

## **Is your LA still on track to meet the deficit control or reduction targets as set out in the agreement?**

**Provisional 2022-23 outturn** is a £0.097 million overspend.

This is an improvement on the projected outturn of £1.638 million at period 9 for 2022-23. This is reflected by the work officers have been undertaking to turn the deficit around since January 2021.

### **Period 2 forecast 2023-24**

Overall, the 2023-24 DSG is forecasting an underspend of £0.473 which is fully attributable to an underspend on the growth fund within the Schools Block DSG.

The Early Years Block, High Needs Block and Central Schools Services Block are all currently predicted to be on budget. But with the caveat that the P2 Budget Management report is very early in the financial year and it normally takes at least 3 months of financial ledger information to get a clear picture of predicted outturn. The main reason for this is that it can take a few months for accruals to be cleared in the new financial year.

It should be noted that neither the provisional forecast outturn for 2022-23 nor the period 2 budget management report have been presented to members yet so they are not yet in the public domain.

## **What progress has been made towards implementing the conditions set in the agreement, and are the timelines set in detailed proposals still on track?**

- The main conditions within the Safety Valve have been tested against the latest numbers of Education Health and Care Needs Assessments (EHCNA), Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans and other live data trends.
- Work is nearly complete to cleanse and update the real-time pupil level granular data.
- The Strategic Inclusion Partnership Board agreed a new Live Cases dashboard that has now been introduced that allows more informed decision making and triaging of cases. The new leadership team have already used the dashboard to review of all current cases to identify possible quick resolutions.
- A new Strategic Inclusion Partnership Board Special Education and Disabilities (SEND) 0-25 data dashboard allows ongoing monitoring and interrogation of the data aligned to the Written Statement of Action and the updated Ofsted/CQC Inspection Framework. This then links back to the SEND team and their Live Cases dashboard. The Partnership Board dashboard will also be aligned with the Frimley ICB Data Dashboard.

- The key conditions within the Safety Valve have been shared with all headteachers in Slough and they are directly involved in ongoing impact assessments.
- Joint commissioning with The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and Bracknell Forest is being developed and the initial focus has been on the Integrated Therapies project with Frimley ICB.
- Each education setting will have a dedicated link officer to ensure better communication with the SEND service.
- The Place Planning Board has been refreshed and will now focus on SEND demand, sufficiency and capital projects to increase statutory places in Specialist Resource Provision and Designated Units while a wider delivery plan is being developed with a number of settings.

**What are the current risks to implementation, and how are these being mitigated?**

- In line with the current SEND 0-25 national data trends, we are seeing a substantial increase in requests for EHCNAs. Other pressures on the service include a rising number of exclusions, increased pressure on alternative provision places, together with an increase in in-year admissions to schools which increasingly often involve pupils with complex needs. Work is being undertaken to increase the ordinary available provision, reasonable adjustments and targeted interventions that are available in Slough schools to meet the needs of more young people with SEND in the mainstream sector. A key focus of support and challenge visits in the Autumn will be the SEND inclusion support provided across our maintained school sector.
- Since April 2023, the new Head of SEND and her new team have identified a large number of EHCNA requests that had been previously agreed for assessment but had been delayed. This was mainly due to the shortage of available Education Psychology (EP) time to provide the advice necessary to move forward with the EHC plan process. The long-term solution to this will be to recruit a permanent team of in-house EPs but, in the meantime, we have commissioned an external service to provide all the EP advice required for the backlog of cases and have identified additional locum EP capacity.
- The current iteration of the Safety Valve does not reflect the backlog cases that were in the EHC plan assessment pipeline pre April 2023. The anticipated cost impact is not reflected in the latest financial outturns for the High Needs Block. A new Safety Valve Working Party is reviewing the conditions set in the current agreement to ensure that the actual figures are reflected and that additional conditions are identified to ensure that the budget still balances for 2025/26.

**Are there any risks to the timing of capital projects that may impact on the delivery of your agreement, such as the opening of a free school? If so, please explain the reasons and impacts clearly.**

- We do not have any new schools planned but this in itself is a risk in that we will not have the additional capacity in the future that a new free school would bring. We are currently working with our special schools, Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) and schools where there is specialist resource provision to review current capacity. Capital is available to support this process and projects have already been prioritised for a special school, a post-16 setting and the PRU. We are also in conversation with established providers locally that are looking to provide an education offer in Slough in the future.

**Have there been any unforeseen difficulties or setbacks in implementing the agreement?**

- As above, the increase in pressure on the service and shortage of EP capacity has created a backlog of cases that are being profiled into the Safety Valve.
- The increase in the number of exclusions in secondary schools, and pressure for immediate alternative provision places in the second half of the 2022/23 academic year has required additional places to be secured in the PRU for 6<sup>th</sup> day provision. A new Preventing Exclusions policy is being developed and a review of PRU funding will take this into account within the Safety Valve agreement.

**Details of any substantial changes to the senior staff at the LA responsible for implementing the agreement**

- The Strategic Inclusion Partnership Board is in place with agreed terms of reference ensuring partnership working with health and social care. They have drafted a Self-Evaluation Framework to inform the strategic objectives and priorities including a data dashboard and a SEND Service Operational KPI Tracker.
- Neill Butler, the Strategic Finance Manager for Childrens Services, is still supporting the Safety Valve service and continues to work closely with the SEND services and the Strategic Inclusion Partnership Board with Budget Management Reporting.
- Sue Butcher, DCS, took up her post in January 2023 and Neil Hoskinson, AD for Education and Inclusion joined Slough in March the same year. Following this, a new SEND team structure has been implemented including a new Head of SEND, new managers and other key personnel including a Transformation and

Commissioning consultant, a Resolutions Officer together with new casework SEND officers. A Preparation for Adulthood post is being created. All case officers will undertake a skills audit to identify CPD needs. Training on the Code of Practice took place in April with a further session in June. CAMHs training took place in May.

- The SEND Commissioner that was involved in drawing up the Safety Valve moved on to a different local authority in March 2023 and has been replaced by the Transformation and Commissioning Consultant. This will allow commissioning decisions moving forward to be informed by the SEND 0-25 data, anticipating the future SEND cohort needs and best practice nationally.