

Date of issue: 14 February 2024

<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b> (Councillors Shaik (Chair), Khawar (Vice Chair), Escott, Hulme, Iftakhar, Mann, Matloob, Mohindra, O’Kelly and Stedmond)
<b>DATE AND TIME:</b>	THURSDAY, 22ND FEBRUARY, 2024 AT 7.00 PM
<b>VENUE:</b>	COUNCIL CHAMBER - OBSERVATORY HOUSE, 25 WINDSOR ROAD, SL1 2EL
<b>DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER: (for all enquiries)</b>	MANIZE TALUKDAR 07871 982 919

NOTICE OF MEETING

The Members listed above are requested to attend the above Meeting at the time and date indicated to deal with the business set out in the following agenda.



**STEPHEN BROWN**  
Chief Executive

**Press and Public**

**Attendance and accessibility:** You are welcome to attend this meeting which is open to the press and public, as an observer. You will however be asked to leave before any items in the Part II agenda are considered. For those hard of hearing an Induction Loop System is available in the Council Chamber.

**Webcasting and recording:** The public part of the meeting will be filmed by the Council for live and/or subsequent broadcast on the Council's website. The footage will remain on our website for 12 months. A copy of the recording will also be retained in accordance with the Council's data retention policy. By entering the meeting room and using the public seating area, you are consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings.

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**Emergency procedures:** The fire alarm is a continuous siren. If the alarm sounds Immediately vacate the premises by the nearest available exit at either the front or rear of the Chamber and proceed to the assembly point: The pavement of the service road outside of Westminster House, 31 Windsor Road.

**AGENDA**

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

**CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS**

1. Declarations of Interest

*All Members who believe they have a Disclosable Pecuniary or other Interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting must declare that interest and, having regard to the circumstances described in Section 9 and Appendix B of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, leave the meeting while the matter is discussed.*

2. Minutes of the last meeting

1 - 12

*Minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2024*

**SCRUTINY CHALLENGE ITEMS**

3. SEND statutory services update

13 - 60

*This report provides an update on Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Statutory Services.*

*In Autumn 2021 SEND services in the Slough Local Area were inspected by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Seven key weaknesses were identified resulting in an action plan to address these. This report provides an update on progress to date.*

**MATTERS FOR INFORMATION**

4. Attendance Report

61 - 62

5. Date of Next Meeting

26 March 2024.

*Key items on the Agenda will be:*

- The scope of the 3<sup>rd</sup> CISC Task and Finish Group on Childrens services engagement with families and children;*
- The Council's Estates Strategy*

*The Agenda will be published on 18 March 2024.*



## Mintes of the Committee' meeting on 30 January 2024

### 1. Apologies

Cllr Hulme had sent her Apologies

### 2. Conflicts of interest

No members declared any conflict.

The Chair welcomed Ian Parry, from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny and the following Lead Members to the meeting: the Lead Member for Improvement & Recovery, Performance, Governance and Young Futures; Lead Member for Community Cohesion, Public Health, Public Protection, Leisure and Planning; Lead Member for Adult Social Care, Mental Health and Learning Disabilities; Lead Member for Highways, Housing and Transport; Lead Member for Customer Service, Resident Engagement, Digital, Data and Technology; Lead Member for the Environment, Environmental Services and Open Spaces.

### 3. General Fund Revenue Budget Proposals 2024/25 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 to 2027/28

3.1 The Head of Governance and Scrutiny advised that Members had agreed the following key lines of enquiry in relation to the draft budget report:

- The Council's reserves;
- The potential impact of the budget proposals on residents;
- Risks and their mitigation; and
- Savings targets and their delivery.

3.2 The Lead Member for Improvement & Recovery, Performance, Governance and Young Futures gave apologies from the Lead Member for Education and Children's Services & the Deputy Leader of the Council; the Lead Member for Finance, Council Assets, Procurement and Revenues & Benefits; and the Chief Executive.

He made the following points regarding the proposals in the report:

- The Council had not formulated an MTFFS (medium term financial strategy) in recent years. The proposed MTFFS in the report would cover a 4-year period;
- The draft budget assumed that council tax would be set at 4.99% for each of the 4 years. However, this would require relying on significant reserves for multiple years.
- It had been necessary to rely on reserves following the identification of unexpected budget deficits late in 2023. DLUCH (the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) had advised against reliance on reserves.

- Consequently, Heads of Directorates had been asked to provide detailed savings plans for the four-year period in order to achieve a balanced budget;
- all proposed spending and savings plans were detailed in the report;
- the actual amount of council tax in the first year may need to be higher than 4.99% if the £16M exceptional government support was not awarded. The impact on vulnerable residents of the proposed increase, would need to be assessed;
- the Council was hoping to raise £88M in capital directions which along with the exceptional support would take the Council to 2028, by which time the government intervention should have ended and the Council returned to regular operations;

**3.3** Members asked the following questions and received the responses set out below in italics:

- What plans were there to close the £2M gap in the budget and what concerns did Lead Members and officers have regarding this deficit?

*The Lead Member explained that officers had identified that the £2M budget gap could be covered through the following measures: increase in council tax receipts; increasing charges and levies, for example, on vacant properties; improving collection rates; adjusting fees and charges so they were aligned with neighbouring authorities. Furthermore, the Government had announced an additional £500M in grants to local authorities, mainly to support adults and children services.*

- Had the Council produced a legal budget?

*The SBC Executive Director of Finance & Commercial advised that areas of growth and means of increasing income and funding were being explored. A balanced, legal budget would be achieved with the aid of exceptional support monies and one-off funding.*

*The Lead Member for Improvement & Recovery, Performance, Governance and Young Futures advised that the council tax base would depend on receipt of the full amount of the exceptional grant - a decision regarding which was imminent. Further details of this would be set out in the next Cabinet report. The proposed budget was balanced, and all spending and savings plans were detailed in the report.*

- Council tax support information on the website did not cater for non-English speakers and those who were not IT literate – how would they be supported to find council tax support information?

*The Lead Member advised that Google translate had been made available on the Council's webpage. Another Member advised that the Council had a contract with a translation services.*

*The Lead Member stated that a generous package of support was available for vulnerable families and that 9000 families had benefitted from council tax support the previous year.*

*The Executive Director added that the welfare benefits team worked proactively to identify those residents likely to need council tax support or other benefits. She urged Members to encourage residents facing difficulty in paying, to contact her team direct.*

- What level of response had been received to the budget consultation and how would feedback from residents be considered when formulating budget policies?

*The Executive Director did not have the consultation response rates to hand but the results and feedback from Executive Directors regarding the impact of savings on residents would be included in the February Cabinet budget papers. Discussions with affected stakeholder groups and individuals were ongoing and their feedback would also be included in the report.*

- How could Members be confident that the figures set out relating to adult social care were accurate?

*The Lead Member stated that Lead Members and senior officers and members of the finance team had engaged in rigorous and critical examination of the proposals in the draft budget and identified potential risks. He stressed that the proposals were based on projections and estimates, and plans would need to be responsive to changing circumstances. The savings set out in the report (which were needed to avoid future reliance on reserves) had been suggested by each service area.*

- Was the use of 'smoothing' (whereby monies are moved from one accounting period to another) a prudent financial measure? How confident was she that the budget gap would be closed?

*The Lead Member re-iterated that DLUCH had advised against this and discussions with DLUCH on the matter were ongoing. As he had explained earlier, this measure had been necessary due to the late discovery of the deficit, which related to the HRA (Housing Revenue Account) funds and additional costs arising from short-term borrowing. It was not uncommon for councils to have recourse to their reserves when savings were not realised.*

*The Executive Director of Finance & Commercial stated that reliance on savings to cover ongoing expenditure was not an ideal situation to be in. She emphasised that the draft was budget based on draft figures and assumptions regarding central government and other funding streams. It was not uncommon to use reserves for one-off expenditure or investments which would yield further savings in the longer term.*

*She was confident that the budget gap could be closed without smoothing, additional funding from Central Government could be used for other purposes such as ongoing expenditure, transformation projects - whereas investment or efficiency funding would need to be part of separate proposals.*

- Was the draft budget aligned with the Council's stated strategies & priorities?

*The Lead Member advised that it was.*

*The SBC Executive Director of Children advised that her team had scrutinised the savings proposals to ensure there would be no risk to children and young people. Her service area, which was on an improvement journey, had made significant strides in terms improving practice, providing better early help in collaboration with other stakeholders, reducing the number of expensive external residential placements; future savings had been identified as potentially coming from establishing the council's own children's homes locally and other measures. Equalities impact assessments and risk assessments had been undertaken for all savings proposals.*

- The capitalisation direction amount changed from year to year. Had all options been considered – for example, setting achievable revenue generation targets for each directorate?

*The Executive Director stated that the budget, which included details of proposed income, expenditure, savings and revenue generation, had been set at achievable levels.*

*The Lead Member added that the transformation strategy, which would be rolled out in the coming months, was still at the development phase. It would focus on transformation through the use of better IT, improved practice, better customer service, savings on agency staff – all these measures would contribute to driving down costs. Further detail would be provided in future reports.*

- How were vulnerable residents being supported through the cost-of-living crisis?

*The Executive Director Finance & Commercial advised that the budget was the mechanism and resource required to deliver the Corporate Plan. There were a number of schemes and funds available to support financially vulnerable residents. The Council tax support scheme was funded from the budget. The budget proposals were based on projections regarding the cost of delivering both statutory and non-statutory services.*

- The Chair invited the Lead Member for Community Cohesion, Public Health, Public Protection, Leisure and Planning to speak about how the savings in his area would be achieved and the mitigation of risk and impact on residents.

*The Lead Member advised that:*

- *savings of £124K would be made by re-charging the domestic abuse post to the domestic abuse budget for 2024-2025 - this represented a one-off, in-year saving of £53,950, Cabinet would consider a longer-term funding plan through service re-design and commissioning later in the year;*
- *the deletion of a vacant assistant housing enforcement officer post and a community warden post would yield a saving of £70,541;*

- *reduction in establishment in the Planning service would yield a saving of £218,000 for 2024-2025. This would help re-design a fit-for-purpose Planning service where job descriptions and pay grades would be revised and any salary increases offset through reduction of establishment;*
  - *appointing permanent staff to replace contractors, exploring options for offering planning apprenticeships;*
  - *all these outcomes were deemed achievable and would not risk staff losses while ensuring a fit-for-purpose service.*
- Did the Director of Adult Services foresee any market-driven issues that could have a detrimental impact on Adult services?

*The SBC Executive Director of People, Adults, responded that market fluctuations could impact on the cost of service provision which would affect forward planning for the service. Current plans and proposals were based on informed forecasting and if external factors changed then the service would need to respond accordingly.*

- How would it be possible to make the proposed £205K savings in home to school transport services without it having a detrimental impact on the children who used those services?

*In response, the Executive Director People, Children emphasised the importance of:*

- *ensuring children received all the services they were entitled to;*
  - *ensuring travel routes from home to school were as efficient as possible, with taxi-sharing among children with properly trained travel assistants;*
  - *travel training (which was being re-evaluated);*
  - *ensuring children were allocated places at the right school for their needs;*
  - *the criteria for allocating transport was adhered to (it was fortunate that the main provision was to a single school in Slough);*
- The Lead Member for Community Cohesion, Public Health, Public Protection, Leisure and Planning was asked if savings to the amount of £22M in his area were on track to being achieved?

*The Lead Member advised that the figures related to 2024/25 period and he was confident they were achievable.*

*The Lead Member for Customer Service, Resident Engagement, Digital, Data stated that there were several areas in his portfolio identified for savings - chiefly, the review of ICT, the deletion of vacant posts and the re-negotiation of contracts with a better and more cost-effective providers.*

- The Executive Director of Children's Services was asked if the budget allocated to Children's services was sufficient to ensure that children in Slough would get the best possible start in life or would it simply provide the bare minimum in services, which could put children at risk?

*The Executive Director People, Children, advised that the service was on an improvement journey. Performance information indicated that risks to children at higher end of the scale had decreased as practice had improved though there remained room for improvement. She stressed the importance of a proper assessment of the needs of each child, followed by the implementation of an action plan and the need to spend wisely. The service's biggest asset was its professional and dedicated staff and the relationships they had established with the young people.*

*The Executive Director of Finance & Commercial stated that the entire Council had a responsibility towards the children in its care as a corporate parent and that children's issues cut across all budgets. Eqias (equalities impact assessments) to assess the impact of policies had been undertaken. Supporting children was a strategic priority and it was imperative that the budget be able to deliver all aspects of the Corporate Plan.*

- Why had £4M savings been identified in housing despite the severe pressures on the service?

*The Lead Member for Improvement & Recovery, Performance, Governance and Young Futures responded that the Housing budget set for 2023-2024 had been severely inadequate to deal with the vastly increased levels of temporary accommodation (TA) demand. There was a £4.7M shortfall, an inherited problem arising from an underspend on previous year's budget. The 2024/25 figure was realistic and had been risk and impact assessed.*

*The Executive Director of Finance & Commercial stated that the £4M savings figure related to regeneration, housing and property services (including waste management) and not merely to Housing.*

*The Associate Director, Place Operations, advised that some savings related to TA and that this would be reported to a future scrutiny meeting. The Housing service was working with providers to find savings of £1.6M in 2024-2025 and £750K in 2025-2026. The private rented sector provided better access to additional housing stock, which would bring down costs and contribute to savings. Savings in regeneration, housing and environment were linked to assets, other savings related to efficiencies, reviewing rates for businesses and additional rental income. External consultants had been engaged to review rents. The new estates' strategy would unlock £1.4M and be reported to cabinet in due course. He anticipated £2M saving next year in his area from reduced energy use and efficient lighting; continuing the fortnightly food waste collections, introducing better ways of working in the environment team, focussing on enforcement; and transformation work in waste disposal and the re-negotiation of the current waste disposal contract.*



- How long would the review of HR support across the Council take?

*The Lead Member for Improvement & Recovery, Performance, Governance and Young Futures advised that the executive support team would work with the new heads of service and would be recruited once all the new executive directors were in place. This process would be overseen by the recently appointed head of HR.*

*The SBC Executive Director of Strategy & Improvement stated that a large swathe of business support staff had been cut under the previous transformation programme. The process of refilling these posts would progress once the growth proposals in the budget were agreed.*

- The proposed budget was predicated on savings targets being met. Did the duplication of several savings proposals for last year and the current year imply that last year's savings were not delivered? What certainty was there that these would now be achieved? For example, savings in planning staffing was £100k last year and £218k next year - how would these savings be delivered?

*The Lead Member for Community Cohesion, Public Health, Public Protection, Leisure and Planning responded that the previous savings target was an inherited one. He did not have detailed figures regarding savings achieved the previous year and undertook to respond to the Member after the meeting. The savings identified for 2024/2025 had followed a detailed review of the service with senior planning staff and would be closely monitored to ensure they remained on target. He added that service delivery within the Planning department currently exceeded national targets.*

- Would reducing staffing in the Planning service impact on its ability to generate income?

*The Lead Member advised that soft market testing had been carried out on how to enhance and build on the work of the planning service to increase revenue generation while running it on a smaller budget.*

- How confident were executive directors and lead members that the savings proposed would be achieved?

*The Lead Member for Community Cohesion, Public Health, Public Protection, Leisure and Planning stated that Lead Members and Directors undertook detailed scrutiny of the proposals and he had every confidence that the savings for 2024/2025 would be achieved.*

*The Lead Member for the Environment, Environmental Services and Open Spaces stated that he too was confident that savings in his area would be delivered. 60% of the proposed savings would be derived from efficiency measures and £3.5M from income generation.*

*For example, re-negotiation of the waste management contract would yield a saving of £1.2M; further savings were expected from the weekly food waste collection service, trials for which had begun in March; and from the deletion of two posts, one of which was vacant. There would be no impact on critical services and statutory duties would continue to be met. The service was committed to tackling environmental issues and health inequalities in Slough.*

*The Associate Director, Place Operations advised that some measures such as renegotiating contracts at lower rates, the food waste collection would provide some certainty regarding future budget savings. Other measures included savings in the waste service, improving commercial recycling figures by improving facilities at the depot, increasing community participation in maintaining allotments and green spaces; assessing free car parks, generating additional income from cemetery and crematorium services, and benchmarking all fees and charges.*

- How would proposed savings be monitored to ensure they remained on track?

*The Executive Director of Finance & Commercial stated that an officer group drawn from performance and finance had done some work on how savings and growth would be tracked. There would be officer and member level quarterly challenge sessions which would strengthen the challenge process and the scrutiny committee had an important part to play in this. These cross-council groups would support delivery of savings and scrutinize the project plans for each item.*

*The Lead Member for Improvement & Recovery, Performance, Governance and Young Futures added that the greatest risk to not achieving targets was the unrealistic budgetary provision for statutory services, e.g., the predicted overspend in housing was largely due to TA. The same thinking was behind the drive to properly fund ASC where an additional £8m had been allocated to ensure the appropriate level of provision.*

*The Lead Member for Adults stated that she was confident that the savings and efficiency measures would be achieved without cutting essential services, while continuing to improve service delivery.*

*The Executive Director People, Adults stated that lead members, senior officers and relevant stakeholders had engaged in challenge sessions. The proposals had been formulated to ensure delivery of the Corporate plan and recovery journey, within available resources. Savings and growth proposals would be closely monitored with a need to remain agile in the face of changing internal and external circumstances.*

- The Executive Director People, Adults was asked about the duplication of savings targets from the previous year, and why some had not delivered, what reassurances could he provide that the larger savings in next year's budget would be delivered?

*The Director advised that it was not unusual for a savings stream to take on a stretch target the following year from original ambition. The assistive technology item was a carry forward as it had taken some time to mobilise the workstream and implement the measures. Going forward, the service hoped to identify and support many more people to live independently, whereby savings would be realised over multiple years.*

- Was the Adults' budget centrally held?

*The Executive Director of Finance & Commercial advised that the Adults budget was not centrally held and that additional monies had been channelled into ASC because of the pressures on the service.*

- A Member suggested that parking charges could be increased and that residents would probably be willing and able to pay these.
- How were new landlords being contacted and what was being done to encourage them to sign up to the lettings scheme?

*The Associate Director, Place Operations advised that a list was being produced and the service was engaging with local landlords in a bid to place more families in homes.*

- Had all possible alternative options been explored with regard to the proposed efficiencies?

*The Lead Member for Improvement & Recovery, Performance, Governance and Young Futures stated that two-thirds of the projected income generation would be from efficiencies; a third would be derived from income generating measures and that both were being explored equally. Each area of service provision been thoroughly assessed to identify new income streams, for example, a new income stream from the crematorium services had seen a significant uptake.*

*The Lead Member for Community Cohesion, Public Health, Public Protection, Leisure and Planning re-iterated that soft market testing had revealed that some aspects of the Planning service could be outsourced to achieve savings. This was under review and any decision would be reported in due course.*

- What mitigation was there for savings targets not being achieved? How would progress be monitored and reported to Members?

*The Executive Director of Finance & Commercial Finance responded that additional steps had been introduced into the monitoring process, as explained earlier – which would be carried out monthly and through quarterly budget management reports. There was a rigorous challenge process applied to each savings area and delivery plans and timelines would be tracked. Contingency sums had been set aside and would only be used if absolutely necessary. Some savings would be achieved in-year and others the following year.*

- The MTFs 2024-2028 listed a loss of income from asset disposals though the disposal strategy had yet to be finalised – were these figures correct?

*The Executive Director of Finance & Commercial advised that the figures were based on best estimates and projections and that the Asset Disposal Strategy was aligned to the Estates Strategy. The figure would depend on when a particular asset was sold.*

*The loss of income for disposed assets and termination of associated borrowing costs were both listed in the reports.*

- A Member asked whether council tax was increasing annually?

*The Executive Director of Finance & Commercial explained that council tax would not increase and that additional £6.8M 2024/2025; £5.58M in 2025/2026, £5.9M 2026/202, £6.3M in 2027-2028 were being allocated.*

- Were council property rents being collected in a timely manner?

*The Associate Director, Place Operations stated that savings and further income generation was expected in the property service through undertaking rent reviews and appeals and ongoing improvements to service provision.*

**Action:** The Associate Director undertook to request the property team to inform the Committee how much rent was currently outstanding.

- What were the big impact savings in MTFs?

*The Lead Member for Improvement & Recovery, Performance, Governance and Young Futures stated that the Council's reliance on the capitalisation direction was diminishing, and receipt of exceptional support would reduce this further and help deliver savings via the transformation project which would help reduce staff by a third, improve IT provision and customer services. Further details would be provided in a future Cabinet report.*

- Members raised a question about the companies that formed SCF (Slough Children First).

*Executive Director of Finance & Commercial advised that there remained only three companies which were being wound down. An update report would be submitted to Cabinet shortly.*

- Members asked about licensing fees for houses of multiple occupation (HMOs).

*The Associate Director advised that these had been very competitive when first introduced. These were being reviewed and that a further report to Cabinet would be submitted shortly.*

**Action:** The Associate Director to confirm whether the amended charges would be introduced in-year or be part of the following year's budget proposals.

*The Executive Director of Finance & Commercial advised that these varied from one service area to another. The Associate Director stated that a benchmarking exercise was being undertaken, and the higher fee criteria was being applied to these, where possible,*

**Action:** *The Associate Director undertook to ask the Group Manager from the Community Safety team to circulate the fee structure to Members.*

- What factors had been taken into consideration when formulating the pricing scheme in the fee structure including the actual costs of providing a service? What level of discretion did the service have when setting these?

*The Executive Director of Finance & Commercial stated that a detailed benchmarking review had been carried out taking into account current market conditions. In cases where there was no increase in fees, it may be that the charges had been set at a significantly high rate in the first instance or was at the top of what the market could sustain.*

*The Lead Member for Improvement & Recovery, Performance, Governance and Young Futures added that the current fee structure was a draft, and the final version would be an evidence-based fee structure.*

- Would it be possible to reduce the fee for parking permits from £75 to £50 as this would be more affordable for residents? Could first half hour free parking in commercial areas be implemented to encourage shoppers?

*The Associate Director advised that controlled parking zone (CPZ) permits, one challenge was to look at benchmarking, so that when compared to Windsor and Maidenhead, the charges were higher for a second permit. The aim was to ensure better road and parking management and ensuring turnover of vehicles coming in and out commercial areas. It was often business owners who parked all day outside their own commercial premises. There was an issue of inconsiderate parking across the borough not simply outside businesses. The suggested 30-minutes free parking would also be very difficult in terms of enforcement.*

- Members queried the figures for sports pitch charges.

*The Executive Director of Finance & Commercial advised that the charges were correct but the percentage figures may be incorrect – she would clarify this after the meeting.*

### 3.4 Recommendations

Following extensive discussion, Committee Members proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed that four recommendations (set out below) would be made to Cabinet for their consideration.

**Resolved** – To recommend that:

- Cabinet considers the potential benefit in retaining the knowledge and skill set of planning officers in order to support the Planning Service to generate income (to offset the necessary savings);
- Cabinet ensures any savings or fee increases do not have a [serious] detrimental impact on residents;
- Cabinet gives consideration to widening the scope of parking permits and charges across the town as part of its fees and charges in the budget; and
- Detailed, regular, up-to-date information about the progress of delivery of savings [and risk of overspend] be made available to CISC to enable scrutiny members to hold Cabinet to account on delivery and assist related policy development and implementation of policy where necessary.

The report was noted.

## Slough Borough Council

<b>Report To:</b>	Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee
<b>Date:</b>	Thursday 22 <sup>nd</sup> February 2024
<b>Subject:</b>	SEND Statutory Services Update February 2024
<b>Chief Officer:</b>	Sue Butcher, Executive Director People: Children
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Neil Hoskinson, Director of Education
<b>Ward(s):</b>	All
<b>Exempt:</b>	No

### 1. Background

- 1.1 This report provides an update on SEND Statutory Services. In Autumn 2021 Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) services in the Slough Local Area were inspected by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Seven weaknesses were identified and it was determined that a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) was required to address these.

#### Written statement of action for SEND – Slough Borough Council

- 1.2. As part of the oversight of the SEND improvement journey, the Department for Education (DfE) hold quarterly monitoring visits and, as a result of the lack of progress made to address the weaknesses evident in their February visit, the Secretary of State for Education issued a Statutory Direction to SBC's SEND Services. This included extending the remit of the Children's Services Commissioner, Paul Moffatt, to include SEND functions.

#### Statutory direction issued to Slough Borough Council

- 1.3. A SEND 0-25 Partnership Board oversees the transformation of SEND services in Slough and includes health, social care, school and parent representatives. Their work is supported by a self-evaluation framework and a data dashboard to ensure that they have a good understanding of the improvements in frontline practice. This ensures a solid understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their workforce and the needs and quality of the services being provided. The Board is supported by DfE staff including a SEND Adviser appointed to provide expert advice. The Board approved a new SEND Improvement Action Plan in the Summer of 2023 to give renewed focus to the improvement journey.

### Recommendation/s

For the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee to note this report for information and offer any observations, bearing in mind the uniqueness of their viewpoint arising from the duality of Councillors' role in this regard.

### DLUCH and DfES Commissioner's Reviews

No Comments

## **2. Report**

### **2.1. SEND Improvement Action Plan Summary (Appendix A)**

2.1.1. In 2023 the Council entered into a Dedicated Schools Grant 'Safety Valve' Agreement [SVA] with the DfE. This was a result of the authority predicting a deficit at the end of the 2022/2023 financial year of £27.6 million. The Council undertook to reach a positive in-year balance on its Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) account by the end of the 2025/26 financial year, and in each subsequent year, eliminating their cumulative deficit no later than 2026/2027. To help to achieve this balanced budget position, the DfE agreed to provide £27 million of additional funding in staged payments up to the end of the 2026/2027 financial year. The latest monitoring report was sent to the DfE on 15<sup>th</sup> December showing that the Council is on track to meet the deficit control and reduction targets set out in its Safety Valve Agreement.

### **2.2. SBC Safety Value December 2023: Summary Update Report (Appendix B)**

2.2.1. As a result, since the February DfE Monitoring Visit, there has been a renewed focus on improvement and developing a stronger SEND Team. The performance of the Statutory SEND 0-25 Team in the second half of 2023 showed a significant improvement. This was reflected in a higher level of Educational Psychology [EP] assessments as well as Education, Health and Care [EHC] plans being completed. Nevertheless, the previous poor performance led to a large build-up of requests for EHC plans for children and young people and, even at the current level of performance, the backlog for EHC plans is only reducing slowly. Although it is important to celebrate improvements in order to build the confidence of the team, there is a long way to go to establish a consistently good service for children and young people with SEND. The latest DfE Monitoring Report from November 2023 (Appendix C) provides more detail on the progress made against the areas of weakness.

### **2.3. SEND 0-25 Statutory SEND Processes**

2.3.1. The improvement in the quality of SEND services has been achieved by developing a stronger SEND team, a targeted training programme and streamlining the SEND Statutory processes. A new Operational Lead for SEND 0-25 was brought in to support the statutory team alongside experienced SEND Managers and Case Officers. A full programme of training, based on individual skills audits, has been completed. A new Operational Manual has been developed that sets out a clear process for staff to follow in their work. This will ensure a consistent approach is followed and will allow schools, families, and other partners to have a full understanding of the processes being followed.

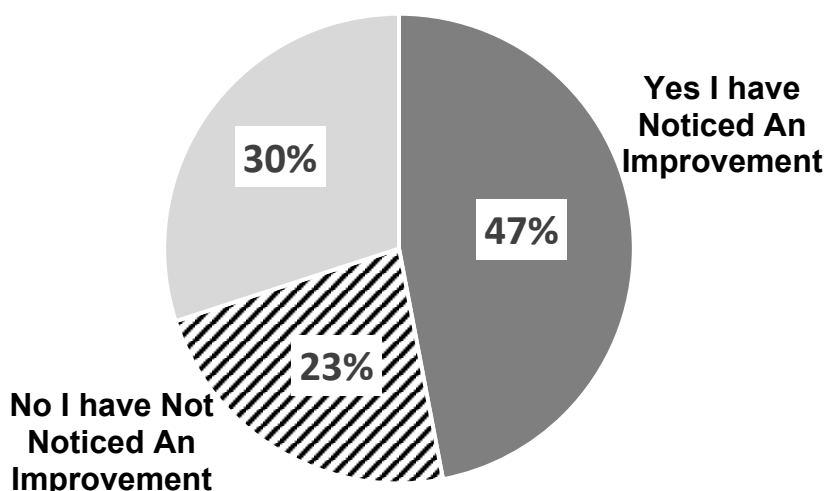
2.3.2. Another important factor in the improvement in performance of the SEND 0-25 Statutory Team has been the internal case management approach that tracks every live case from the initial request for an EHC Needs Assessment until either an EHC plan is finalised or there is a decision not to issue a plan. There was a session in December to share internal processes with DfE representatives in which they were very positive about the impact of the tracker. The up-to-date information on the process of individual cases is beginning to improve communication with families, schools and other partners.



- 2.3.3. The appointment of a highly experienced Principal Education Psychologist [PEP], a practicing SEND 0-25 Ofsted Inspector, has energised the statutory process. The PEP chairs the SEND 0-25 weekly Panel which is now functioning well. As part of the support provided by our DFE SEND Advisor, Liz Flaherty, she attended a panel to quality assure the conversation and confirmed that the decisions being made are in line with the SEND Code of Practice.
- 2.3.4. Another factor has been securing additional interim educational psychologist capacity. In June there were 130 unallocated EP assessments, this backlog has now been completely removed and all assessments are quality assured to British Psychological Society Standards.
- 2.3.5. Existing staff members have also taken on the new Preparation for Adulthood [PfA] Strategic Lead and the Lead for Inclusion roles. These are both key focus areas for this term moving into next year. The PfA lead has designed proformas and systems for collecting lived experience evidence from young people and their families, as well as drafting a new PfA approach. The Lead for Inclusion is focusing on the Graduated Approach and identifying best practice locally. A key focus of support and challenge visits in the Autumn was gathering information from all schools about the SEND support they provide to pupils without an EHC plan, including ordinarily available provision and interventions. This work was supported by the Lead for Inclusion and shared at two school inclusion conferences in January 2024.
- 2.3.6. Up to the Summer of 2023, far too few EHC plans had been produced and there was a large backlog of cases that had already exceeded the statutory timescale. As well as producing more EHC plans in the second half of the year, the team managed to improve the percentage that were completed within the twenty-week timescale despite this including a high proportion of backlog cases. Nevertheless, overall timeliness remains a significant issue with more than four in five plans failing to meet this deadline in 2023. In future, it is planned to report in more detail on EHC plans to understand blockages in the system and to ensure that there is a focus on meeting the deadline for newly received cases.
- 2.3.7. There is also greater focus on the quality of plans and work is ongoing to align EHC quality assurance with the wider Children's Services Quality Assurance Framework. In the meantime, Liz Flaherty has provided feedback on ten EHC plans that were selected for her at random. Overall feedback was that there was a lack of consistency in the format of the plans and that they were generally too long. Actions to address these areas have been built into training sessions and the Operational Manual.
- 2.3.8. There will be a significant turnover in the team in February 2024 because five case officers have decided to leave the authority. Each is leaving for different reasons but the focus on performance that is now possible using the Case Tracking System is clearly a factor by increasing the level of individual scrutiny. Another factor is the policy to move to a hybrid work pattern and officers that were recruited previously may not feel able to be in the office the required amount of time. Officers are aware that the plan is to move to a permanent team as soon as possible so two of the officers have accepted longer term roles in different local authorities. There is confidence that the refreshed team will be more fit for purpose because the service has a much improved reputation and we are aware of case officers that have recently ended interim contracts in a neighbouring authority. We will also look to recruit permanent case officers.

2.3.9. Recent tribunal decisions have not had significant implications for the Council on the whole and we are not seeing the high level of appeals that other local authorities are experiencing. The improvement in the reputation of the SEND service is also evidenced from a survey carried out by Special Voices in November. This asked the question “in the last four months, since our last information day, have you noticed a difference in education?” Obviously not all families will have had contact with the SEND Team or had an annual review at their school during this period, but nearly half stated that they had seen an improvement (see chart below).

### **Have You Noticed a Difference in Education in the Last Four Months?**



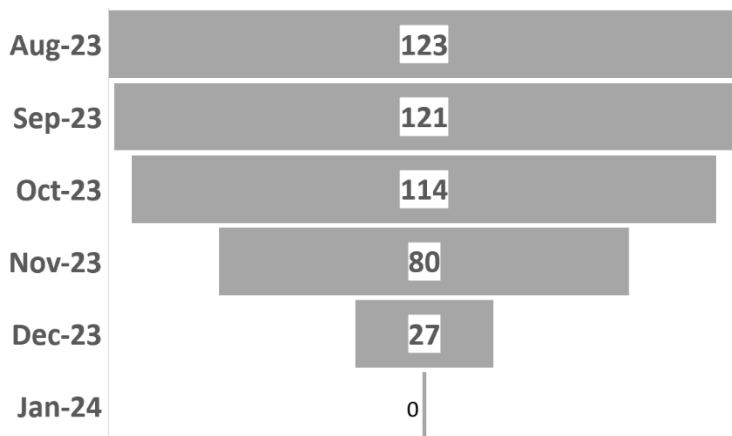
2.3.10. However, we are still receiving a high level of complaints particularly related to communication and timeliness. A number of historical issues have led to complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) but, so far, we have been able to resolve most of these through mediation and other methods to avoid judgements that could have financial as well as reputational implications.

2.3.11. Moving forward there will be a greater focus on EHC plan annual reviews and the team are on track to achieve all phase transfers to identify places for September for pupils with an EHC plan transitioning to a new setting by the February and March deadlines.

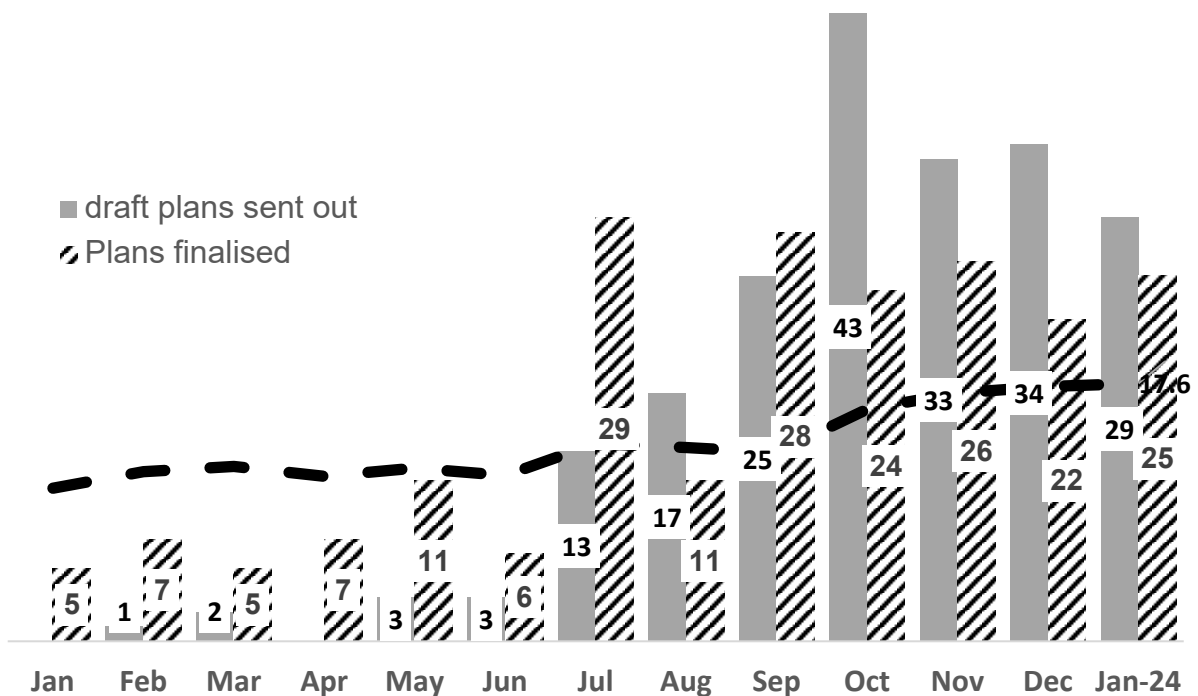
## **2.4. SEND Performance Data (Appendix D)**

### **EP Assessments**

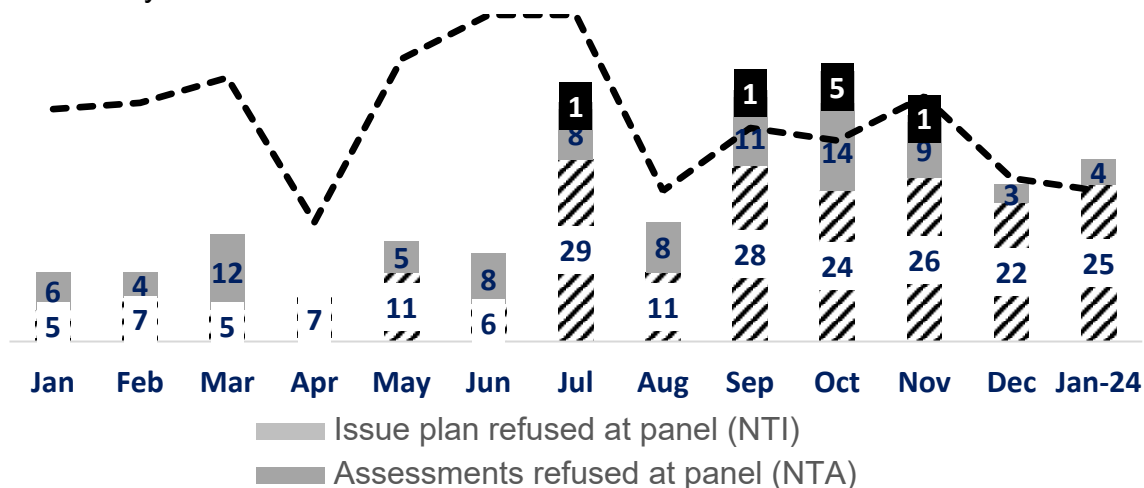
2.4.1. Following the recruitment of a highly experienced Principal Education Psychologist [PEP] and the securing of additional interim educational psychologist [EP] capacity there has been a significantly higher level of EP assessments completed each month since August 2023. As a result, the backlog of unallocated assessments that stood at 123 at this point, has now been cleared completely (see below) so the team are now focused on meeting ongoing requests within statutory timescales. This a significant achievement by the PEP and the EP Service.



2.4.2. The graph below shows that the SEND 0-25 Statutory Team have maintained a higher level of EHC plans sent out each month as drafts or as final plans since the Summer. The dotted line shows the cumulative percentage of EHC plans that have been completed within the twenty week statutory timescale. This has risen consistently throughout 2023 and ended the year at 17.6% compared to 11% in 2022. This is despite clearing backlog cases that were already well over the timescale when allocated to the case officer. However, there needs to be a greater focus on timeliness for new cases and it is being proposed to report on backlog cases separately in the future so that their impact does not mask the performance of the team for new cases.



2.4.3. The table below shows the number of cases resolved each month by finalizing EHC plans, a refusal to assess or a decision not to issue a plan. The dotted line shows the level of new requests received each month so it is clear that, since September 2023, better performance and decision making is beginning to reduce the backlog of cases. There has been a particular focus on those children and young people that have been waiting the longest. However, at this rate it will take a long time to completely clear the backlog so the Operational Lead is drafting a further recovery plan to speed up this process which will be shared with the SEND Partnership Board in February.

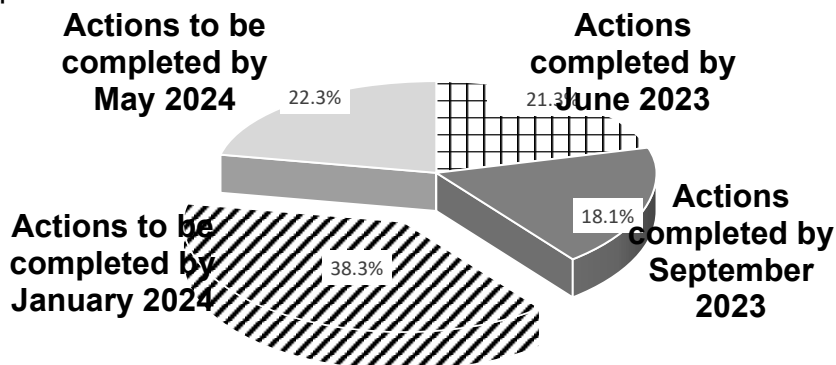


2.5. Written Statement of Action [WSOA] Update

2.5.1. There has been considerably more progress against the individual actions in the WsoA since the development of a new SEND 0-25 Improvement Action Plan presented to the SEND Partnership Board in July 2023. The plan is based on 5 clearly defined workstreams and ensures a much tighter focus on the individual actions as well as a closer alignment to the WSoA impact measures.

2.5.2. From the publishing of the Local Area Inspection Report in November 2021 up to the Summer of 2023, only 20 actions had been completed of which 9 were health actions linked to integrated therapies. This represented just over 20% of the total number of actions in the WsoA. Since the implementation of the improvement plan, another 17 actions were completed by September 2023 and a further 36 actions are on track to be completed by the end of January 2024. This will mean that less than a quarter of the total number of actions will remain to be completed. It should be noted that, although the actions themselves may be considered complete, they will not be signed off by the DfE until there is evidence of sufficient impact.

2.5.3. Completed WSoA Actions



## **2.6. Leadership**

- 2.6.1. A Strategic Inclusion Partnership Board is in place ensuring partnership working with health and social care. An Improvement Action Plan and a Self-Evaluation Framework have been developed, using feedback from the DfE Advisor, alongside a data dashboard and Operational KPI Tracker that align to the new SEND Inspection Framework and learning from other local areas. At every monthly meeting, the Board reviews the Written Statement of Action to ensure that progress is accurately reflected, and key priorities are clear. Risks workshops take place before every Partnership Board meeting to inform management action.
- 2.6.2. The Slough Schools Placing Strategy and the Place Planning Board has been refreshed with a clearer focus on SEND 0-25 including Alternative Provision and Post 16 sufficiency. Work is underway to deliver a revised Joint Commissioning Strategy with a Commissioning and Transformation consultant appointed to lead on this work. Initial scoping meetings have taken place to identify opportunities for wider delivery with Arbour Vale School. Capacity analysis of current Specialist Resource Provision has been conducted and detailed SLAs agreed for each setting are being agreed.
- 2.6.3. We have begun a Targeted Performance Improvement Programme through the RISE programme, including engagement with inclusion best practice with a particular focus on the Graduated Response and Preparation for Adulthood. This involves working with Sector Led Improvement Partners to identify best practice regionally and nationally as well as further Local Government Association peer challenge to quality assure our internal progress judgements. Other key workstreams include effective student voice programmes, support from the National Network of Parent Carer Forums, access to the Regional Improvement and Innovation Alliances (RIIAs) data for benchmarking and linking with Education Endowment Fund / Ofsted research and improvement programmes.
- 2.6.4. We have identified Capita data cleansing (our case management system) and the development of the SEND Parent Portal / links to key data (e.g. attendance) as another key area for support as well as increased system integration with NHS and Social Care for Children With Disabilities.

## **2.7. Engagement with Partners and families**

- 2.7.1. A Working Together Charter informs and underpins all the SEND improvement work as well as the business-as-usual SEND service delivery. A range of planned events have been held in person / online involving young people, their families, partners and other professionals. Information is gathered through facilitated discussions, focus groups and surveys. A Kids co-production event took place as well as a Youth Parliament session with further events planned including Breakaway, Gems, CLA pupils, care leavers and short breaks users.
- 2.7.2. A new Local Offer website has been designed using feedback from young people with SEND and their families as well as partners. Improvements are in the 'look' of the Website, functionality, accessibility, and useability and it includes a "Get Involved" section. Future development work is focused on identified gaps in the offer available and ensuring that these are addressed.

- 2.7.3. The Place Planning Board has been refreshed and will now focus on SEND sufficiency and the revised Joint Commissioning Strategy, including a wider delivery plan and capital projects to increase places in Special Schools and Specialist Resource Provision.
- 2.7.4. A SEND Participation Officer has been recruited and will be visiting schools to consult with children and young people with SEND on what a SEND Youth Voice Group should look like so that a new group can be launched as well as a joint, all reaching participation strategy agreed.
- 2.7.5. SEND 0-25 Information Sharing sessions ensure that our education partners are provided with regular updates on our transformation actions, while newly established working parties ensure that they participate in key pieces of work such as inclusion in mainstream schools, SEND 0-25 sufficiency, Early Years, post 16 and capital programmes. We have recently increased the number of school representatives on the SEND Partnership Board. As stated above, a key focus of support and challenge visits in the Autumn term was inclusion and this led into two inclusion conferences that took place in January 2024.
- 2.7.6. Slough Council and Slough Childrens First have also initiated a working group to develop a joint participation strategy. A key priority has been to ensure that SEND services work collaboratively with our social care partners to ensure a coordinated single plan approach to young people. Work is ongoing to align EHC plan audit and quality assurance processes into wider Childrens' Services processes and a working group is developing a Joint Participation Strategy. A strategic group meets quarterly to support and oversee transition to adulthood, co-chaired by the Directors for Adult Social Care and Childrens Social Care Group.
- 2.7.7. The Frimley ICS SEND board has been launched which will oversee the progress on the Integrated Therapies Project and the health workstream in the Written Statement of Action. Commissioning work is ongoing across East Berkshire to agree a new contract for integrated therapies, a Mental Health Steering Group has been formed and a new dysphagia service is in place. Another workstream is considering the impact of therapies provided in a special school via termly check in sessions and drop-in clinics. OT triage waiting times have reduced to no more than five weeks for occupational therapy. Although the delay in SALT assessments is still far too high, it is also reducing, and the Communications Passport is having a positive impact.
- 2.7.8. A key focus for the SEND Service moving forwards is to gather the "lived experiences" of children and young people with SEND. We have already produced videos, voice notes as well as inviting young people to attend Partnership Board meetings and other events. A proforma has been shared with all education settings to support the gathering of pupils' experiences.

### **3. Implications of the Report**

#### **3.1 Financial implications**

Although there is a clear focus on the Designated Schools Grant and the Council's Safety Valve Agreement in this paper, there are no direct financial implications because it is purely for information purposes. All the financial information in this paper has been cross referenced with the Safety Value Intervention

Programme/High Needs Budget Deficit Recovery Plan completed by Neill Butler, Strategic Finance Manager, People (Children). The SEND Improvement Plan aligns to the High Needs Block recovery and Safety Valve monitoring programme.

## **3.2 Legal implications**

- 3.2.1** The Council and partner agencies have a number of key statutory responsibilities to children and young people with SEND. These include duties set out in the Children and Families Act 2014, the Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004, the Care Act 2014 and the Childcare Act 2006. Partner agencies include health agencies, Slough Children First and early years providers, schools and colleges.
- 3.2.2** The SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years provides statutory guidance for organisations which work with and support children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities. This is a substantial code setting out guidance on the principles of the legislative framework under the Children and Families Act 2014, the requirements around information, advice and support, the need for joint working to deliver outcomes, the requirements for a Local Offer (being a list of services available to children and young people with SEND and their families). The Code also provides guidance to early years providers, schools, and further education providers, as well as providing guidance on preparing for adulthood. Detailed guidance is given on the processes for assessing, identifying, and meeting needs in education, health and care plans and the needs of children and young people in specific circumstances, including looked after children, care leavers, children educated at home and children in youth custody.
- 3.2.3** The Children Act 2004 (Joint Area Reviews) Regulations 2015 state that the Chief Inspector of Schools must make a written report where a review has been completed. The Chief Inspection of Schools must determine whether it is appropriate for a written statement of proposed action to be made in light of the report and if so, determine the person or body who must make that statement. In response to a requirement to produce a written statement of action, the Council prepared a statement and submitted this to the Department for Education and Ofsted in February 2022.
- 3.2.4** On 4 August 2023, the Secretary of State made a direction in accordance with powers under s.497 of the Education Act 1996. This was on the basis the Council had made a lack of progress towards the WSoA since it was approved in March 2022 and the Secretary of State was satisfied that the Council was failing to perform to an adequate standard in some of all of the functions conferred on it under Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014. The direction extends the remit of the existing DfE commissioner.

### 3.3 Risk management implications

	<b>Risks</b>	<b>Potential Impact</b>	<b>Mitigating Actions</b>
1	Failure to produce EHC plans within statutory timescales means that children and young people do not receive the right support early enough.	Dissatisfied families and children and young people's SEND needs not met. As a result children and young people do not achieve the best outcomes. Also possibility of tribunals and LGSCO complaints.	Additional locum EPs in place and revised SEND statutory processes are maintaining a high level of EHC plans. New panel processes already impacting on the quality of decision making and timeliness.
2	Lack of consistent approach to SEND in mainstream schools around the graduated approach.	Children and young people's SEND needs not met. Increased cost to the council with more requests for EHC plans	Ongoing work to coproduce a new graduated approach for Slough to be launched at an Inclusion Conference. Inclusion a focus of Autumn Term Visits.
3	Failure to secure enough non-maintained places for pupils requiring resource provision or a special school.	Children and young people's SEND needs not met. Increased cost to the council with more independent school places needed.	SEND Sufficiency Working Party established and SEND needs added to the Place Planning Board TOR.
4	Failure to complete WSoA actions by the end of May 2024.	Reputational damage to the SEND Service and wider Council. Statutory Notice remains in place.	Improvement Action Plan and project management in place to ensure timescales are kept.
5	Failure to secure the trust and confidence of families in delivering support for their child with SEND	Lack of engagement and lost opportunities for coproduction and joint working.	Working Together Charter in place, new Local Offer website and SEND handbook to be launched at the Special Voices Information Day.
6	Financial risks caused by increasing demand for EHC plans.	The Council has entered into a Safety Valve Agreement (SVA). Therefore, as well as impacting on the overall Council budget position, a significantly higher level of SEND sending could threaten the additional funding being offered by the DfE if the SVA targets are achieved.	As stated in the report, there is a High Needs Block Budget Recovery Plan in place supported by a programme of monitoring and reporting. Currently the Council is on track to achieve the budget position set out in the SVA and the first payment of £10.8zm in additional funding has already been received.
7	Recruitment and retention issues due to the SEND service being largely interim.	As stated in the main report, there has been recent turnover in the SEND Case Officer team and this is likely to continue until a permanent team is in place.	A Recruitment and Retention policy is being developed alongside consistent SEND processes and data management to minimise the impact of staff changes.



### **3.4 Environmental implications**

**3.4.1** There are no known environmental implications arising from this report.

### **3.5 Equality implications**

**3.5.1** In the last academic year, 2022/23, over 389,000 pupils in England had an EHC plan and a further 1.1 million were receiving SEND support without a plan. Therefore over 17% of all pupils are classed as having SEND. The most common type of need for those with an EHC plan is autistic spectrum disorder but a rapidly increasing number have social, emotional, mental health issues. Earlier identification and meeting their additional needs will have a positive impact on their educational outcomes and wider life chances. Work is ongoing on the latest SEND Survey and this will give more detailed data to identify whether characteristics around gender, age or race are over-represented in Slough and to ensure that there is appropriate targeting of support. Since the last survey, a great deal of effort has been put into ensuring that the information in our database is accurate.

### **3.6 Corporate Parenting Implications**

**3.6.1** The majority of Children Looked After [CLA] by local authorities have SEND and will often have suffered instability in their education. CLA children and young people are nine times more likely to have an EHC plan than their peers but also likely to not have had their needs accurately assessed as early due to these gaps in schooling. Any improvements in overall SEND services will have an obvious positive impact on the CLA cohort in terms of meeting their needs and mitigating the impact of previous educational issues. The Virtual School Headteacher ensures that SEND support is a key priority in Personal Educational Plan meetings. Where amendments to EHC plans and additional support for pupils without a plan are requested, the CLA team will advocate for the child or young person and liaise with the school and SEND Service.

**3.6.2** Similarly, young people with SEND must be a priority in Preparation for Adulthood work to prepare them for moving away from school and into positive adult pathways. This includes post 16 education and training places, support for employability, independence training and supported internships.

## **4. Appendices**

Appendix A: SEND Improvement Action Plan	Page 24
Appendix B: Safety Value Intervention Programme/High Needs Budget Deficit Recovery Plan	Page 26
Appendix C: Slough Quarterly Performance Review on Written Statement of Action	Page 29
Appendix D: Slough Local Area SEND Dashboard	Page 59

## Appendix A: SEND Improvement Action Plan

- It is a requirement of the WSoA for the local authority to report against the WSoA Priority Areas but, because they cut across a number of different workstreams, this makes internal monitoring and reporting complicated. A new SEND 0-25 Improvement Plan has therefore been drafted to give impetus to the improvement journey.
- Initial feedback on the first draft of the plan was not uniformly positive and there was felt to be a lack of clarity and clear workstreams to give a focus to the work. This was exacerbated by the number of different workstreams and overlap between the different priorities in the WSoA document. A second draft was shared at the August SEND Partnership Board to address these concerns.
- The agreed SEND 0-25 Improvement Action Plan includes five new workstreams subdivided into smaller workstreams as set out below. The updated plan allocated all the remaining WSoA actions into these new workstreams. This has made reporting and monitoring of progress far more coherent.
- At the time the new plan was written, there were 74 WSoA actions that were still ongoing and the number of remaining WSoA actions included in each area is shown below in brackets:
  - 1. Governance & Strategy (14)**
    - a) Budget Project Management (2)
    - b) Capita Review / Use of Data (6)
    - c) Improvement Action Plan Monitoring (6)
  - 2. Working Together (18)**
    - a) Children and Young People Lived Experiences (6)
    - b) Local Offer Review (4)
    - c) Participation (8)
  - 3. Strong SEND Team and EHCNA Processes (17)**
    - a) Preparation for Adulthood (5)
    - b) Recruitment & Retention Strategy (3)
    - c) SEND Statutory Processes Quality & Timeliness (9)
  - 4. Inclusion in Mainstream Settings (9)**
    - a) Graduated Approach (4)
    - b) Promoting the Inclusion Agenda (5)
  - 5. Sufficiency & Commissioning (16)**
    - a) Integrated Therapies Contract (7)
    - b) Joint Commissioning Strategy (7)
    - c) SEND Sufficiency (2)
- The individual actions and impact measures in the new draft plan have not changed from the original WSoA document and, whilst we will report internally to the new workstreams, the DfE will still receive reports in line with the original seven Priority Areas. The new baseline date for completion of each action will be different from the original WSoA document but this is unavoidable due to the lack of progress previously. The change in completion date has been approved by the Partnership Board which includes DfE representation. The plan has been approved by the Partnership Board and included in a Cabinet update report.
- The improvement plan also includes a section setting out the principles of effective SEND leadership. We have reviewed all the available Ofsted and CQC reports from local authorities nationally to identify common themes within effective leadership. This work, coupled with our own commitment to improving the quality of SEND services, has led to a number of principles that we believe should underpin our leadership.

- The five new Written Statement of action [WSoA] workstreams shared with the Board in August have now been implemented with overall strategic oversight leads for each area supported by an operational lead officer for each individual action. A new system identifies completed actions but where further evidence of impact is being collected before being put forward for DFE sign off. Each workstream area also has an ongoing risks and mitigations report. Links to working parties and other key groups, such as Special Voices, have been added. An additional section sets out the migration of WSoA improvement work into business-as-usual SEND 0-25 work. This will mean that, as the WSoA targets are achieved, a longer-term plan for continuous SEND 0-25 improvement will emerge.
- As a result, there is a closer alignment to the WSoA impact measures in our reporting and this will ensure that all actions are completed by May 2024. Since the WSoA was launched with 94 separate actions, only 20 have been completed of which 9 were health actions linked to integrated therapies. At the September meeting, evidence was provided that a further 17 actions had been completed across four different workstreams improving the completion rate from 21.3% to 39.4%. A further 36 actions were on track to be completed by the end of January (to be presented to the February Partnership Board) which would bring the percentage up to 77.7%

## Appendix B: Safety Value Intervention Programme/High Needs Budget Deficit Recovery Plan

- The Dedicated Schools Grant 'Safety Valve' Agreement [SVA] between the DFE and the Council covers the financial years from 2022-23 to 2026-27. In the SVA, the authority undertakes to reach a positive in-year balance on its Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) account by the end of 2025-26 and in each subsequent year. The authority undertakes to control and reduce the cumulative deficit as follows (not including any contribution made by the department through this agreement):

Year	Forecast DSG Deficit Profile at year end (£m)	DFE additional DSG by year end (£m)
<b>2022-23</b>	£27.6m	<b>£10.80m</b>
<b>2023-24</b>	£28.1m	£3.24m
<b>2024-25</b>	£28.1m	£3.24m
<b>2025-26</b>	£27.7m	£3.24m
<b>2026-27</b>	£27.0m	£6.48m
		<b>Total £27.0m</b>

- The 2023-24 Period 8 (November 2023) position for High Needs DSG has total forecast spend of £24.9m against a budget of £25.1m with a predicted position for 2023-24 of an underspend of £0.155m. The actual predicted DSG Deficit position for the end of 2023/24 is a reduction to £11.0m once the Safety Valve contribution of £3.2m is received.
- Therefore, although there is increasing demand nationally on all SEND services, SBC is on track to meet the deficit control and reduction targets set out within the agreement. As a result of the progress evidenced in the first monitoring report, the first payment of £10.80 million has already been received.
- The DSG management plan has five main agreement conditions relating to the following areas:
  - Demand for EHC plans and provision of top-up funding
  - Commissioning of special school and independent school places
  - Reviewing local Post-16 provision in collaboration with health and adult services;
  - Reviewing arrangements for Specialist Resource Provision
  - Reviewing agreements for Alternative Provision and ensuring sufficient places are available;
- As well as the five main agreement conditions, the SVA contains identified risks, mitigations and a section on overall resilience. In each quarterly monitoring report, the local authority has to RAG rate the progress made against the targets. All RAG ratings are currently Green other than the risk of legal challenge by way of appeal, judicial review and to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) which is rated as Amber. This identifies this area for greater monitoring and attention.
- New monitoring arrangements for the High Needs Block and the Safety Valve Agreement are in place with fortnightly meetings taking place including the Section 151 Officer and the Director of Children Services [DCS].
- There is national pressure both in terms of demand for EHC plans and existing settings requesting larger than usual cost of living inflationary increases. The Council has agreed a maximum uplift policy which, other than a couple of school settings, we have been able to adhere to so far.

- Commissioning decision making has been better informed and quality, appropriateness and value for money are the key considerations. Spend to save options must be produced on any expenditure or suggestion of an Out of Area placement. Building on this, work is underway on a joint commissioning approach to be brought to the SEND Partnership Board by the end of December 2023 with the SEND Commissioning and Transformation consultant appointed to lead on this work.
- In addition, there is potential for capital projects to support commissioning of places as population fluctuates (this is anticipated and planned for), and these are being incorporated into the current draft of the Council's Place Planning. Another key workstream is a new joint commissioning approach for integrated health therapies.

### **Rising Demand for EHC Plans**

- The level of requests for Needs Assessments is higher currently than at the time that the Safety Valve was originally agreed and future mapping shows that requests for EHC plans will continue to increase. The backlog of cases that are currently being cleared will impact on High Needs Funding in future years as well. However, as the number of EHC plans increases there are also likely to be further increases in the High Needs Block allocation.
- A higher level of EHC plans does not necessarily mean that the authority will fail to achieve a balanced in-year budget, but it will remain a key area for vigilance. Mitigations are inbuilt and based on rigorous process and decision-making, which is already seeing an impact. Key factors in the current positive position are the reduction in recent terms of the average cost of a new EHC plan and the increase in the percentage of pupils being placed in mainstream settings. The average cost of a newly issued plan has decreased from £11,086 in July-Sept 2020 to £8,478 from September 2022 onwards. This exceeds the savings figures set out in the Management Plan.

### **Shortage of Special School Places**

- Slough is still above local, statistical neighbour and national benchmarks for the percentage of pupils with an EHC plan remaining in mainstream settings. Appropriate funding and training for mainstream settings will ensure that most children and young people continue to have their needs met in mainstream settings. However, some pupils will need to be placed in resourced provision, special schools and alternative provision. A revised Joint Commissioning Strategy has been developed based on a joint delivery plan with our local Special Schools, Additional Resource Provision and Alternative Provision to deliver additional places to meet future demand.
- The proportion of newly issued plans designated mainstream as type has also increased over the same period from 81% to 92% with some fluctuation at times e.g. mover ins and phase transfers. This has been achieved by reviewing panel processes to ensure that only pupils whose needs cannot be met at local Maintained Provisions are being placed in Independent Non-Maintained Special Schools [INMSS]. Consultation processes are being strengthened and INMSS settings are only being consulted with where appropriate.
- The review of mainstream resource bases has identified some young people that have been placed that we will need to consider a special school setting for in the future as well as growth in demand caused by population increases. It will be important to ensure that we develop additional spaces, particularly with Arbour Vale School, to meet this demand.

- Capacity analysis of current SRP provision has been conducted and detailed SLAs agreed for each setting will be issued. Current placements are being reviewed for all young people placed in INMSS including post 16 college placements. The effectiveness of the setting is reviewed after taking into consideration the young person's outcomes, aspirations but also ensuring quality of placements and value for money.

### **Alternative Provision**

- Alternative provision costs in Slough have been disproportionately high compared to our statistical neighbours because there has not been a strong, clear strategy which highlights Academies and Maintained Schools' statutory responsibilities. Meetings with headteachers and school leaders, including Slough Education Partnership Board (SEPB), Slough Primary Headteachers Association (SPHA) and the Slough Association of Secondary Headteachers (SASH), have clarified the DFE principle that preventative placements should mainly be funded from the Schools Block not the High Needs Block. The current model does not follow this definition with the majority of costs being met by the High Needs Block.
- Following a benchmarking exercise looking at data from a range of local authorities conversations have taken place with Littledown School and Haybrook College regarding the current model in place for Slough schools. This has included the funding model (base funding and top up funding). The revised Joint Commissioning Strategy will include opportunities to broaden the alternative provision offer by potentially working with other external providers.

Appendix C:

**SLOUGH QUARTERLY PROGRESS  
REVIEW ON WRITTEN STATEMENT  
OF ACTION**

**13th November 2023**

Signed by:

**SUE BUTCHER**

**Executive Director People Children's / CXSCF Slough Childrens  
First**



Signed by:

**TRACEY FARADAY-DRAKE**

**Executive Managing Director**



# **In Slough we get the Right Support, at the Right Time, in the Right Place for children/young people, their families and ourselves.**

## **Introduction**

This is the Slough SEND 0-25 Local Area Partnership's progress update report against the Written Statement of Action. The report provides evidence of progress made since the WSoA started, with a particular focus on improvements between June 2023 and November 2023.

The partnerships between the Borough and Health continue to develop and this period has provided opportunities for senior health colleagues to meet with the commissioners to feed into the current review of Slough Childrens First. The ICB Chief Nurse currently chairs the Local Safeguarding Partnership Board which brings further opportunities for closer working. Outside of the SEND arena there are some innovative joint initiatives between the ICB and the Borough Council, such as the joint visits by a housing officer and asthma nurse which captures the clinical needs of children with asthma alongside the housing needs of the family, addressing social, environmental and health needs to improve outcomes for children and avoid hospital admissions.

The Slough Leaders Learning Set which began in 2022 also continues to meet and is a space for senior leaders from across the community to come together with a focus on tackling the inequalities and helping to make Slough a good and safe place to live, work and visit.

This written report is accompanied by appendices, including an action tracker. Please note that appendices have been collated in the attached Zip File for ease of access.

## **Headlines**

The key points that you will read in this update report are:

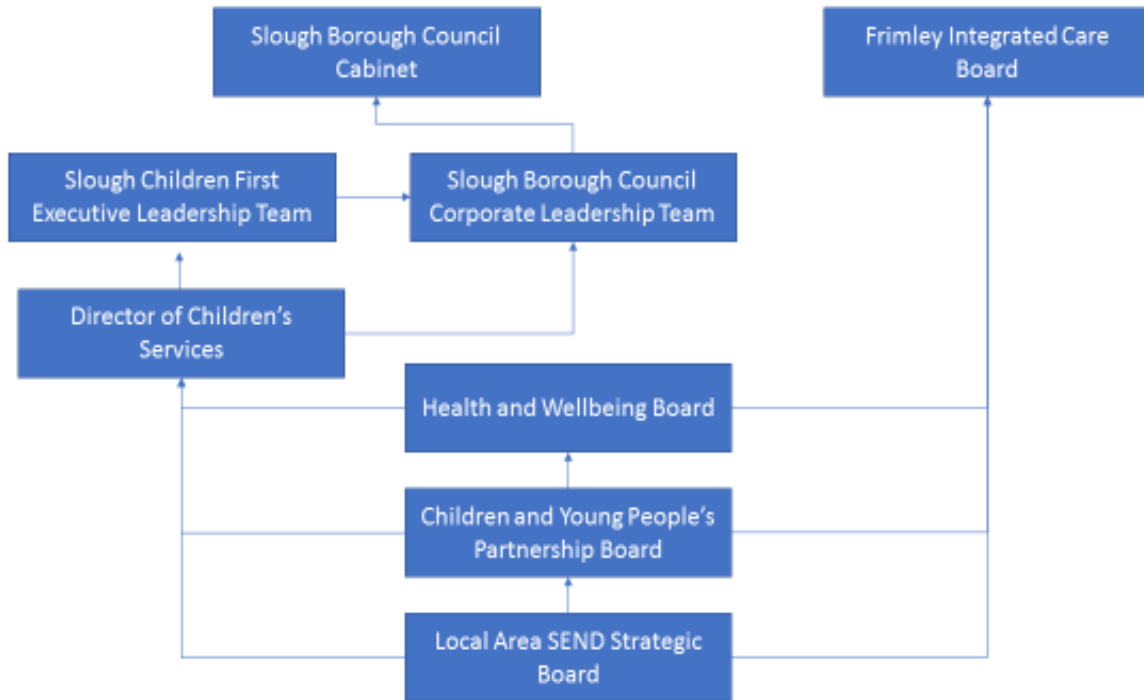
- A continued, shared local area-wide ambition to improve the lived experiences of children and families in Slough.
- Evidence of listening to children, families, and professionals, and of co-producing plans and services.
- Evidence that the local area partnership itself is learning and adapting, embedding lived experience and continuous improvement.
- Examples of changes to the lived experience of children and their families in Slough.
- Progress made against the WSoA actions since the last reporting period.
- Evidence of impact for children and their families in Slough, as delivered through actions responding to the seven Priorities in the WSoA.
- Risks, checks, and balances on the progress to achieve timelines already agreed.
- A trajectory for continuous improvement.



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**WSoA Priorities and Responsibilities**

The Slough SEND 0-25 Local Area Strategic Board is accountable for the delivery of progress against the Written Statement of Action and has the following reporting lines into decision-making forums at Slough Borough Council, Slough Children First and Frimley ICS.



The partnership has assigned lead responsibility for enabling delivery of the actions as follows:

Priority Area	Priority Area Title	Responsible Owners
1	There are weak arrangements for ensuring effective joint leadership and accountability, self-evaluation and improvement planning at a strategic level across education, health and care services [including considering the high turnover of staff and an area-wide commitment to inclusion].	Neil Hoskinson [Assistant Director Education]  Len Brazier [Head of SEND 0-25]
2	The overlooked voice of the children and young people with SEND and their families and consequent lack of understanding of their lived experiences and the lack of readily available, helpful and accurate information in this regard.	Adele Simpson [Preparation for Adulthood Strategic Lead]  Gary Nixon [Principal Educational Psychologist]
3	There is a lack of effective use of meaningful performance information to inform the area's	Dave Hounsell

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Priority Area	Priority Area Title	Responsible Owners
	strategy and planning, as well as to evaluate its effectiveness.	[Group Manager – Data, Insight, Strategy, Transformation]
4	There are limited opportunities for parents, carers and children and young people with SEND to be involved in planning and reviewing area services.	Brynmor Smart [SEND 0-25 Service Lead]  Gary Nixon [Principal Educational Psychologist]
5	The timeliness with which EHC plans are produced and updated, particularly nearing transition points, and the absence of systematic processes for the quality assurance of EHC plans.	Brynmor Smart [SEND 0-25 Service Lead]  Len Brazier [Head of SEND 0-25 & Lead Commissioner]
6	The absence of social care considerations in EHC plans, for children and young people not known to children’s social care, and in services in the area, including the lack of age-appropriate social opportunities for children and young people and limited offer of short-break or respite services for parents and carers.	Ben Short [Assistant Director Social Care, Slough Children First]
7	There is inequitable access to SALT and OT services, excessive waiting lists and waiting times and the absence of a dysphagia service for those aged five and over.	Alison Woodiwiss [Head of Transformation, CYP Mental Health and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, Frimley Integrated Care System]

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**Where are we now?**

**Snapshot - SEND 0-25 Service activity October 2023 -**

*The Right Support at the Right Time with the Right Focus for the SEND 0-25 Team.*

Please see the simple table below which is an operational snapshot of Educational Health and Care [EHC] plan system delivery at the end of this reporting period. It is placed here as evidence of the impact of increasing numbers of EHC plans that have been compiled, drafted, and issued by SEND 0-25 Team in this period. This improvement was kick started by the poor output in August 2023 when Senior Staff were changed, a new PEP arrived, and the SEND Team 0-25 have been managed 'differently'. It also shows the impact of having timely Educational Psychology reports through targeted allocations. This drives a flow of evidence that the SEND 0-25 Team can deliver a service on time and respond to students, families, and schools.

Slough SEND 0-25 Team Weekly Dashboard update	Totals
EP reports received	40
Draft sent out	47
Finalised meeting 20 week	7
Finalised over 20 weeks	12
Totals as of 27 <sup>th</sup> October 2023	19
Remaining finals due out before month end	8
Finalised total: Oct 2023	27

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General update on progress or areas of significant impact on the local area e.g., staffing

The February Monitoring Visit evidenced the lack of progress that had been made to address the areas of significant weakness identified by the inspectors in the Local Area Inspection. As a result, Minister Coutinho decided to issue a Statutory Notice to Slough Borough Council [SBC] SEND 0-25 Services.

Key progress was made by the time of the next Monitoring Visit in July 2024 and SBC was able to demonstrate “green shoots” of progress. Improvements had already been made to the SEND 0-25 team, the statutory processes and in identifying additional locum Educational Psychologist [EP] support. The Minister’s office accepted that a new leadership team was now in place and that they were determined to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

New Improvement Action Plan

This report is aligned to the Seven [7] Areas of significant weakness, however, a significant change since the last DFE Monitoring Visit has been the development of a new SEND 0-25 Improvement Action Plan based on five [5] clearly defined workstreams. The remaining WSoA actions have been mapped into these workstreams and have a nominated officer to lead on each action and a workstream lead to coordinate the different pieces of work. New reporting processes ensure a much tighter focus on the individual actions. A new system identifies completed actions but where further evidence of impact is being collected before being put forward for DFE sign off. Each workstream area also has an ongoing risks and mitigations report.

As a result, there is a closer alignment to the WSoA impact measures in our reporting to ensure that all actions are completed by May 2024. Since the WSoA was launched with 94 separate actions, 20 have been completed of which 9 were health actions linked to integrated therapies. At the September meeting, evidence was provided that a further 17 actions had been completed across four different workstreams improving the completion rate from 21.3% to 39.4%, an increase of 18.1%. A further 36 actions are on track to be completed by the end of December which would bring the percentage up to 77.7%, an increase of 38.1%.

Staffing Changes

Since June 2023 the performance data has improved significantly and so there is a clearer impact evident from the transformation that has taken place. The key factors here are maintaining a stable team of SEND 0-25 officers, the impact of the managers and focused training based on a skills audit of individual staff.

However, following a decline in the number of EHC plans finalised in August 2023 and the 6-month contract of the Head of SEND 0-25 ending at end of the same month, it was decided not to renew. To sustain pace, drive and impact the existing SEND 0-25 Commissioner and SEND 0-25 Transition Lead roles have now been combined into the Head of SEND 0-25 role.

To further strengthen the leadership and management of the SEND 0-25 Team, SBC has appointed a new Operational Lead for SEND 0-25, reporting directly to the Head of

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SEND 0-25, who manages directly the two existing SEND 0-25 Team Managers. This strong and combined working together of collected SEND expertise has shown immediate impact in the processing and creating of EHC plans and consequential, tangible output of EHC plans within 20 weeks.

The appointment of a highly experienced Principal Education Psychologist [PEP], a practicing SEND 0-25 Ofsted Inspector, has also energised the statutory process. Currently the PEP is directing and allocating 40 EP Assessments a month which the SEND 0-25 Team are turning around month on month into timely EHC plan drafts and Final EHC plans [see October data]. The PEP also Chairs the SEND 0-25 weekly Panel. The SEND 0-25 panel is now functioning well with dedicated SEND 0-25 Officer time for detailed preparation of evidence.

Existing staff members have also taken on the new Preparation for Adulthood [PfA] Strategic Lead and the Lead for Inclusion roles. These are both key focus areas for this term moving into next year. The PfA lead has designed proformas and systems for collecting lived experience evidence from young people and their families, as well as drafting a new PfA approach. The Lead for Inclusion is focusing on the Graduated Approach and identifying best practice locally and more widely to share at a school inclusion conference in January 2024.

Safety Valve Agreement [SV] First Monitoring Report

In September, SBC sent the first monitoring report for its Safety Valve Agreement to the DFE. This showed that the Council is on track to meet the deficit control and reduction targets. The provisional outturn position for 22-23 is a DSG overspend of £0.097m [including an overspend on the HNB of £0.407m]. This contrasts with a forecast overspend of £1.638m.

The current 2023-24 total forecast spend of £22.3m is against a budget of £25.1m. However, there is a backlog of 290 EHCNAs that have not been factored into this forecast. The SEND 0-25 team have estimated that, using current benchmarks, this will generate additional funding of £2.6m. Therefore, even including this additional forecast spending, this would currently give an overall projected spend of £24.9m and an estimated underspend of 0.2m in 2023-24.

New monitoring arrangements for the High Needs Block and the Safety Valve Agreement are in place with fortnightly meetings taking place including the Section 151 Officer and the Director of Children Services [DCS]. Work is being undertaken to refine forecasts and a more accurate estimate of the final outturn for 2023-24 will be available in the December 2023 SVA Monitoring Report.

There is pressure from demand for EHC plans as well as existing settings requesting larger than usual cost of living inflationary increases. Currently all uplifts agreed have been in line with the SBC maximum uplift policy. Mitigations are inbuilt and already seeing an impact. There is potential for capital projects to support commissioning of places as population fluctuates.

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Request For Additional Support

In discussions with the DFE around the WSoA and the Safety Valve Agreement, we discussed additional support that would help us to achieve our targets. At the SEND 0-25 Partnership Board in September, a range of potential support activities were identified. These support activities fall into two broad categories, a request for additional capital funding and establishing a support programme linked to the key workstreams.

There is approximately £5M of SEND 0-25 capital funding which has provisionally been allocated to support the programme to increase the capacity of Specialist Resource Provision [SRP] / Designated Units [DU] and for converting three buildings that were previously children's centres into SEND 0-25 Bases This is necessary to meet the demand for places in the September 2024 phase transfer process and increasing levels of SEND in early years. The allocation will still need to be formally approved by the Council processes once the sufficiency approach has been agreed by December 2023.

Some local authorities entering into a Safety Valve Agreement were awarded additional capital, but Slough did not make a request. SBC are now looking to submit a retrospective request for additional capital funding to increase our special school places to meet the rising demand over the next four years. There is also the possibility of a future application for an all-through Special Free School when the application process reopens. Since March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023, no pupils have been placed in Out-Of-Area Independent Non-Maintained Special Schools [INMSS]. Without additional places, particularly for pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health [SEMH] needs and Autistic Spectrum Disorder [ASD], there is a high risk that there need to be pupils placed in INMSS provision.

Conversations have already taken place with Sam Gomarsall, who is the Programme Manager for the Council for Disabled Children, around the RISE programme and an initial proposal has been drafted around support for the Inclusion Conference in January 2024 as well as the Graduated Approach framework. However, there is likely to be further support that we can access.

Priorities this term

- Consistently improving performance
- Lived Experiences
- Joint Commissioning
- Inclusion
- SEND 0-25 Handbook / Communications Charter
- SEND pupils attendance and SEND needs of the Electively Home Educated [EHE] cohort.
- Working Parties for SEND 0-25 Sufficiency, Capita and Preventing Exclusions

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Coproduction and Communication with Our Families

A Working Together Coproduction / Partnership Charter was developed following in-person / online sessions that involved over 190 people including young people, parents, carers and professionals. The draft charter was circulated to the SEND 0-25 Board, internally to SBC staff, families, schools and partners for feedback. The strategy has been agreed and will inform and underpin the transformation work as well as the business-as-usual service delivery from the SEND 0-25 team.

Funding and procurement for a redesign for the Local Offer redesign was agreed and the final version of the new website was designed following a consultation with young people with SEND and their families as well as with partners. As well as improving the look of the website, functionality, accessibility and useability have been improved by the new framework. Work is ongoing to identify and fill gaps in the services on the website as business as usual.

The current critical focus is on gathering Lived Experiences of children, young people and their families. The process and templates for this work are being developed in partnership with partners and stakeholders.

**WSoA Actions/timescale check**

Are there any actions behind schedule?

Not against re-profiled dates in the new WSoA improvement action plan.

Action

Reason

Mitigation/remedial action

Re baselined all the timescales in the WSoA.

Lack of progress made up to February 2023 as evidenced in the DFE Monitoring Visit and the Subsequent Statutory Notice.

New Improvement Action Plan agreed by SEND 0-25 Partnership Board with all actions complete by the end of May 2024. However, actions will not be signed off until there is evidence of impact. All remaining actions are currently on track to be complete either by the end of December 2023 or May 2024 as agreed in the improvement plan.

**Support received in this reporting period**

**Support Activity**

We have received support from the DFE including Eleanor Deathridge, Daniel Hendrie and Liz Flaherty, as well as the Safety Valve Team. Discussions are ongoing with the RISE team about future support particularly with inclusion.

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**Progress on Priorities 1-7**

Priority 1	There are weak arrangements for ensuring effective joint leadership and accountability, self-evaluation and improvement planning at a strategic level across education, health and care services [including considering the high turnover of staff and an area-wide commitment to inclusion].
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Progress on key actions

Joint Oversight and Accountability

The one action due for completion in September 2023 in this workstream area [1.1.2] has been signed off by the SEND 0-25 Partnership Board. Arrangements for joint oversight and accountability are now in place through the Slough SEND 0-25 Partnership Board. The Board has met regularly now over a number of months and has agreed Terms of Reference [ToR]. There is a supporting data dashboard so that progress is measurable against agreed Key Performance Indicators [KPIs]. Health, social care, early years, schools and Special Voices are all members whilst minutes show that partners understand their roles and responsibilities and demonstrate evidence of oversight and accountability.

A new SEND 0-25 Improvement Action Plan, based on five clear workstreams, has been signed off by the SEND 0-25 Partnership Board. The remaining WSoA actions have been mapped into these workstreams and have a nominated officer to lead on each action and a workstream lead to coordinate the different pieces of work. New reporting processes ensure a much tighter focus on the individual actions. Each workstream area also has an ongoing risks and mitigations report.

Workforce Development

The one action due for completion in September 2023 [1.2.2] is complete. Building on the Workforce Development Strategy, the capacity of the SEND 0-25 Statutory Team has been reviewed and new staff are in post including a new operational lead, team managers, case officers, a PFA officer, a new inclusion lead and a new Principal EP. The impact is clear with a higher level of EHC plans completed within statutory timescales and overall. The backlog of cases that has built up over time is now beginning to reduce. Initial quality assurance of EHC plans also indicates an improvement in their quality.

Future mapping shows the number of EHC plans will continue to increase and a benchmarking exercise is being carried out to ensure that the team is strong enough to support a larger cohort. Officers are in place to support transformation work in inclusion, Preparing for Adulthood [PfA] and a new PEP.



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Place Planning and Sufficiency

Action 1.5.2 has also been completed with the updated ToR document for the Slough Place Planning Board now including a focus on SEND 0-25 sufficiency. This is supported by a SEND 0-25 Sufficiency Working Party including school leaders and other partners. This will support the updated Joint Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy that will be complete by the end of December 2023. This ensures that there is a more strategic approach to SEND 0-25 place planning and ensuring children and young people have access to the provision best suited to their needs. The Safety Valve Agreement monitoring evidence that pupils are being placed appropriately with the large majority in mainstream settings.

Promoting Inclusion/ Effective Practice

The following actions have taken place with a focus on consistent and effective inclusion practice in mainstream schools:

- Reviewed delivery model for Inclusion Teachers.
- Emotional Literacy Support Assistants [ELSA] training being delivered.
- Service Day looking at SEND Quality First Education resources.
- Delivery of AET training [Autism Education Trust Training] has been rolled out across Slough Mainstream Schools. Since the 1/03/23 18 training sessions have been delivered to settings totaling 123 delegates. Additional training has been delivered internally to Children's Social Care and the SEND 0-25 Team.
- 2 SENDCo Network Meetings planned and delivered 1 meeting all age 1 meeting secondary SENDCO.
- SENDCo Conferences are planned for December and January. December to review findings of SEND questionnaire. Young People to be invited to attend part of the session to contribute to the planning and parents will be consulted around the Slough SEND Best Practice.
- January to consult over the Graduated Approach Best Practice Strategy
- Inclusion Best Practice in Mainstream Settings meeting. Attendees SENDCo's, Head Teachers and Slough Inclusion Officers. Remit to develop a core offer of SEND best practice. First meeting held October.

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Evidence of impact

- The new Improvement Action Plan will allow the Board to monitor progress of the WSoA actions whilst the data dashboard allows alignment to agreed KPIs.
- New monitoring arrangements have been put in place for the High Needs Block and the Safety Valve Agreement which will ensure that forecasts are more accurate and allow better decision making. This will inform the joint commissioning and sufficiency work.
- Changes to the SEND 0-25 team have improved the number and quality of EHC plans being produced each month. New staff appointments for inclusion, PfA and the new PEP are having a clear impact on transformation work.
- The new Place Planning Board arrangements will ensure that sufficient places are available for pupils with SEND requiring SRP and special school places.
- Inclusion Teachers School Age Have supported 25 different settings since September and capacity has kept pace with demand.
- ELSA training Feedback 2022 – 2023 is very positive.
- SENDCo Meetings have taken place and a Secondary SENDCO's working group formed to develop the Slough SEND core offer for primary to secondary transition.
- Inclusion Best Practice in Mainstream Settings meeting has taken place.
- Agreement has been secured for the development of the Graduated Approach strategy for Slough.
- Questionnaire / Self Evaluation for SEND 0-25 practices in settings in Slough. Was distributed in early November.
- SEND Setting Q & A Review process and document to be developed and trialed [29 November].
- Agreed to develop CPD for learning support assistants.

Key next steps

Inclusion in Schools

There were no actions due for completion in September 2023. As well as the actions listed above, a key focus of SEND 0-25 transformation work this term is to identify best inclusion practice particularly around the Graduated Approach. The Autumn Term Capacity and Risk visits to all schools include a questionnaire on inclusion.

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This information will be used to plan the January 2024 Inclusion Conference. The RISE program has also offered support for the conference. This work will inform the school-to-school support, training and other support.

Further steps:

- AET training to be delivered by “SEBDOS” to meet demand.
- Additional AET training to Governors and Schools Leadership team around legal duties.
- SEND Conference 1 & 2 Feedback development further consultation of Graduated response strategy/ SEND Good Practice.
- Liaise with Health and Social Care to include their resources into best practice documents.
- Design and deliver identified needs led Training to support Good Quality First Teaching across Slough (Summer Term). Including specific Learning Support Assistant [LSA] training.
- Publishing of strategy / documents on Local Offer.
- Finalizing Secondary Transition SEND Offer develop Year 11 transition and review Early Years.
- Embed Send Quality and Assistance reviews and feedback findings to SEND 0-25 Partnership Board and Head Teacher Forum.

Information Sharing Arrangements

The Inclusion Working Party will approve new induction paperwork by the end of term including guidance for information sharing. This will ensure that all schools have a consistent approach to improve information gathering and sharing which allows for more strategic analysis and action. The next stage will be to ensure that 9–12 month and 2-year review data is effectively shared where early identification suggests support is required to meet developmental milestones.

Preparation for Adulthood [PfA]

There are no actions that were due for completion in September 2023. However, a PfA lead is now in place and is working with other LA teams to review opportunities for post 16 transition including work experience, supported internships and employment opportunities with a view to improving outcomes and reducing NEET figures. A draft PFA strategy “Capturing the Journey” is being shared with partners for feedback alongside a PfA toolkit.

This includes a sufficiency review of opportunities and the creation of a multi-agency Transition Pathways Group to enable joint commissioning

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Priority 2	The overlooked voice of the children and young people with SEND and their families and consequent lack of understanding of their lived experiences and the lack of readily available, helpful and accurate information in this regard.
<p>Progress on key actions</p> <p>[2.1.1, 2.1.3, 3.2.3, 3.4.2]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• SEND Youth Focus Group took place in September 2023 - <a href="#">Learning from the second SEND Youth Focus Group - Together as ONE</a></li><li>• SEND 'How to support me' Form developed by young people through Together as One - <a href="#">Introducing the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities [SEND] Support Form - Together as ONE</a></li><li>• In order to ensure that we collectively listen to all stakeholders including parent carers and children and young people we have strengthened our communications with all. Our telephony service has been improved to ensure that nobody's query, question or feedback is missed or overlooked and is dealt with in a timely manner. This sits within the newly drafted communications charter.</li><li>• Three templates have been created for professionals, parent/carers, CYP to capture the Lived Experiences of their individual journeys. Whilst it is imperative to hear the Lived Experiences of our families, our colleagues in settings, in the SEND 0-25 team and other partners are also on this journey and only by hearing their perspectives can we truly ensure that we are improving services across the board which will improve outcomes for our families. These templates have been shared with all settings, SENDIASS, YOT, Special Voices, Virtual School, Adults, and the Young People's group Working Together As One, The Autism Group and will be sent out when EPs request advice at EHCNA stage. We are encouraging children and young people to share their stories in a variety of ways including videos, voice notes, drawings and text and will be offering £10 Amazon vouchers to participants.</li><li>• Paper written documenting the importance of capturing the Lived Experience of CYP as they transition into adulthood.</li><li>• Paper notes the importance of partnership working and co-production.</li><li>• Promotion of post-16 opportunities available i.e., "DFN Project Search" [presented to SEND 0-25 Team and at SENCo conference] and shared on Local Offer. Parent carers and young people have been given the opportunity to receive a similar presentation.</li><li>• A Preparation for Adulthood [PfA] Strategy has been drafted and shared for co-production with "Together As One" [a youth group], Special Voices and the Strategic Transition Group.</li></ul>	

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- A more robust system for monitoring and managing complaints is now in place with meetings held weekly with the Council Complaints Team. The SEND 0-25 Team is receiving ongoing training on how to reduce complaints by improving their communications with all stakeholders.

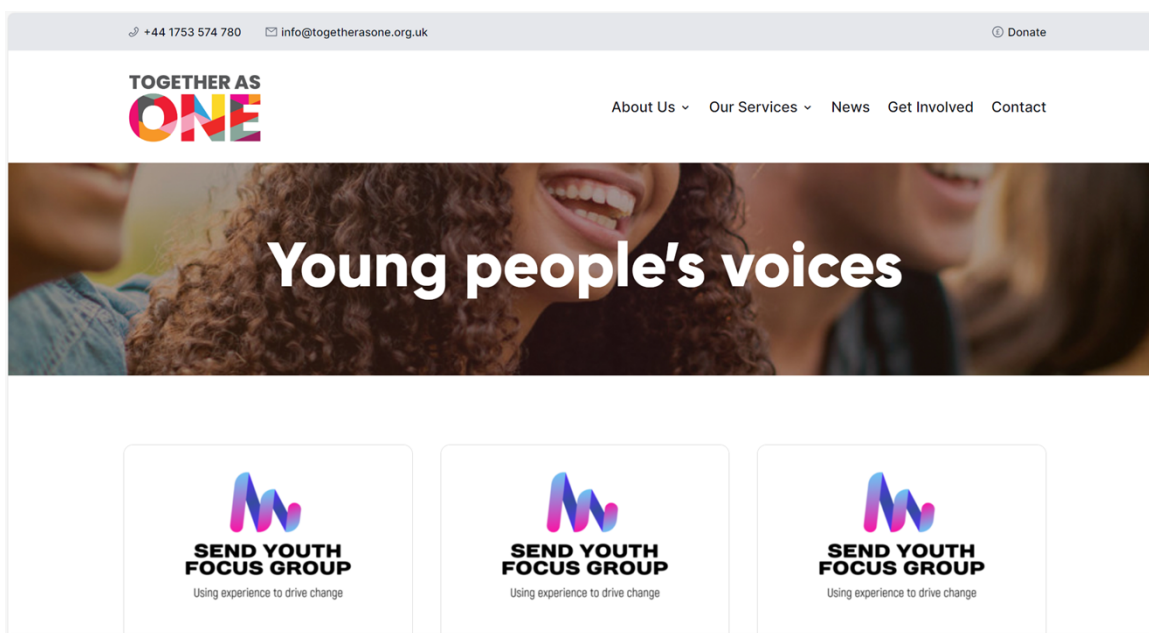
Evidence of impact

“Together as One” engagement continues:

[SEND – “Together as ONE”](#)

<https://togetherasone.org.uk/meet-jovi-our-new-send-engagement-and-participation-officer/>

<https://togetherasone.org.uk/category/young-peoples-voices/>



- CYP and families will feel listened to and included in decisions about the future and will be involved in next steps.
- Feedback from case studies showed pupil “V”, who attended a special school, was well supported to be an active member of the “Youth Parliament” [SYP]. He had previously had negative life experiences but had gone on to successfully participate in events and became healthier and happier.

*‘Trying out tips to stay happy and healthy during lockdown has led to V taking up regular bike riding and time out with family, indulging contacting his Nan, which he has said he enjoys.’*

Another young person has found the support of “Together As One” invaluable,

*‘I receive good support from my school and from my parents and more recently from Together as One. I have not always found joining in easy and would prefer my own company. As I have gotten older, I find conversations easier.’*

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When asked what the biggest moment in his life was, his response was:  
*‘Doing a speech about my experience of Autism for Together as One. This speech was in front of about 40 Adults and although I was nervous I didn’t let my nerves stop me from achieving this.’*

- Early communication with stakeholders will reduce complaints and will ensure that all stakeholders have greater faith in the LA and the systems which they work within.
- Greater participation of CYP as well as parent carers is key to ensuring that they feel and know that they are valued.
- CYP feedback re PfA strategy shows they are particularly happy that PfA is to be considered from earlier than Y9.

**Key next steps**

- “What Is It Like To Be Me” Local Offer co-produced video will be developed with children by the end of January 2024, and made available on the new website.
- Regular Together as One engagement to continue.
- Work to be done to raise awareness of apprenticeships and to raise the offer and to broaden the offer.
- Recruitment of Supported Internship/Employment Officer to help raise awareness and to work with schools and FE settings, parent carers and YP to understand the post-16 pathways into employment.
- “Easy Read” versions of templates will be created in partnership with Adult Social Care.
- PfA Toolkit to be devised.
- Incorporate feedback from CYP and parent carers re PfA Strategy.
- Lived Experiences will be captured directly via voice note and videos in schools/settings evidencing ELSA and “Autism Education Trust” [AET] training

<b>Priority 3</b>	There is a lack of effective use of meaningful performance information to inform the area’s strategy and planning, as well as to evaluate its effectiveness.
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**Progress on key actions**

At the June update it was reported that the following WSOA actions had not yet been completed, and that each action had a forecast completion date of either July or September 2023:

**Due by July 2023**

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- **3.2.1** Ensure performance data is captured specifically to support equitable and transparent decision- making on funding.
- **3.1.3** Ensure Self-Evaluation Framework [SEF] includes specific data and reference to the lived experiences of children and young people with SEND and their parents/carers.
- **3.2.4** Develop and implement a system designed to capture and collate a wide representation of parent and carer views and make them available to area leaders.
- **3.3.1** Review and develop systems to allow data about pupils with an EHC plan who are absent from school and those on a school roll who are persistently absent to be gathered, interpreted, and insights shared.

**Due by September 2023**

- **3.5.1** Develop and implement a comprehensive and systemic data and performance dashboard that will drive improvement, set priorities, and inform strategy.
- **3.3.2** Based on the analysis of data enabling a better understanding of why too many pupils with an EHC plan are absent from school too often, draw up and implement an action plan to reduce absences.
- **3.4.1** Develop an action plan to increase participation in education for young people with SEND and no EHC plan.
- **3.4.2** Use data to track, monitor and assess participation in education to measure success, draw out insights about the effectiveness of the action plan and adapt the plan as appropriate if necessary.
- **3.5.2** Ensure an effective management information system [MIS] is in place to extract specific data on all children and young people, such as primary need, to inform current and future strategy.

**Evidence of impact**

Action	Impact evidence [as of Nov '23]	BRAG
3.1.3 Ensure SEF includes specific data and reference to the lived experiences of children and young people with SEND and their parents/carers.	Self-Evaluation Framework [SEF] developed and approved by SEND 0-25 Board in March 2023.  On-going SEF development incorporated into inspection framework development project.	
3.2.1 Ensure performance data is captured specifically to support equitable and transparent decision- making on funding.	Monthly finance-activity reconciliations since July 2023.  School Capacity Survey [SCAP] forecast developed and submitted to DfE in July 2023.	

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	SEND 0-25 Panel decision-making process informed by insight.	
3.2.4 Develop and implement a system designed to capture and collate a wide representation of parent and carer views and make them available to area leaders.	Service user feedback form developed for 0-25 SEND 0-25 Service.  Special Voices parent-carer survey feedback presented regularly to the SEND 0-25 Partnership Board.	
3.3.1 Review and develop systems to allow data about pupils with an EHC plan who are absent from school and those on a school roll who are persistently absent to be gathered, interpreted and insights shared.	“Studybugs” rolled out to schools in Slough. Weekly insight on attendance levels available to the SEND 0-25 team and the Associate Director for Education and Inclusion.	
3.3.2 Based on the analysis of data enabling a better understanding of why too many pupils with an EHC plan are absent from school too often, draw up and implement an action plan to reduce absences.	“Studybugs” rolled out to schools in Slough. Weekly insight on attendance levels available to the SEND 0-25 team and the Associate Director for Education and Inclusion.  Attendance team, schools, and SEND 0-25 team collaborating to improve attendance.  <i>[Actions 3.3.2, 3.4.1, and 3.4.2 delivered as one group]</i>	
3.4.1 Develop an action plan to increase participation in education for young people with SEND and no EHC plan.	“Studybugs” rolled out to schools in Slough. Weekly insight on attendance levels available to the SEND 0-25 team and the Associate Director for Education and Inclusion.  Attendance team, schools, and SEND 0-25 team collaborating to improve attendance.  <i>[Actions 3.3.2, 3.4.1, and 3.4.2 delivered as one group]</i>	
3.4.2 Use data to track, monitor and assess participation in education to measure success, draw out insights about the effectiveness of the action plan	“Studybugs” rolled out to schools in Slough. Weekly insight on attendance levels available to the SEND 0-25 team and the	



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<p>and adapt the plan as appropriate if necessary.</p>	<p>Associate Director for Education and Inclusion.</p> <p>Attendance team, schools, and SEND 0-25 team collaborating to improve attendance.</p> <p><i>[Actions 3.3.2, 3.4.1, and 3.4.2 delivered as one group]</i></p>	
<p>3.5.1 Develop and implement a comprehensive and systemic data and performance dashboard that will drive improvement, set priorities, and inform strategy</p>	<p>Local Area SEND 0-25 Performance Report operational for 12 months. Presented to each SEND 0-25 Board.</p> <p>In addition, operational level performance reports were created and used by SEND 0-25 Service and the Berkshire Health Family Trust [BHFT] therapies services.</p>	
<p>3.5.2 Ensure an effective management information system [MIS] is in place to extract specific data on all children and young people, such as primary need, to inform current and future strategy.</p>	<p>Local Area SEND 0-25 Performance Report operational for 12 months. Presented to each SEND 0-25 Board.</p> <p>In addition, operational level performance reports were created and used by SEND 0-25 Service and BHFT therapies services.</p> <p>SEND 0-25 Service and BHFT share case load information at child-level, informed by case knowledge.</p> <p>Proactive set up of East Berkshire quarterly benchmarking club with Frimley ICS, RBWM, and Bracknell Forest, which draws out trends in need and outcomes.</p>	

**Key next steps**

- The Local Area Partnership would be grateful for a dialogue with the DfE about marking this workstream complete. Due to the progress made against all WSOA actions, and impact evidenced, it is proposed that this workstream transitions into business-as-usual continuous improvement and is no longer reviewed as part of the Written Statement of Action.

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- Business-as-usual continuous improvement will be led by the council’s new SEND Service Analyst [a new post with dedicated capacity] and Frimley ICS Performance Analysts.
- To provide assurance that there is a continued focus on good data and insight to improve the lives of children and families, the following is a summary of the business-as-usual continuous improvement plan in Slough for the next 6 months:
  - ✓ Improvements to, and submission of “SEN2” 2024 child-level return.
  - ✓ Improvements to, and preparation ready for Ofsted Annex A dataset return.
  - ✓ Improvements to, and preparation ready for SCAP 2024 return.
  - ✓ Continue to deliver new quarterly benchmarking club report alongside Frimley ICS. RBWM, and Bracknell Forest.
  - ✓ Continue participation in Southeast benchmarking forums [both social care and education]
  - ✓ Continue to report key SEND 0-25 KPIs to SBC leadership, SCF leadership, Frimley leadership, DfE Commissioners, and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities [DLUHC] Commissioners.
  - ✓ Continue to return monthly “DfE Wave” surveys.
  - ✓ Continued case level information sharing between SBC and BHFT.
  - ✓ Continued case officer level performance analysis informing person-level support and coaching.
  - ✓ Integrated working through new access for SEND 0-25 analyst to social care system, and vice versa for social care analysts to education system.

Priority 4	There are limited opportunities for parents, carers and children and young people with SEND to be involved in planning and reviewing area services.
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Progress on key actions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children, young people, and parent-carer voice gathered in EP assessments, therefore shaping EHCN assessments, SEND 0-25 Panel decisions, and EHC plans issued.</li> <li>• Children, young people, and parent-carer voice included in Annual Reviews.</li> <li>• Children, young people, and parent-carer feedback questionnaire developed and available to Case Officers.</li> <li>• Children and young people have co-produced content for the Local Offer [see links and screenshots below].</li> </ul>	

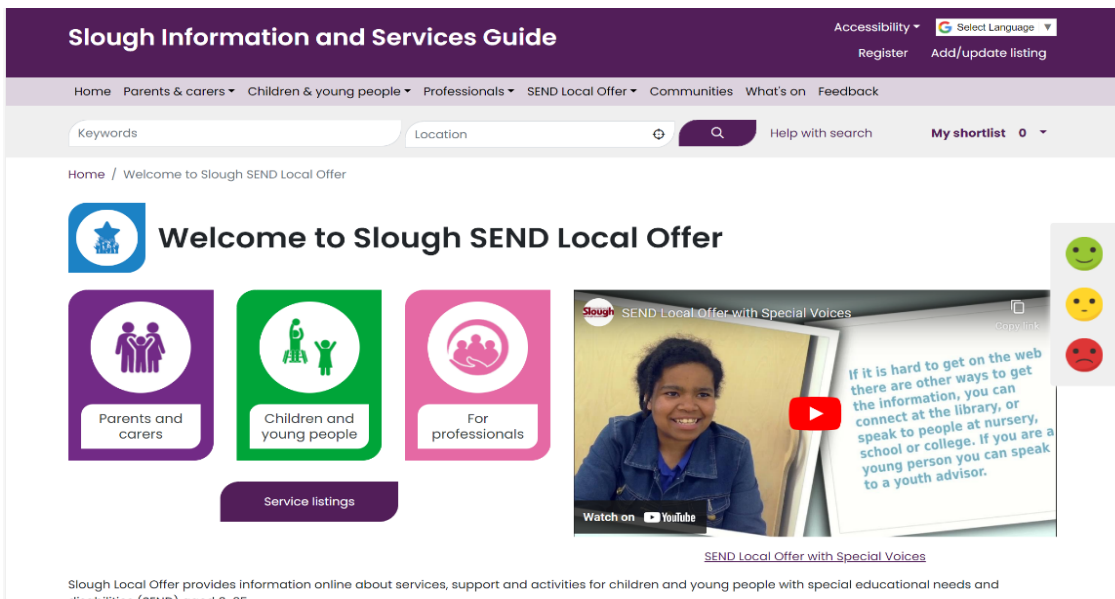
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- SENDIASS continues to have positive use from parents and carers.
- Professionals attending parent-carer network sessions.
- Preparation for Adulthood Strategy shared with CYP and Special Voices for consultation.

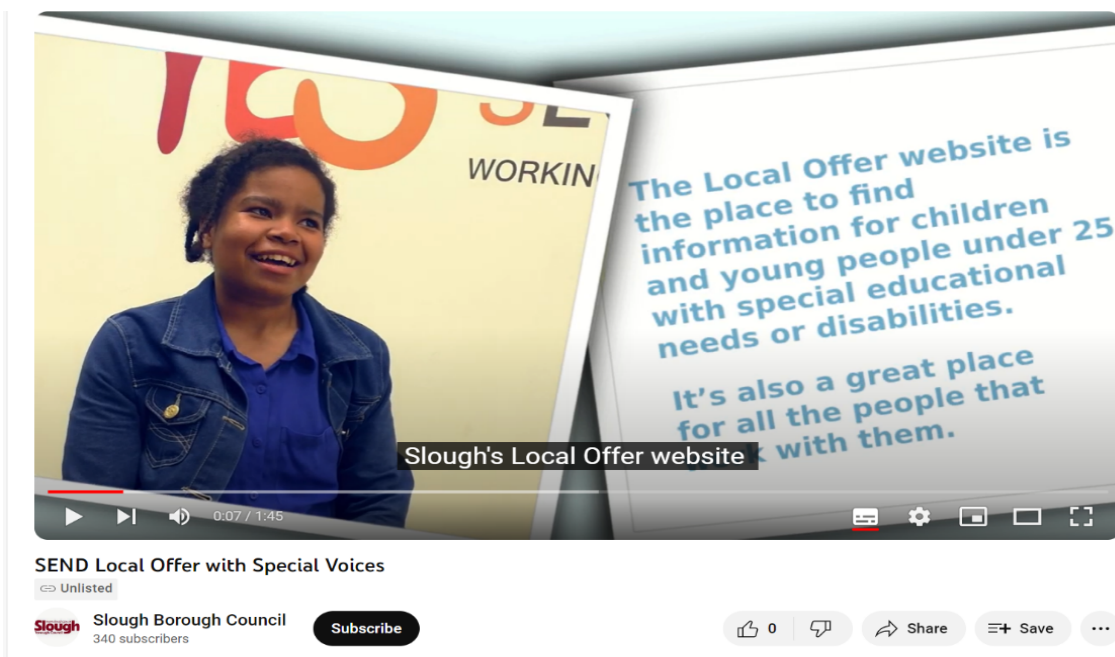
New Local Offer website:

Landing Page

[Slough Information and Services Guide | Welcome to Slough SEND Local Offer \[idoxgroup.com\]](http://idoxgroup.com)



Local Offer co-produced video on YouTube <https://youtu.be/QwxLCb4ytIU>



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Evidence of impact

- “Special Voices” parent-carer feedback gathered regularly and shared with key decision-makers [latest example is included in evidence folder for Priority 3].
- Questionnaire / Self Evaluation for SEND 0-25 practices in settings in Slough. Distributed 1<sup>st</sup> Week November.
- Positive feedback from children involved in co-production activity for Local Offer.

Key next steps

- The Local Offer launch is imminent. [See screenshot above of website in testing.]
- There will be young people and parent-carer representatives in the new Strategic Transition Group.
- A local area, multi-agency attended, ‘Youth Voice’ conference will be held in the new year.
- Consultation with parents and YP around schools’ strategies.
- Autism course [4 sessions] to be delivered to parents within schools.
- “DFN Project Search”. Supported Internship Model. Presentation for parent-carers and to young people from “Together as One” and “The Autism Group”.

Priority 5

The timeliness with which EHC plans are produced and updated, particularly nearing transition points, and the absence of systematic processes for the quality assurance of EHC plans.

Progress on key actions

- An experienced Principal Educational and Child Psychologist in post since the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2023. This has enabled us to increase the amount of psychological advice being allocated.
- The newly appointed PEP monitoring quality of EP advises and working with team of agency psychologists to improve quality of reporting.
- A new role of operational lead was created and appointed to develop and implement standard operating procedures [SoP’s].
- Standard operating procedures manual and SEND 0-25 handbook for internal staff and professionals prepared at draft stage which will be sent out for circulation and workshops in November 2023. This includes clear indication of roles and responsibilities built into SoP’s for consistency of process and accountability.

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- Management meets 3 times weekly to ensure direct lines of communication of expectations, roles and responsibility and to respond to and clarify any problems or misunderstandings quickly.
- Ongoing programme of weekly full Team Meetings and training/updates to ensure consistency and understanding of standard operating procedures.
- 1:1 formal supervision scheduled for all SEND 0-25 Service Staff with line managers fortnightly. Weekly sub-team meetings with each manager's individual teams.
- There is an acknowledgement that our Capita system historically has areas of weakness in the data. We have allocated specific support via a member of the data team to work on SEND 0-25 data quality and reporting mechanisms.
- The Live Case Tracker has been implemented to ensure clarity and consistency of process recording to run concurrently with Capita allowing for clearer accountability and cross validation of data.
- Capita Training program ongoing with SEND 0-25 officers and Business Support Officer to ensure all fields are being completed to promote better data output and reporting.
- All draft EHC plans are being quality assured by Team managers prior to issuing within the new assessment framework.
- All SEND 0-25 Officers are involved in weekly training around developing quality of EHC plan writing, including writing effective and appropriate outcomes.
- The EHC plan template has been fully revised and updated to improve quality of plans and ensure a clearer link between assessed needs, provisions and outcomes.

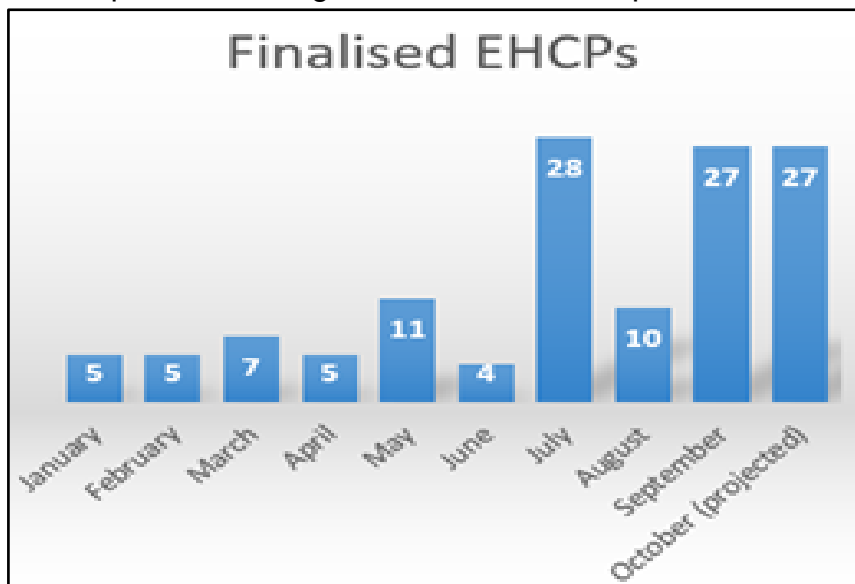
**Evidence of impact**

- 40 psychological advice requests are being allocated per month from October onwards, there is an interim team of agency EPs now working together to help reduce the current outstanding reports.
- All psychological advice requested from October 1<sup>st</sup> is predicted to meet the 6-week time scale.
- In addition, the advice is being professionally quality assured to British Psychological Society Standards.
- EP reports are being received in a timely fashion and this is leading to an increase in the number of EHC plans over the twenty weeks that are being finalised, reducing the backlog. An increase in the number of newly

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agreed assessments that are completed within the 20-week timeframe has also being evidenced.

- At the last review in June there were 130 unallocated EP assessments, and this has now been reduced to 80. There were 40 EP reports received into the SEND 0-25 team in October 2023. The quality of advice was sufficient to allow 47 draft plans to be written and quality assured. All finalised plans are being issued on a new template.



- Embedding agreed standard operating procedures ensures workflows are all consistent and actions are based on legislation and statutory timeframes, including our data reporting systems.
- A significant increase in the number of EHC plans being finalised in the period July to October 2023, as compared with the period Jan-June 2023 [see graph on previous page].
- New data reporting process will provide more accurate performance data.
- Improved case tracking feeding directly into 1-to-1 Supervision and feedback to SEND 0-25 Officers.

**Key next steps**

- A programme of training sessions to be delivered weekly on new Standard Operating Procedures [SOP] for each workflow area. This will assure and ensure understanding of expectations and will embed new processes. The new processes will be shared at the next monitoring visit.
- A Task and Finish group will continue to meet in order to map the move towards opening the professional portal with a pilot before the end of the spring term 2024, and then the parent portal – which ultimately allows us

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to digitally coproduce the EHC plans by summer of 2024. This directly links into Priority 3.

- Work with Special Voices on how to involve young people in the quality assurance process.
- Finalise multi-agency involvement and quality assurance framework.
- Finalise standard operating procedures manual and SEND 0-25 Handbook for internal staff with input and revision from stakeholders by Jan 2024.
- Multi-Agency involvement and QA framework to encourage settings/professionals and officers to consider this as a checklist when completing amendments, writing and supporting an application to be drafted and shared with Health and Social care colleagues for their input.

Priority 6	The absence of social care considerations in EHC plans, for children and young people not known to children’s social care, and in services in the area, including the lack of age-appropriate social opportunities for children and young people and limited offer of short-break or respite services for parents and carers.
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Progress on key actions

Short Breaks

- Increased Short Breaks’ provision continues to be provided and bespoke to families, driven by the commissioning framework in children’s social care.
- Packages of Care tailored to meet a child’s unique needs and cover respite from weekdays, weekends and overnights. Between April 2021 and October 2023 there has been a 140% increase in commissioned packages of care for children receiving residential short breaks and 153 children have received a package of support which included a short break.
- With partners Social Care also work to provide targeted support through activities such as school holiday clubs and after school activities. At the time of reporting there were over 1999 sessions accessed by 20 families.

‘Breakaway’

- The service continues to offer in excess of 90 overnight stays each month on average with extra capacity given to ‘day care’ hours and emergency respite and support throughout.

Working together

- Childrens Social Care now have joint working arrangements with the Virtual School, Early Help and the SEND 0-25 Team including: shared monitoring

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visits, working with the Local Authority Designated Officer LADO and detailed partnership work on provisions for children with very complex needs.

- This includes shared budgets and spending to save options. This is becoming an operational norm and strength and joined up challenge, critical friend support and tangible working and supporting together. This particularly so with Children Looked After [CLA] cohort and between the Virtual School and SEND 0-25. There is a professional urgency between services to avoid log jams in the system for CLA.
- This working together and shared solution focused thinking, in spite and despite the different statutory duties, is positively, tangibly permeating Social Care and SEND 0-25 staff. There is more to do.
- More joined up working can be evidenced in working together with Children Missing Education and the Fair Access Panel. This has continued joint staff involvement and support [telling the 'whole story'] the education for our most vulnerable young people and reintroduce those pupils Missing Education and Missing *in* Education back to an appropriate provision.
- SEND 0-25 officers continue to benefit enormously by having access to the Social Care system so that they may crosscheck/ read, in real time, information regarding context and activity of Social Care interventions [or not] for children with an EHC plan or for EHCNAs.
- As SEND 0-25 Officers continue to have this access and link it to the Capita recording, a more holistic and timely decisions and actions can be evidenced. Both SEND 0-25 and Childrens Social Care can speak, meet and discuss using the same language for a clearer picture of the young person. If there is a question the openness with staff problem solves together on what can be done not what cannot.

Transitions

- The quarterly Transition Panel continues to meet, co-chaired by Children and Adult social care. This panel reviews all children with complex needs aged 14 and over moving to adulthood. At 31/05/23 the panel continues to track 73 children through transition. Each quarterly meeting over the last year has directly addresses the pathway of 22 young people on average.

Evidence of impact

- Joint working on issues and cases that cross over has become increasingly the norm, with several examples, including spend to save options.
- Short Breaks continue to be provided and the rate of and type of provision continues to be sustained and exceeded in some areas.
- Shared budget on provisions with Social Care, NHS and SEND 0-25 can be evidenced and are increasingly sought. There is very robust discussion to evidence VFM by all agencies when they meet.



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- SEND 0-25 have not placed any children in Out of Area Placements since 15<sup>th</sup> March 2023 and continues not to do so up until 31/10/2023.

Key next steps

- Joint Commissioning with Social Care, NHS and SEND 0-25 needs maturing especially around therapies.
- Livid experience from all activities needs to be collected, analysed and triangulated to inform services, along with standard granular metrics, and these qualitative assessments used to improve users' experiences.
- Challenge back to all, on all, around 'You said, we did' and 'So what' must be part of SBC improvement journey and taking stock.
- SBC needs to embrace co production as always inherent not an add on.

Priority 7	There is inequitable access to SALT and OT services, excessive waiting lists and waiting times and the absence of a dysphagia service for those aged five and over.
<p>Progress on key actions</p> <p>Of the remaining actions still open since the WSoA update in June 23 [either closed or moved to BAU], key areas of progress are described below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scoping of service for CYP aged over five who are likely to require dysphagia [eating and drinking support] has been carried out, SLA now signed and Arbor vale School managing service across both Special [and mainstream provision if required].</li> <li>• Sustained and focused implementation of the OT Plan to reduce waiting times.</li> <li>• Senior Health representation is now embedded in SEND 0-25 Panels and are involved with triaging decisions.</li> <li>• Quarter 2 data has indicated that there has been a 68% increase in referrals to OT across East Berkshire compared to the same period 22-23. Despite the significant and growing increase in the number of referrals made to the OT service, referrals for Q2 have been managed [with just 1 exception] within a 2-week time frame.</li> </ul> <p>In Slough 100% of CYP are now waiting less than 52 weeks with an average wait time of 23 weeks [stretch target is 100%]. Longest wait times for Q2 have decreased from 89 weeks in Q1 to 70 weeks in Q2. Those that are waiting longer are referrals where triage has commenced but not yet completed and where the clinicians are waiting for additional information from the referrer or family to enable the triage process to be completed.</p>	

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Mapping and monitoring of referral data is now embedded as business as usual and used consistently to help plan the timely allocation to triage.

- Continuing signposting for waiting well - Increased signposting and support for those who are waiting well is now live. BHFT Children and Young People's Integrated Therapies [CYPIT] live toolkit menu went live on the Frimley Healthier Together platform and was added to Slough Local offer. The Resource was evaluated, feedback captured and reviewed in July 2023 and version 2 has incorporated the feedback for further improvements.

The WSOA actions completed as of October 2023 are:

7.6.1 and 7.6.2 - Reduction in the number of children and young people both in mainstream school and at Arbour Vale School with outstanding SLT

- reviews/assessments as outlined within their EHC plan.
- Action completed – backlog identified through the SEND 0-25 Inspection and identified as an action has been cleared.

7.3.2 - Ensure we have a fully commissioned eating and drinking service for all children in Slough.

- Action completed.

7.6.3 - Deliver universal and targeted training to all 18 schools in the currently commissioned contract to support school staff in implementing the 'Graduated Response.'

A comprehensive training offer for all integrated therapies to schools is being addressed through the integrated therapies project and will form part of the new commissioned service.

- Moved to BAU

7.6.1 - Ensure all CYP with EHC plans within the 17 mainstream schools covered by the current commissioned contract with BHFT are seen for a review/up-to-date assessment of their needs.

- Completed – backlog identified through the Inspection.

7.6.2 - Ensure all CYP who attend Arbour Vale School and have identified speech and language therapy needs on their EHC plan are seen and have their needs reviewed/reassessed.

- Action completed – backlog identified through the SEND 0-25 Inspection and identified as an action has been cleared.
- All remaining actions outlined within Area 5 have been BRAG rated and a health status of the overall working group completed and shared via the

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Slough SEND 0-25 Strategic Board. The remaining outstanding actions from the WSOA are:

- Green [progressing]:

7.5.1 Implement OT action plan in place aimed at reducing waiting times for assessment for routine referrals to a maximum wait of 12 months.

Q2 data shows that 100% of Slough Children were assessed within 12 months which achieves the stretch target for June 2023. We will continue with our action plan with a focus on maintaining achievements and improving where possible.

7.5.2 - Improve compliance with EHCA 6-week target – target 95%

- In the June 23 update the EHCNA compliance data was stable and averaging around 60% monthly. For the last period this has increased to 67%. The current challenges continue to be the high numbers of requests for children not known to service across East Berkshire. We continue to actively try to reduce these numbers and look at innovation from other areas to address this challenge. In Slough we coproduce so we get the right support, at the right time, in the right place for children/young people and their families and ourselves.

Evidence of impact

- New Dysphagia service has now been launched which will greatly support children and young people and their families.
- Cohesive and consistent multi-agency working leads to improved decision making and planning processes to better meet the needs of CYP in a timely way.
- The continuing reduction in wait times for children and young people and their families in Slough means they are not struggling for longer than they need to with everyday activities such as being able to focus on a classroom at school. The small numbers that are waiting are offered interim support and signposting.

Key next steps

- The key focus for the next steps is to address the two outstanding actions.
  - ✓ Improving EHC plan compliance
  - ✓ Improving waiting times

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Appendix D: Slough Local Area SEND Dashboard

Area	Metric	Source	Frequency	Trend data													Direction of travel	Benchmarks					
				Dec-22	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23		Slough	National	South East	CIPFA NN		
SEND population	No of CYP for whom Slough maintains an EHC Plan	Capita	Charlie Watson	Monthly		1,809	1,816	1,822	1,827				1,859	1,874	1,891	1,898	1,915	↑	1,695				
	No of CYP for whom Slough maintain an EHC Plan that attend a Slough school	Capita		Monthly		1,299	1,306	1,306	1,309							1,245	1,310	↑					
	No of CYP identified with SEN support in Slough schools	School Census	Charlie Watson	Termly	3,470	3,567			3,638					3,733					↑	3,567			
	No of CYP identified with an EHCP in Slough schools	School Census	Charlie Watson	Termly	1,266	1,303			1,308						1,320					↑	1,303		
CME & EHE	No of CYP with SEN support missing in education (CME)	Capita	Anjli Sidhu	Termly	13	13			10				7						↓	16			
	No of CYP with an EHCP missing in education (CME)	Capita	Anjli Sidhu	Termly	1	0			1				4						↓	11			
	No of CYP with SEN support electively home educated (EHE)	Capita	Anjli Sidhu	Termly	60	63			64				45						↓	68			
	No of CYP with an EHCP electively home educated (EHE)	Capita	Anjli Sidhu	Termly	15	20			19				18						↑	14			
Social Services	% of school aged Children Looked After with SEN support	SCF	Awais Raza	Monthly	10.3	7.5	8.6	8.1	8.6	8.7	8.9	8.9	11.1	11.2	11.1	11.3	10.6	↓	25.5	27.4	26.4	27.1	
	% of school aged Children Looked After with EHCP	SCF	Awais Raza	Monthly	31.4	29.9	27.8	28.5	28.6	27.6	29.1	31.6	32.9	31.9	34.1	32.1	32.7	↑	28.6	28.9	33.6	29.2	
	% of school aged Children in Need with a disability	SCF	Awais Raza	Monthly	13.9	13.2	13.0	13.0	13.1	11.9	12.4	12.6	13.4	12.7	12.9	13.0	12.8	↑	10.1	12.3	14.2	14.1	
	% of school aged Children in Need with SEN support	SCF	Awais Raza	Monthly	15.3	16.4	16.0	15.6	15.5	16.5	15.5	15.3	15.8	16.1	15.4	15.8	16.1	↔	15.5	20.9	20.9	20.9	
	% of school aged Children in Need with EHCP	SCF	Awais Raza	Monthly	18.7	18.1	17.9	18.6	18.9	17.2	16.5	17.0	18.3	17.8	17.1	17.9	17.5	↓	21.8	27.9	30.3	28.2	
EET	% of 16-17 year olds with SEN support EET	SCF	Alison Wiles	Monthly	85.7	86.5	88.9	89.1	88.0	87.6	87.8	87.6	85.2	61.3	68.9	80.2			↓	83.2	86.9	85.1	-
	% of 16-17 year olds with EHCP EET	SCF	Alison Wiles	Monthly	87.3	89.0	89.0	89.0	89.0	87.9	86.7	87.2	86.1	72.3	75.7	79.0			↓	88.2	88.7	89.1	-
Complaints, mediation, appeals and tribunals	No of stage 1 SEND complaints received to LA	Intalex	Finbar McSween	Monthly	0	1	2	4	5	2	8	4	1	6	2	8	2	↓	25				
	Average number of days taken to resolve stage 1 complaints	Intalex	Finbar McSween	Monthly		11.0	13.0	9.8	9.2	9.0	19.6	15	11	13	13	9.75	N/A	↓	10.2				
	No of SEND complaints resolved within timescale	Intalex	Finbar McSween	Monthly		0	0	4	1	2	0	1	1	2	1	4	N/A	↓	17				
	No of SEND complaints received to LA partially or fully upheld	Intalex	Finbar McSween	Monthly		0	1	3	1	2	8	2	1	2	1	4	0	↓	16				
	Percentage of SEND complaints received to LA partially or fully upheld	Intalex	Finbar McSween	Monthly		0.0	50.0	75.0	20.0	100.0	100	50	100	33.3	50	50	0	↓	64.0				
	No of referrals received for SENDIASS		Dayo Williams	Monthly	70	91	80	76	74	76	117	79	44	150	111	95	39	↓	881				
	No of requests for an EHC mediation		Brynmor Smart	Monthly	6	6	6	9		5	Not available in time for Board						4	2	↓	80			
	No of EHC mediation cases that have been held		Brynmor Smart	Monthly		0	0			0	Not available in time for Board						0	0	↓	3			
	No of SEND tribunal appeals registered		Brynmor Smart	Monthly	2	6	5	1			Not available in time for Board						3	2	↓	15			
assessments requests	No of requests for EHC needs assessments received	1.Tracker	Natalie Hunt	Monthly	26	39	35			43	43	47	23	28	38	35	26	↓					
	Late running EHC needs assessments	Capita	Aman Gill	Monthly	69	73	76			109	120	122	140	130	149	164	168	↑	49				
	Late running EHC needs assessments between 21 to 30 weeks	Capita	Aman Gill	Monthly	31	24	17			39	49	61	56	42	48	61	57	↑	35				
	Late running EHC needs assessments between 31 to 40 weeks	Capita	Aman Gill	Monthly		25	25			10	16	24	43	51	54	45	47	↑					

Area	Metric	Source	Frequency	Trend data													Direction of travel	Benchmarks				
				Dec-22	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23		Slough	National	South East	CIPFA NN	
EHC needs	Late running EHC needs assessments between 41 to 52 weeks	Capita	Aman Gill	Monthly		20	24			25	16	7	9	18	28	42	44	↑				
	Late running EHC needs assessments over 52 weeks	Capita	Aman Gill	Monthly	4	4	20			35	39	30	32	19	19	16	20	↑				
Statutory assessment process	No of requests for EHC needs assessment refused	1.Tracker	Natalie Hunt	Monthly	5	10	3	3	0	0	5	4	1	11	10	9	3	↓	32			
	No of EHC plans issued following assessment	Capita	Aman Gill	Monthly	12	5	6	3	6	10	6	27	10	27	24	19	21	↑	177			
EHCP compliance	No of new EHC plans issued within 20 weeks (including exceptions)	Capita	Aman Gill	Monthly	4	0	1	0	0	1	0	6	1	3	10	2	4	↑	24			
	% of new EHC plans issued within 20 weeks (including exceptions)	Capita	Aman Gill	Monthly	33.3	0.0	16.7	0.0	0.0	10.0	0.0	22.2	0.0	11.1	41.7	10.5	19.0	↑	11.4	47.6	44.8	76.1
	No new EHC plans issued within 20 weeks (excluding exceptions)	Capita	Aman Gill	Monthly	4	0	1	0	0	1	0	6	1	3	7	2	2	↓	23			
	% of new EHC plans issued within 20 weeks (excluding exceptions)	Capita	Aman Gill	Monthly	33.3	0.0	16.7	0.0	0.0	10.0	0.0	22.2	0.0	11.1	29.2	10.5	9.5	↓	11.60	49.1	45.8	79.1
Attendance and exclusions	Number of pupils on SEN Support who were recorded as persistently absent (>10%)	StudyBugs	Anjli Sidhu	Termly			1363				1399				862			↓				
	Number of pupils on EHCP who were recorded as persistently absent (>10%)	StudyBugs	Anjli Sidhu	Termly			450				399				158			↓				
	Fixed period exclusion rate for pupils with SEN support as a percentage of the school population	Capita	Charlie Watson	Termly	4.01		3.62				3.38				0.00			↓	10.50	18.59	16.97	18.44
	Fixed period exclusion rate for pupils with EHCP as a percentage of the school population	Capita	Charlie Watson	Termly	4.90		5.37				5.12				0.00			↓	11.58	17.63	19.11	18.77
	Permanent exclusion rate for SEN Support pupils as a percentage of the school population	Capita	Charlie Watson	Termly	0.23		0.25				0.08				0.01			↓	0.18	0.25	0.14	0.23
	Permanent exclusion rate for pupils with an EHCP as a percentage of the school population	Capita	Charlie Watson	Termly	0.00		0.23				0.31				0.00			↓	0.17	0.13	0.11	0.15
Child development reviews	% of children who received a 2-2½ year child development review	S4H	Jack Hockin	Quarterly	82.8		94.1			99.0			85.0					↓	85.8	74.0	76.9	-
	Child development: % of children achieving the expected level in communication skills at 2 to 2½	S4H	Jack Hockin	Quarterly	75.0		78.6			83.0			78.0					↓	73.1	86.2	88.0	82.9
	Child development: % of children achieving the expected level in personal social skills at 2 to 2½	S4H	Jack Hockin	Quarterly	86.1		92.7			92.0			91.0					↓	89.0	90.8	90.9	89.1
	Child development: % of children achieving a good level of development at 2 to 2½ years	S4H	Jack Hockin	Quarterly	76.1		76.3			78.0			75.0					↔	73.6	80.9	81.7	75.2
EHC health assessments	No of EHC health assessments requests received	BHFT	Ali Woodiwi	Quarterly	106		108			156			116					↑	97			
	% of EHC health assessments completed within 6 weeks (EAST-wide)	BHFT	Ali Woodiwi	Quarterly	60%	56%	57%	63%	64%	65%	62%	64%	73%	61%				↓	75%			
Therapy wait times	No of CYP on the waiting list for Occupational Therapy (OT) and physiotherapy assessment	BHFT	Ali Woodiwi	Quarterly			104			70			86					↓				
	CYP waiting 53+ weeks for OT and physiotherapy assessment	BHFT	Ali Woodiwi	Quarterly			21			8			2					↓				
Neurodiversity	Number on waiting list for ADHD Specialist Pathway (data is Berkshire East-wide)	BHFT	Ali Woodiwi	Quarterly	1278		1379			1,456								↑	1,002			
	Number on waiting list for Autism Assessment Team 5-18 (data is Berkshire East wide)	BHFT	Ali Woodiwi	Quarterly	1193		1190			1,381								↑	831			
	Number on waiting list for Autism Assessment Under 5 (data is Berkshire East wide)	BHFT	Ali Woodiwi	Quarterly	261		326			452								↑	257			

**Trends**

- ↑ Performance has improved
- ↓ Performance has deteriorated
- ↔ Performance is the same
- Performance above Benchmark tool
- Performance below Benchmark tool
- Performance in line with Benchmark tool
- Performance can not be compared

Note: EET data is one month prior to current m

**MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE RECORD 2023/24**  
**CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT SCRUTINY PANEL**

	COUNCILLOR	27 June 2023	25 July 2023	26 Sept 2023	24 Oct 2023	28 Nov 2023	4 Jan 2024	30 Jan 2024
1.	Manku	P	P	P	P			
2.	Shaik	P	P	P	Ap	P	P	P
3.	Escott	AP	P	P	P	P	P	P
4.	Hulme	P	P	P	P	P	P	Ap
5.	Iftakhar	P	P	P	P	P	Ap	P
6.	Khawar						P	P
7.	Mann	P	P	P	Ap	P	P	P
8.	Matloob	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
9.	Mohindra	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
10.	O'Kelly	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
11.	Stedmond	P	P	AP	AP	P	P	P

P = Present for whole meeting  
P\* = Present for part of meeting  
Ap = Apologies given  
Ab = Absent, no apologies given

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