening this year. There are also a number of resource units in mainstream provision opening.

Q – SEND provision for the academically able? It would be good to have this provision locally. The need for small settings with A-levels for academic young people is really needed.

A – We are looking to provide this via our mainstream resource provisions, where young people access their GCSE's and then carry onto 6<sup>th</sup> form.

Q – The next year of school leavers is a high birth rate, what will be available for them in 2027.

A – The SEND Hub will open in 2026 at the old Library in Wokingham town centre. The interior design has been co-designed with young people. There are also plans to expand secondary provision with two secondary schools resource units are planned for 2026 and another planned for 2027. There are another 2 possibly as well.

A – Chiltern Way also has additional post 16 places, which are now open

Q – it would be good to understand what offers will be available academic and vocational. FE not always viable.

A – We are investigating how some pupils might be able to stay in mainstream provision post 16 with a wider range of courses available to these pupils.

Q – is there a complete list of all these resource units?

A – not yet as some are still in consultation. Two primary that have been announced are Winnersh Primary, Walter Infant/St Pauls and secondary - Bulmershe (Resource Base for cognition & learning needs pupils) and Waingels (SEND Unit for pupils with social communication and interaction difficulties which may include those with a diagnosis of autism and associated needs). We will update with more information once the proposals allow us to.

Q – will all the SEND resources require a diagnosis?

A – no - none require a diagnosis and all are being commissioned that way

Q – question on communication with families, sometimes people just need to pick up the phone, still issues with communication from the SEND team.

A – There was agreement about good communication being important and this is an area of focus

Positive feedback from another parent - I think communication with the SEN team is so much better than it used to be.

Q – are there any primary education specialist provision places coming online?

A – There is a programme for the next 3 years, based on the SEND Sufficiency Statement and mapped into additional bids within the prospective Medium Term Financial Plan (which will be considered by Council in February). Assuming this is approved, the programme includes expansion of special school provision; seven Primary Resource Bases / SEND units (two of which have already been delivered at Loddon and Radstock); seven secondaries Resource

Bases / SEND Units; three Post-16 Hubs and provision for Early Years expansion. In the programme for this year (delivery for the 2026/27 academic year) are six Resource Bases / SEND Units (four primary / 2 secondary) and the Post-16 SEND Hub in Wokingham Town Centre. WBC will provide information on specific settings as soon as it is able. There are already confirmed public consultations on opening Resource Bases / SEND Units at Walter Infant, St. Paul's Junior, Winnersh Primary and Bulmershe School.

Q – Concerns were raised about the high number of refusals to assess for EHCP's and that private reports are not being accepted.

A – Our SEND Panel (further information here: [EHCP decision making panels](#)) has multi-agency representation from our SEND Service, EP, social care, local schools / early years, and our Alternative Provision provider, Foundry College. For all Education, Health and Care Needs assessments, the attendees consider the range of evidence available at the time it is presented and apply the relevant legal test. On occasions where a decision is made to not proceed with an EHC needs assessment, we try to signpost or recommend support that is available without needing an EHCP, such as EP surgeries, Outreach services, and provision detailed in our [Ordinarily Available Provision Guidance](#).

In relation to private reports, the LA has to consider any information provided, including advice commissioned and put forward by a family (e.g. an independent education psychologist). This does not mean the report will be guaranteed to be included in the event an EHCP is issued, but it does have to be considered as part of the assessment process and cannot be unilaterally dismissed by a blanket position of “we don't accept private reports”. We have delivered training on this to the SEND Team and will add further information on this to our Local Offer website.

Q – a year or two ago WBC spoke about post 16 and good to hear that there is now being opened, even if too late for my child. We are doing an Annual Review and need to name a school (not specialist) but are looking out of borough as no school can meet need in borough. How are these new units going to be announced as I would love to look at these schools, as don't want to go out of borough. St Crispin's had a resource which is local to us but not there now. When will more information be available?

A – information will be on each school's website, there is a lot of interest in the provisions, we will notify SVW when more information about any of the SEND Units or Resource Bases is available so they can share the information with families. 2 new secondary provisions are planned for September 2026.

Q – when are the panel consultations for specialist / resourcing bases and SEND Units ending? For EHCP's

These have finished ahead of phase transfer (e.g. Year 6 to Year 7) **Child with EHCP who is due to start or move school**, with decisions being finalised by 15 February 2026, the statutory deadline.

Additional (new) resource / unit provision planned for September 2026 will have panels in March 2026.

Q – ADHD - what happens when the young person turns 18 and is still on the waiting list, do they get moved to the adults wait list?

A – No they will remain on the CYP waiting list until assessment complete and then be transitioned straight through if they require ongoing support with medication. There is currently work ongoing on the medication review backlog in adult services, do contact the ADHD team for support if needed.

Contact number:

0118 904 6401 Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm (excluding bank holidays)

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