

## **Wokingham 0-25 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy 2019-2021**

Wokingham is committed to supporting and improving the life chances of all local children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), ensuring that all are well prepared for life beyond education and training.

Whilst all partners support this vision for Wokingham local area, it has become evident through a variety of informative and consultative exercises that this strategy can go further in supporting our vision.

To this end we will maintain this strategy as a working document whilst we co-produce a final Wokingham Local Area SEND Strategy by December 2020, taking into account developments since the creation of the current document.

Please note, that where this document refers to schools, it is referring to all educational establishments within Wokingham (maintained schools, academies, free schools, special schools and alternative provision).

### **Introduction**

Wokingham is committed to supporting and improving the life chances of all local children and young people with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND), ensuring that all are well prepared for life beyond education and training. The aim of this strategy is to set out the things we want to work towards achieving our vision, reflecting the changes in the law about how we support children and their families, (through the Children and Families Act 2014, the SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 years, the Care Act 2014 and the Equality Act 2010), Chronically sick and disabled persons act (1970), and achieving the best possible outcomes for all.

The Children and Families Act 2014 introduced the biggest changes to SEND in a generation and we want to meet the requirements of the Act in a way that is inclusive and realistic in a very challenging financial context. Through four high level strategic priorities, this strategy serves to provide a sense of direction and will support future planning in a time of significant change. It seeks to address those issues which are of principal concern at this stage and which, when achieved, will have maximum impact on the delivery of effective and efficient services. It is for children, young people and their families, staff, partners and the wider public.

The strategy seeks to understand the need in Wokingham and then organise our resource to meet that need in the most cost effective way. It is designed to demonstrate our collective responsibility and accountability across all partners, specifically education, social care and health and also reflect the contribution made by voluntary and community partners. It will support clear pathways for children, young people and their families with a particular emphasis on the transition between services as children and young people get older and the smooth interface between childhood

and adulthood. Most importantly of all, it should encourage better outcomes for all children and young people.

We realise there is still much to do, to keep pace with increasing and changing demand, to improve provision and to build local capacity. We must target our resources effectively and achieve value for money while recognising the significant increase in numbers supported by high needs funding and the corresponding increase in pressure on broader health and social care services.

## Context

Wokingham is a great place for children and young people with SEND to grow up. The area has a strong and growing economy, high performing schools, quality health care providers, and a range of public and privately funded resources for children and young people with SEND and their parents and carers. But like many other local areas, we are facing a rising demand from a growing and changing demography, at a time of reducing public funds. Achieving our aspirations against a backdrop of increased demand, particularly for children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs and constrained local authority and partner resources will require new ways of working across public agencies and a new relationship with service users.

We want to coordinate the support and services for children and young people with SEND and in this strategy we have developed a set of high level priorities for the improvement of services from birth to age 25, which we believe will support us in realising better outcomes through:

- Improving our data gathering and analysis to support an evidence based approach to provision;
- Improving our communication and engagement practices and developing strong partnerships across the local area with schools, health, families and other partners;
- Supporting children to thrive at times of transition and as they become adults;
- Improving provision and building capacity locally to meet need.

We believe that putting a greater emphasis on supporting children and their families to have an active role in their own care will be critical for improving outcomes. We want to ensure that the voice of children, young people and their families is heard in all aspects of decision making.

Wokingham Borough Council is the lead agency for all children and young people's services in Wokingham. This means that the Council brings together all public

services and other stakeholders and supports them in working together to help local children and young people to achieve the best possible outcomes. The Council and its public sector partners are responsible for providing additional support to children and young people with SEND and their families. This support includes:

- Coproducing with children and their families in the decisions that the Council may make about the support and services they receive;
- Providing advice and information to parents on what support is available for children and their families locally;
- Working with parents on the production of joined up education, health and care plan (EHCP) that sets out how education services, schools, health services and social services will support each child;
- Commissioning services jointly between the Council and health services for children with SEND;
- Supporting parents with information and advice, helping them to care for their children.
- Providing support and guidance for families where children and young people have a SEN Support Plan.
- Providing good and timely support for families

We are also committed to working across the area served by the three Berkshire West authorities. Health and local authority partnerships are working to create a shared data set and a shared understanding of need, so that where there is a common need for particular provision, we will work together. This may mean sharing resources with a view to creating new provision that will be closer to families and offering better value for money than independent sector provision.

Our work will be set within a strong management framework with clear accountabilities and reporting lines to ensure that service aspirations are delivered with tangible benefits to local communities and that better outcomes for children and young people are achieved. Our governance arrangements will ensure that services are held to account to achieve these aspirations in a timely and efficient manner. These are explained later in the strategy.

## [Our Vision](#)

**Our vision for all children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in Wokingham is that, with the right support and the right opportunities, they are able to achieve the best possible outcomes and to lead happy and fulfilled lives.**

We will improve outcomes by enabling families to support themselves. Placing a greater emphasis on supporting children and their families. We will work with them to improve their outcomes and ensure the voice of the children and their families is heard in all stages of decision making. We have consulted with partners in the production of this strategy to ensure that it reflects the views of all.

We will also achieve this through access to high quality local early years provision, schools and other education settings. We want to provide a well-planned continuum of provision from birth to early adulthood. We aim to meet need in mainstream and universal settings wherever possible and where specialist help is needed we want to ensure that we can provide it in Wokingham whenever appropriate. We want children and young people to get the right support, advice and guidance at the right stage depending on their needs, to make good progress and achieve the best outcomes in all aspects of their lives. We want local provisions to meet local needs.

## Special Educational Needs and Disability in Wokingham

### *1. Who are the children with SEND?*

This strategy is concerned with supporting children and young people with SEND to achieve the best possible outcomes and to help parents and carers to provide the best possible care and support. Children and young people with SEND are defined as follows:

*A child or young person has special educational needs if he or she has a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her. (S 20.1 Children and Families Act 2014)*

The term disabilities is used as follows:

*If you have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long term' negative (adverse) effect on your ability to carry out normal day to day activities. (Based on S6.1 Equalities Act 2010)*

Wokingham Borough Council has a duty to make suitable arrangements for the education of children and young people aged 0-25 with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities where needs cannot be met by the schools they attend using their own resources. The needs of individual children and young people may be met within mainstream schools and colleges by providing additional support or through a place being provided within a special school or college. Where a child or young person has not made the expected progress despite the school having taken purposeful and relevant action to identify, assess and meet the needs of the child or young person, the school or parents can consider requesting an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) which will set out the services they will receive and the school, college or other provision they will attend.

## *2. How many children are there with SEND in Wokingham?*

There are approximately 38,000 children and young people under the age of 18 years living in Wokingham. This is 23% of the total population in the area. In October 2019, 1035 of children and young people had EHCPs maintained by Wokingham Borough Council, with the most significant needs of resident children being:

- Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) - 40%
- Social Emotional and Mental Health – 19%
- Moderate Learning Difficulty – 9%
- Severe Learning Difficulty – 9%
- Profound or Multiple Learning Difficulty – 4%
- Speech Language and Communication Needs – 7%
- Hearing Impairment – 2%
- Physical Disability – 5%

The overall number of children and young people with an EHCP and the predecessor statement of special educational needs, has grown since 2015 from 730 to 1035 in 2019.

A further 2,319 children were categorised as needing SEN support in Wokingham state-funded schools.

The proportion of children and young people in the borough requiring education in special schools has increased at a rate of 5% per annum since 2015. At the same time, the 0-25 population (and in particular the number of young adolescents of statutory school age) is projected to grow. These two factors will lead to a significant increase in the number of children needing special school places in the next five years. It is estimated that there will be an additional 125 places required by 2023.

Currently the Council educates 34% of children and young people in special schools and specialist post 16 institutions. However, 129 are educated outside of Wokingham, 45% in independent or non-maintained special schools.

## *3. SEND Provision in Wokingham*

In Wokingham there are:

- 10 secondary schools,
- 33 Infant, Junior and Primary schools

- 6 Resource Bases at Primary
- 1 Resource Base at Secondary
- 1 Special School
- 1 Academy Special School
- 1 Pupil Referral Unit

#### 4. *Finance*

The continued reduction of budgets in successive local government financial settlements means that the Council must:

- Seek the best value for money in all service areas, through efficient organisation, better procurement and partnership working with other councils and health commissioners;
- Focus specialist services on those children, young people and families who have the greatest need and who have statutory entitlement;
- Target Early Help services to prevent needs increasing and avoid higher levels of spend on statutory services;
- Review our chargeable services
- Give families and young people greater control in how their financial support is used.

Already stretched High Needs Block funding means that we must target our resources effectively and deliver this strategy in a way that is affordable, recognising the unprecedented increase in pupil numbers supported by High Needs Block funding and the corresponding increase in pressure on the broader health and social care services. Partnership working will become even more important for the future, particularly with schools, where innovative ways to use High Needs Block funding in mainstream schools.

### [Our Principles](#)

Across the partnership, we have developed our principles, priorities and key actions. These principles will be reflected in our support, services and provision in order to improve outcomes for children with SEND. They will be embedded in everything we do.

1. Encouraging independence:

We want children and young people to be resilient and confident, so that they are prepared for independent adulthood. We will ensure that services and provision are proportionate to need and we will provide the support and tools for individuals and families to do things for themselves where they are able. Parents, carers, children and young people will feel empowered through being aware of the support available and better informed to make choices and decisions. We recognise that raising a child with a disability can at times be more challenging or complex than raising a child without a disability. We will therefore provide support ranging from information and sign posting to funding for and direct provision of short breaks. We will also provide courses and direct support from skilled staff for specific issues. As every child and their family is different we will accommodate different levels of support based upon individual needs.

2. Ensuring progress:

We want all children and young people to make progress appropriate to their needs. We will ensure that we are well informed about the progress that children are making and support strong inclusive practice. We will hold schools and colleges to account where insufficient progress is made against the EHCPs and SEN Support plans, and will ensure that the right support is in place promptly to respond to changing needs.

3. Communicating well:

We will be transparent and honest in all communication to support the effective delivery of services. We will be clear, open and honest with all our audiences, and will explain who does what, how it works, what to expect and when, and we will keep each other informed. The views and voice of the child and their family will be at the centre of everything that we do. As a consequence, children and their families will feel listened to and involved in planning for their future.

4. Working in partnership:

We will encourage partnership working to ensure that we use our resource as effectively and efficiently as possible. Statutory health, education and care services, schools and the voluntary sector will work together, taking collective responsibility to deliver better outcomes in a coordinated way. We will put children and their families first, to work in partnership to deliver services in line with meeting need and individual choices.

5. Identifying need early:

We aim to improve the long term outcomes for the child and reduce the need for more costly interventions later on. We will identify need as early as possible and work with families and young people to decide how to support that need efficiently. We will treat times of transition with particular importance and ensure that early planning supports and informs the appropriate aspirations of the child and their family.

6. Ensuring financial sustainability:

We will ensure that provision and services are commissioned to ensure clear pathways between services while improving financial sustainability. We will review

commissioning arrangements in the context of local partnerships, spend SEND budgets carefully and efficiently and have a clear understanding of what types of investment best benefit our children.

## **Our Priorities**

Wokingham is committed to supporting and improving the life chances of all local children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), ensuring that all are well prepared for life beyond education and training.

To realise our vision for children and young people with SEND, we have identified the following strategic priorities for 2019-2021. An action plan attached outlines the priorities of this strategy and recognises that we can go further in supporting our vision and a detailed action plan for Strategic Priority 5 accompanies this strategy.

### **Strategic priority 1: Improved data gathering and analysis to support an evidence-based approach to provision.**

Through the development of improved data gathering, systems and processes, we will ensure an evidence based approach to the planning and commissioning of support. We will work closely with health colleagues and those in voluntary and community services to maximise the opportunities for early identification of changing needs and demands to target support in the most effective way. Utilising good quality information we will ensure a transparent and fair allocation of existing resources with budgets aligned to our strategic priorities.

Significant amounts of data are available across the Council and its partners in health. Currently a local health data set is being developed using the Council for Disabled Children's data set to assist with future planning across Berkshire. We will develop a systematic approach to using existing systems in a smarter way. We will use data to plan strategically for the future. We will establish a general agreement of what data we need to collect and how we use it. We will improve methods of quality assurance to make sure that we are using existing resources in the most efficient and effective way.

To have early sight of changing needs and demands we will develop evidence sources such as:

- Pupils with EHCPs by primary need;
- Pupils with SEN Support Plans
- Current placements by primary need;
- Placement costs by primary need;

- Use of EHCP funding in schools;
- Applications for and use of Exceptional Needs Funding;
- High Needs Block budget monitoring;
- Data and trajectory of children in receipt of early intervention.

## **Strategic priority 2: Improved Engagement and Communication**

- With and between partners

Working closely with schools, social care, health colleagues and other providers we will ensure that the commissioning of places is closely aligned with the changing climate of need in Wokingham; that the commissioning of integrated services ensures a holistic approach and meets the individual needs of children and young people through bespoke packages, from birth to adulthood; and that there is a shared and widely agreed understanding of the role and function for each partner in the delivery of the SEND strategy.

- With and between services

Regular meetings and other channels of communication between the local authority and service providers will ensure that commissioned services continue to meet the needs of children and young people, that there is a clarity of purpose and that any changes of priorities and funding are shared with providers and stakeholders. Communication will focus on meeting the needs of the child and the young person in the context of the finite resources available.

- With and between schools

We will support schools to understand their legal and moral obligations to accommodate all children with SEND through regular sharing of information at SENCO network meetings and Schools Forum. We will ensure that schools are held accountable for the outcomes of pupils on their roll and by making reasonable adjustments, ensure that the gap between pupils with SEND and their mainstream counterparts is narrowing.

- With parents, carers and young people

We will communicate regularly with SEND Voices Wokingham, SENDIASS and CAN network in order to provide a co-production working model so that there is ownership by all stakeholders and that the voice of the child and the parents is heard. SENDIASS will ensure access to good quality, impartial information advice and support to parents, children and young people.

### **Strategic Priority 3: Improved Transition at All Stages**

- Transitions within Education

We recognise how important successful transition procedures are to all children but especially for those with additional needs. Transition for a child with SEND requires some additional planning to ensure that it is smooth and successful.

We will ensure effective transitions at all stages of education by working with early years providers to develop communication links between other local settings and primary schools, and supporting effective relationships between primary and secondary schools and post 16 provision. This will ensure greater continuity for children in their movement from home to setting and from school to school. Transition from one setting to another should be seen as a seamless journey.

Planning for transition should be timely and commence prior to when the child is due to start in their new setting, to enable sufficient time for any plans or support to be put into place. Parents and any professionals involved with the child should be invited to the transition meeting. This ensures parents can make informed decisions for their children.

- Transitions into adulthood

We will establish a clear pathway across the partnership which allows for 'Preparing for Adulthood' (PfA) arrangements to begin at 14 years. This includes defined roles and responsibility within the Local Authority both strategically and operationally. Children's and Adult's Services will work in partnership with other agencies, the child and young person and their family to develop effective person centred preparation for adulthood.

The PfA Pathway will deliver the following;

- Emphasis on a planning process to support children and young people with SEND to make positive transitions into adulthood in all aspects of their life including:
  - ✓ Employment;
  - ✓ Good adult health;
  - ✓ Independent living;
  - ✓ Participating in society and/ or the local community.

- Establishment of a new Preparing for Adulthood and Transition Team between Children's and Adult's services to embed and co-ordinate a preparing for adulthood pathway.
- Development of a workforce training programme to embed the principles of Preparing for Adulthood, in line with legislative duties and Children's and Adult's Services approaches.
- Development of advice, information and signposting for young people, parents and carers and professionals through the Local Offer and other routes.
- Development of the market place to ensure that there is suitable post 18 provision in place to support young people's aspiration and life choices through to adulthood, including employment and accommodation.
- Development of a mental health protocol which specifies how young people with SEND and mental health problems are prepared for adulthood and transition to adult mental health services, where appropriate.
- Early information and advice for young people and their parents and carers in respect of where their needs or their children's needs do not meet the thresholds for Adult's Services provision.

#### **Strategic Priority 4: Improved provision and local capacity building**

The increase of children and young people requiring education in special schools and colleges in Wokingham and the projected growth of the 0-25 population will lead to a significant increase in the number of children needing special school places in the next five years (an additional 125 place growth requirement by 2023).

We know that we need additional capacity to support growth, specifically to include the ASD and SEMH needs which demands further investigation, expertise and understanding to ensure provision is effective and appropriate.

Insufficient local capacity and the consequent use of high cost out of borough provision, has led to a High Needs Block projected deficit. This overspend will potentially increase in 2019/20 as the numbers of children requiring an SEN placement is set to rise.

There will be an additional pressure for 190 places for children with SEND will be required by 2023, to mitigate growth (125 places) and provide a local alternative to high cost, out of borough provision (65 places).

There is one state funded special school within Wokingham Borough, Addington School in Woodley. Addington School is currently undergoing an expansion to accommodate 250 pupils, focusing on Autism and Learning Disabilities. Currently over 80% of the places are taken by children and young people from Wokingham. Northern House as an academy that provides services for up to 72 children with a focus on

Social, Emotional and Mental Health difficulties. Currently around 50% of the places are taken by children and young people from Wokingham.

Six infant, junior and primary schools and one secondary school have designated Resource Bases for children and young people with SEND. The Resource Bases provide support within mainstream schools, so allowing a child to continue to be educated within this environment rather than within a special school. Resources Bases currently cover the following areas (number of schools in brackets):

- Hearing Impairment (1 infant, 1 junior);
- Autism Spectrum Disorders (1 infant, 1 junior, 1 secondary);
- Physical Disabilities (2 primary);
- Speech Language and Communication Needs (1 primary).

The cost of supporting all current children and young people in Wokingham Borough with SEND is £18,000,000 per year. Over recent years, the pressure on the High Needs Block has increased. This reflects the increased size of the cohort and the number of children placed in special schools (particularly independent and non-maintained special schools). These placements are often outside of the borough, and the council is required to meet the home to school transport costs. Transport costs of children with SEND are higher than for children in mainstream schools, reflecting the longer journeys and lower vehicle occupancy rates.

We will review and explore the various options that we have to address this deficit and these will all be investigated as part of this strategy. These options include:

- Increasing inclusion (education in mainstream schools), through improved provision of specialist support;
- Providing local high quality but better value facilities to replace high cost placements;
- Building a new school through a free school application;
- Expanding existing special school provision;
- Developing Satellite Provision linked to an existing school;
- Reviewing the provision of the Resources Bases
- Providing additional support for mainstream schools;
- Improving purchasing frameworks for independent provision.
- Post 16 education provision
- Reviewing the additional health provision required

## **Strategic Priority 5: Coproducing a SEND Strategy that goes further and demands more for Children with SEND**

Wokingham is committed to supporting and improving the life chances of all local children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), ensuring that all are well prepared for life beyond education and training.

Whilst all partners support this vision for Wokingham local area, it has become evident through a variety of informative and consultative exercises that this strategy can go further in supporting our vision.

To this end we will maintain this strategy as a working document whilst we co-produce a final Wokingham Local Area SEND Strategy by December 2020, taking into account developments since the creation of the current document.

The development of this broader strategy will build on the strategic priorities contained within this document, and respond to additional strategic drivers for Wokingham. These include:

- SEND provision sufficiency current and future planning
- Resource Base and Outreach support review
- Home to School Transport
- Enablement Technology

## **Enablers**

To achieve our vision and deliver on our strategic priorities, there are some key enablers which will support this strategy:

- Within the SEND Service to appoint to permanent posts to ensure continuity and consistency;
- Continue to develop a permanent skilled workforce that delivers high quality and effective interventions;
- Promote and support an inclusive culture across and within all our schools;
- Continue to develop the range and quality of information through our SEND Local Offer;
- Develop a set of comprehensive action plans that detail the activities, measures of success and timescales for achieving our strategic priorities.

## Indicators of Success

As a result of better use and analysis of data, improved communication and engagement, transition arrangements and improved provisions and local capacity, we will seek to ensure:

1. All children and young people with SEND feel that their voices are valued and heard
2. Local provisions are meeting local needs for children and young people with SEND
3. Transition planning meets the educational, health and care needs of all children and young people and there is a smooth process for families at all stages.
4. Identify children with SEND as early as possible and provide them and their families with the right help at the right time, to achieve best possible outcomes.
5. Robust financial monitoring of all SEND provision and packages of care to be responsive to changing needs whilst delivering value for money and best outcomes.

## Governance of the strategy

In order to manage, monitor and evaluate progress effectively it will be vital that there is robust governance of this strategy. This will be undertaken at two levels. Operational scrutiny will be undertaken by the owners of the attached action plans. The purpose of this group is to ensure that action plan is delivered on time and on budget, and where this is not happening, to report obstacles and concerns to the SEND Improvement Board (SIB). This group will be chaired by the Assistant Director Children's Services, (Learning, Achievement & Partnerships).

Other activities will include scoping the future for priorities that are emerging and where early action will ensure that problems do not escalate; identifying the best people, groups, etc. to lead on actions; demonstrating flexibility where situations are changing and actions need revising; learning from the experience of others.

Strategic scrutiny will be undertaken by the Children and Young People's Partnership (CYPP), a multi-agency and multiservice group, to be chaired by the Director for Children's Services. The delivery of this strategy is not the responsibility of a single agency. It requires a partnership approach, owned by all who work with children, young people and their families. The purpose of the group is to support the shared vision, judge progress against the stated strategic priorities and provide scrutiny and challenge to the delivery of the SEND strategy through the operational group.

The CYPP will provide the strategic drive, coordination and oversight by receiving regular reports on performance and outcomes against the strategic priorities and supporting action plans and consider a range of data, information and soft intelligence

from a variety of sources. In considering these data sources the CYPP will evaluate the progress made by the SIB in delivering key improvements for children and young people with SEND and their families. The CYPP will also consider key risks to the successful delivery of the strategy and mitigate/remove any blockages to improving outcomes for this group of children and young people.

## Consultation

This working strategy details the overarching vision and direction for children and young people with SEND in Wokingham for the next three years. Faced with radical legislative overhaul through the Children and Families Act 2014, continuing financial pressures and increasing demand, we need to think differently about the way that we plan and deliver SEND support in Wokingham.

We believe this strategy can go further supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This strategy has been produced by officers, partners and schools in the first instance, and the co-produced strategy will reflect the views of parents, carers and young people from Wokingham as well as wider partners in the voluntary sector. It will set out how the local area will work to support children, young people and their families with SEND in future. It is built upon a shared belief that considering and providing for the needs of children and young people with SEND should be 'everyone's business', with the aim of providing effective services which will enable children and young people to thrive that goes further and demands more for Children with SEND.

## Timescale

This strategy will cover the period 2019 – 2021, however it is anticipated that a new co-produced strategy will be developed and implemented by Dec 2020 which will supersede this current strategy.

## Appendix

SEND Strategy Action Plan