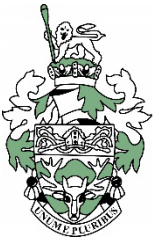


Wokingham Area SEND & Inclusion Strategy 2024 – 2029

*Wokingham's Strategy for Children and Young People
with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities*



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**



**Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire
and Berkshire West**
Integrated Care Board



Berkshire Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust



Royal Berkshire
NHS Foundation Trust



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1. Foreword

Welcome to Wokingham's co-produced Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) & Inclusion Strategy. Our aim is to enhance the life chances and outcomes of children and young people with SEND and adults with Learning Disabilities (LD) across our local area.

The Local Authority (LA), Wokingham Borough Council and the NHS Integrated Commissioning Board (ICB) lead on delivery of the strategy, but its success undoubtedly lies in the effectiveness of the partnership between all stakeholders, in particular the families of children and young people with SEND represented through SEND Voices Wokingham, our Parent Carer Forum. This ensures that our priorities remain relevant and reflect the needs of our local SEND community.

Central too is the voice of children and young people with SEND themselves, who have been actively engaged in the development of this strategy through 'Say Yes' our local SEND Youth Forum. Our SEND Partnership wants to do more, to increase the strength and depth of co-production with children and young people, along with young adults with disabilities. These ambitions to further improve our co-production are set out within this Strategy and we will see these plans realised in the coming months and years.

The strategy sets out our six strategic priorities, which have been agreed in partnership between Wokingham Borough Council, the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board, families, schools, settings, other agencies and providers in Health and Social Care, including Adult Services and the voluntary and community sector.

Delivery of this strategy will be overseen by the area's Strategic SEND Partnership Board, membership of which is listed in the appendices and will report to the Health and Wellbeing Board on progress

We hope you find our strategy aspirational and inspiring, and a reflection of our core values; to achieve the best outcomes for our area's most vulnerable children, working with and alongside our young people and adults with additional needs and disabilities. The signatories below wish to express their thanks and appreciation to all partners for the level of commitment already shown in developing this strategy.


Executive Signatories

WBC Executive Signature

BOB ICB Executive Signature



Susan Parsonage, Chief Executive



Dr Nick Broughton, Chief Executive

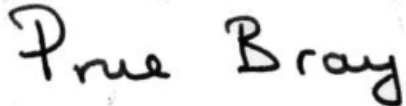



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**



**Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire
and Berkshire West
Integrated Care Board**

Co-Signatories

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2. Introduction

This strategy sets out a collective vision and direction of travel for Wokingham's SEND system serving children and young people 0 – 25 years, with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). It covers the entire system including all local authority services, this being; local schools, colleges, and early years settings; social care; health partners across the Integrated Care System (ICS); NHS England for specialist services; and the voluntary and community sector. All these partners will work closely together with children, young people, parents, and carers in order to deliver our ambition of achieving better outcomes for children and young people with SEND. This will be through the provision of the right support in the right place at the right time.

Throughout this document 'we' refers to the collective system of agencies and people listed above which are all working together in partnership with the shared aim of improving the outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

The strategy has been co-produced initially through a series of SEND Co-Production working group meetings with input from key stakeholders including SEND Voices, Me2 Club, Schools, SENDIASS and other council officers. The group commissioned some of the research including the surveys that informed the strategy and agreed the direction of travel, content and structure of the document.

By December 2023 an initial draft of the document was circulated to Wokingham's Strategic SEND Partnership, and this was further developed through a series of three Co-Production Workshops attended by Partnership members in the first quarter of 2024. These sessions further refined the Strategy and defined clear objectives for the delivery of each of the strategic priorities.

The final document draws upon the following information (source material is set out in more detail in the Appendices):

-
- **SEND & Inclusion Strategy co-production workshops with all stakeholders held during Spring 2024**

- **Wokingham's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2024, which includes data from all key agencies and benchmarking with statistical and regional neighbours and the national picture**

- **Feedback from children and young people with SEND and their parents and carers**
- **Feedback from early years providers and education settings gathered through discussions at various network meetings and in surveys confirming local SEND priorities**
- **Feedback from professionals and front-line workers**

3. Wokingham's Vision for Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Our vision is that Wokingham is a borough where all children and young people are visible, valued and included in their communities, are safe and cared for, achieve their potential, are healthy and feel happy, hopeful, and loved.

To achieve this requires true partnership working with a whole-system approach to SEND where inclusive settings, clear support pathways and outstanding provision all work together to make sure there are excellent outcomes for all children and young people.

4. Wokingham's SEND Partnership Principles – *How we will work together?*

We will follow these principles, reflecting the shared commitments that the local SEND system has developed together and agrees to follow.

Principle 1: WE WILL BE INCLUSIVE - Children with SEND will feel visible, valued, and included as members of their community. They will be able to access local services that are as inclusive and accessible as possible.

All children and young people are supported to access local community and health services, to attend good local educational settings and reasonable adjustments will be made to enable this; a key ambition of this SEND & Inclusion Strategy is to ensure all children and young people are able to be part of their community.

Principle 2: WE WON'T WAIT TO GET INVOLVED - Support will be needs-led NOT diagnosis-led and children and young people with SEND will access effective early identification and appropriate intervention at the earliest opportunity without awaiting diagnosis.

We don't want children to have to wait until they've had a formal diagnosis to receive support, and we will therefore ensure some intervention is provided at the earliest stage possible; this will mean that some children will never need to progress to formal diagnosis or assessment as their needs will have been addressed at an earlier stage.

Whilst this principle applies to support at an early stage, we must also ensure that people with higher levels of need can access specialist support when required; some services (particularly those serving more complex needs) will, therefore, continue to prioritise or only serve those with a diagnosis.

Principle 3: WE WILL WORK WITH CHILDREN AND FAMILIES - The voices of children, young people and their families will help shape our services and drive system improvement alongside professionals.

The voices of children, young people and their families will help shape our services, so they are responsive to local need. We will make sure that co-production is set at all levels

of planning & delivery and the views of all partners are fully accounted for. We will show mutual respect for skills and expertise across the system. Services will listen to and work with parents, carers, their children and young people to plan and explain what is possible and why things may need to change or happen. Partners may not always reach an agreement, but they will always be honest and work to support the children's best interests.

Principle 4: WE WILL BE AMBITIOUS FOR OUR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE - We will support children and young people with SEND to have high ambitions and will act as advocates in their best interests.

Children & young people have their voices heard and decisions are made in the best interests of the child. They will be encouraged to be ambitious and to have positive ambitions and achieve to the best of their ability.

Principle 5: WE WILL WORK TOGETHER - SEND is everyone's business so children and young people with SEND and their families will experience an all-inclusive approach, with all services working together in partnership providing the right support in the right place at the right time.

Development and implementation of pathways and processes will involve all stakeholders including children and families. They will work together to develop whole system responses to shared challenges. For this to be effective, it needs to include wider community services all working together in meeting the needs of children and families with SEND.

Principle 6: WE WILL MAKE SURE CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE ARE PREPARED TO MOVE ON SUCCESSFULLY AT EACH STAGE OF THEIR LIVES - Children, young people and families will be well-prepared and ready to progress from pre-school to primary school. Primary to secondary schools, and on to college and are ready to be as independent as possible in adult life.

The local SEND system will plan to meet local SEND needs and make sure children, young people and their families are prepared for progression towards independence and adulthood.

Principle 7: WE WILL DO WHAT WORKS - Resources are limited and the local system will prioritise activities that have a demonstrable and positive impact.

We will base our spending decisions on evidence of what works to make sure it is best value for money. We will also make sure we are using effective quality assurance processes to improve our practice and remain focused on service improvement.

Principle 8: WE WILL FOCUS ON EMOTIONAL HEALTH AND WELL BEING - We know that the emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people with SEND is paramount, and that parents and carers may need extra help if they are feeling overwhelmed.

This has been a consistent theme in discussion with all partners who contributed to developing this strategy. We will make sure this is addressed in all activities and at every stage from early intervention and prevention through to crisis response.

5. National Context

In 2014, the Children and Families Act was introduced to change the delivery of support and services for children and young people with SEND. The changes were ambitious – placing children and young people at the heart of the system and seeking to reduce the confrontational nature of the SEND system that set the needs of children and families, local authorities, and service providers against each other. This vision has faced its challenges, and it is now widely recognised that the changes have not delivered the intended results.

In response to the challenges facing the SEND system nationally, the Government launched an ambitious SEND Review ending in the development and publication of the SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan in March 2023. The plan states its mission as:

- Fulfilling children’s potential through them enjoying their childhood, achieving good outcomes and being well prepared for adulthood and employment.
- Building parents’ trust, helping them navigate the system easily and making them feel confident that their children will get the right support, in the right place and

at the right time.

- Providing financial stability for local authorities while using the budget to meet children and young peoples' needs.

This mission is welcome and supported by Wokingham's SEND Partnership and will help to address the challenges Wokingham's SEND system is currently facing. BUT we also know that implementation of the Government's plans will take some years to take effect. The local area needs to make changes urgently to improve outcomes and ensure sustainability.

6. Local Context

Where Are We Now?

Like the rest of England, Wokingham has seen considerable growth in the number of EHC Plans since the SEND reforms in 2014. What marks Wokingham out as unusual is the pace of change in recent years with *rates of growth faster than all comparators since 2019*.

This has been driven partly by the impact of the Pandemic, partly by significant population growth and partly by Wokingham's improvements in earlier identification of need in response to the poor outcomes of the Local Area SEND Inspection in 2019. The combined impact of these factors has seen annual growth in the total number of EHC Plans of over 17% in both 2021 and 2022, dipping to 13.2% in 2023.

Development of capacity in the local SEND system has not kept pace with this increased demand, which has led to an increased reliance on out of area and independent sector placements and Alternative Provision; these services are expensive without necessarily delivering better outcomes for local children.

One of the key ambitions within this SEND & Inclusion Strategy is to increase capacity across the whole SEND system locally (in mainstream as well as in special school). This is whilst making sure local mainstream schools are supported to meet a wider range of needs as reflected in the local population.

Wokingham's Financial Context & Safety Valve

Wokingham faces significant financial pressures upon the SEND system with a current project annual deficit approaching £13m (2024/25). This is in its Dedicated Schools Grant, stemming from overspends in the High Needs Block (this is the part of the Dedicated Schools Grant allocated to English Council's to fund services for complex SEND).

In 2023 Wokingham Council joined 54 other Local Authorities (the programme has continued to grow since) in being admitted onto the Department for Education's (DfE) 'Safety Valve' programme. This targets local areas with the highest budget deficits related to SEND. The programme needs local authorities to deliver reforms by focusing on rebalancing their systems to focus on prevention and more effective earlier intervention. This is so that they can function sustainably and therefore in the best interests of the children and young people they serve.

The Safety Valve programme was launched by the DfE in recognition of the stark financial position facing many local authorities and offers a much-needed central government response demonstrating shared responsibility for the challenges facing the SEND system nationally. Wokingham is now in the process of implementing a 6-year transformation programme designed to rebalance the local SEND system and to achieve a balanced Dedicated Schools Grant budget by 2028/29.

This strategy covers the key areas that will help us to drive cultural change, maintain momentum around service improvement and be more responsive to changing needs across our local area whilst also operating within available resources.

What Are We Doing Well?

In recent years progress on improvements has been difficult in the context of limited resources and the current pace of growth remains unsustainable BUT things are now changing; Council investment facilitated by the Safety Valve Programme is starting to address the challenging local context and the area has some excellent local provision and practice that should be celebrated.

- Educational outcomes for children and young people with SEND are very positive; Wokingham's children with SEND (both at EHCP and SEND Support) at every stage from EYFS to GCSE perform better than national averages; *in many cases this performance is significantly better.*
- Local mainstream schools have shown significant growth in the number of pupils

with EHC Plans within a very short period. The area is delivering an inclusive education system with a higher-than-average percentage of learners with EHC Plans in mainstream compared with statistical neighbours, regional and national averages.

- 94% of our local schools in all phases are good or outstanding compared with 90% nationally.
- Two local special schools; Addington School and Chiltern Way Academy achieved outstanding in their Ofsted inspections in 2023.
- Addington School has opened their Early Years Centre on the site of the old Farley Hill Primary School.
- Oak Tree Special Free School opened its doors in September 2023 with 52 pupils with autism and associated complex needs. The school will ultimately grow to serve 150 pupils serving needs across Wokingham and Reading.
- The area continues to invest in SEN Resource Base or SEN Unit provision embedded within mainstream schools with the launch of the newly refurbished premises for the Indigo Resource Base operated by Maiden Erlegh Trust (MET). This will grow to accommodate 25 secondary aged learners with autism. Two new primary bases for pupils with autism will open in September 2024
- The experiences and progress of children in care are good as recognised in Wokingham's last ILACS inspection in March 2023.
- Wokingham Prevention and Youth Justice Service (PYJS) have continued to perform well against government indicators, with low rates of First Time Entrants into the criminal justice system. This is coupled with low re-offending and custody rates.
- Children receiving a service from the Children With Disabilities team receive strong support. They are visited regularly, and their needs are considered in plans, meetings, and supervision... It should be mentioned that in the SEND Voices Annual Survey 2024, the generally positive feedback for this team has dropped, so this may not be the experience of all families accessing the service.
- The recent launch of Wokingham's Early Years Speech and Language support telephone helpline now provides easier access to initial assessment and expert advice and support for Wokingham children in early years placements.
- Several local health services have been co-designed with children and young people and parents / carers including the Learning Disabilities (LD) annual health checks, the Keyworker programme, and CAMHS for young people with LD and transitions within the Royal Berkshire Hospital.
- We have improved the support for children waiting for Therapies, Autism and

ADHD assessments.

- Rapid development of a SEND-focused Joint Strategic Needs Assessment in 2024 has gathered key data on local needs and demand and is informing the priorities in this strategy as well as the commissioning of services across the area.
- As this Strategy highlights below, there are further plans for a wide range of developments of new SEND provision in the coming years.

7. Wokingham's Previous SEND Strategy 2021-24

Like many local areas, Wokingham faces significant challenges in improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND. Not least of which are the specialist workforce and financial pressures upon the SEND system. The needs of children and young people are changing and demand for services is increasing in the context of sustained pressures on public finances. These have been made worse in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Wokingham's 2019 Local Area SEND inspection and subsequent Written Statement of Action identified several areas for improvement facing the area, which were the main focus of Wokingham's last SEND & Inclusion Strategy 2021-24. This aimed to address these issues by focusing on a number of strategic priorities as follows:

Key priorities identified in SEND & Inclusion Strategy 2021
Address growing demand for EHC Plans, which is particularly heightened in the early years
Address insufficiency of specialist provision, particularly within certain categories of need (Autism, SEMH)
Co-production at the strategic level is lacking
The quality of management information related to SEND needs to improve
Need to strengthen inclusion in mainstream education – increased focus on early intervention
Timeliness and quality of EHCPs needs to improve
Joint working and joined up thinking and delivery between professionals across education, health and social care needs to be strengthened

Whilst there have been considerable improvements, many of the priorities identified in 2021 remain a challenge. Resource limitations (as seen across all English Local Authorities) have been (and remain) a barrier to progress, particularly in relation to development of new provision. This has not kept pace with increasing demand, but is now well underway locally with plans and funding in place for two new special schools and a range of new provision.

8. Understanding Local Needs Part 1 - *What does the data tell us?*

Recent analysis of educational data¹ reveals some of the key trends and changes that Wokingham's SEND system has seen in recent years. One key issue facing the area is the continuing dramatic increase in demand that has been a consistent feature of the SEND system nationally since the SEND reforms in 2014. That has been further accelerated by the pandemic. The details are set out in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA),² but is summarised below.

- Across all English Local Authorities, the number of pupils with education, health, and care plans (EHCPs) ranges from 2.0% to 6.2%. This has been increasing nationally since 2015.
- The percentage of pupils with an EHC plan across England has increased to 4.8%, from 4.3% in 2023. Wokingham has 4.2% of pupils with EHC Plans an increase from 3.6% in 2023.
- Wokingham remains behind comparators for the number and percentage of pupils with EHC Plans, which has been the case since prior to 2014.
- What marks Wokingham out as unusual is the pace of growth; since 2020 growth has been significantly faster than the statistical neighbour³ average; Wokingham has been 'catching up' with comparable areas and the mix and volume of provision

¹ The data in this section is drawn either from the High Needs Benchmarking Tool available here: [High needs benchmarking tool - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/tools/high-needs-benchmarking-tool) or from the DfE web pages here: [Statistics: special educational needs \(SEN\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/special-educational-needs-sen)

² Wokingham's JSNA available here: [JSNA \(Joint Strategic Needs Assessment\) \(wokingham.gov.uk\)](https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/jсна)

³ Statistical Neighbours are the 10 local authorities considered most similar to Wokingham in terms of children's services and provide the closest comparators to the area.

has not kept pace.

- The development of special schools and SEN Resource bases or SEND Units (specialist provision attached to mainstream schools) has not kept pace with increasing demand.
- In 2023-24 Wokingham had 8.2 pupils per 1000 of 2-18yrs population attending special schools. This is compared with 12.6 per 1000 across England; this reflects the significant gaps in special school capacity locally.
- The majority of EHCP growth in Wokingham has been accommodated by mainstream schools, which given the pace of the change has created significant pressure on the system.
- Partly due to this lack of local provision, there has been increased usage of Independent and Non-Maintained Special Schools (INMSS).
- There have also been increases in the use of Alternative Provision, which is being used to cater for the needs of pupils who struggle to be placed full time in mainstream school and may be awaiting specialist placements.
- Growth in the percentage of EHCPs has been particularly high in the 0-5yrs and 20-25yrs age ranges (these are from a lower starting point and therefore a relatively small number of new cases represents a very high percentage increase).
- Wokingham's percentage of pupils identified at SEND Support remains lower than comparators (10.7% in Wokingham vs 13% nationally) and there are wide variations in the percentage identified in individual schools. EHCP percentages in individual schools' range between 0% to 8.5%, and at SEN Support between 2.7% to 19.2%. This shows the inconsistency of the ordinarily available offer across the local education sector.
- Financial benchmarking shows that the local area spends fairly little, high needs funding, on early intervention at the SEND Support stage and a comparatively large amount on EHC Plans. This is due to a system that intervenes late and then ends up spending more overall.
- We have seen an increase in the number of parental appeals to the First Tier SEND Tribunal. Although this is in line with national trends and the increases in the number of EHCPs locally, this is a time-consuming and costly process. We also recognise the distress and frustration for parents that sit behind this. This SEND & Inclusion Strategy is about addressing the root causes of those disputes.

9. Understanding Local Needs Part 2 - *What do Stakeholders tell us?*

Views of Children and Young People with SEND

Me2 Club is an organisation working with local young people with special educational needs and disabilities. Over the Summer of 2023 they surveyed young people's views to assist with Wokingham's SEND & Inclusion Strategy refresh.

- 52 young people completed the survey aged between 8-24yrs; 80% had an EHCP.
- Most of the young people attended a mainstream school or college (38%), but there was a good range of responses including young people in work, special school, home-tutored and one at university.

Their feedback on Wokingham's current SEND priorities was as follows:

- There was broad support for the priorities in this Strategy.
- 61.5% said that they had a local school or college that met their needs.
- 15.4% said that they had a local place that didn't meet their needs.
- 17.3% said that they didn't have a local school or college place (a number of these were in work or work or apprenticeships so this is not entirely an access issue)
- More than half of young people wanted services to communicate with them more effectively and to have better transitions.
- Some of the requests from young people are inexpensive to put in place e.g. – more transition days for SEND children and information about the timetable before the first day of each new school year.
- The Strategy needs to be clear so that young people, their families, and other agencies who have not been involved in creating the strategy, understand what is intended; communication and information need to be accessible and timely.

Key areas that young people highlighted as priorities for the SEND & Inclusion Strategy:

- Better support in mainstream schools; too many young people said they are sitting in class not understanding the work and not having help. A concern highlighted was that young people are being denied strategies to self-regulate such as removing fidget aids.
- Better mental health support for all levels of needs. Responsive and accessible mental health support in schools and community, not just CAMHS.
- Provide more opportunities to attend SEND activities outside of school.

Views of Parents and Carers

SEND Voices Wokingham (Parent Carer Forum) carried out their Annual Wokingham Borough SEND Survey 2024 to find out about Parent Carer experiences of the SEND system locally in the last 12 months (since June 2023). 294 responses were received from Wokingham Borough residents. Parents and carers reported on what is going well as well as areas for improvement as follows:

Highlights of what is going well from a parent's perspective

- SENDIASS – families feel supported, heard, and able to make informed decisions.
- ASSIST – families feel supported and heard.
- Portage – Families feel supported.
- Short Breaks team – families report the process and contact with the SB team is a positive experience.
- Support from charities – Camp Mohawk, Me2Club, BFTF, Parenting Special Children, SEND Voices Wokingham.
- Wheelchair Services, Continence Services, Health Visitors and Priority Dental services are improving.
- ADHD diagnosis, GP 14+ health checks and wheelchair services are improving.
- Preparation for Adulthood (PFA) Team feedback has improved since last year and annual reviews now cover a wider range of PFA topics.

Areas for improvement from a parental perspective

- Poor communication from many services was a common theme causing concern, including challenges in accessing to up to date information about available support (through the SEND Local Offer) and frequent inconsistency in communication from the SEND team.
- There is a need for earlier identification of need and earlier support to be provided across a number of service areas as follows:
 - Inconsistency in support that schools provide to children with identified SEND and at SEND Support level (through their Ordinarily Available Provision).
 - Generally waiting lists for support are too long – particularly but not solely in relation to health services.

- There have been improvements, but challenges remain with the timely and effective identification of social care needs and in terms of suitability of the Early Help offer.
- Whilst feedback about the Short Breaks team is positive, families also reported that a wider range of provision is required as there are too few options for using Direct Payments.
- A need for increased access to additional mental health support.

Views of Schools and other settings

Wokingham Council ran a survey for schools between June to July 2023 gathering school's views on their priorities for improvement of the local SEND system and Wokingham's new SEND & Inclusion Strategy. This was accompanied by dialogue with school leaders as to the current challenges schools face, and the opportunities for improvement, as follows:

- Complexity of need is increasing, and this stretches the setting's resources and knowledge – particularly the complexity of mental health difficulties being faced by pupils (and families as a whole), which has been acute in the wake of the pandemic.
 - These sit below the thresholds for CAMHS specialist services but are often too complex for preventative services including the Emotional Well-Being Hub, the Mental Health Support Teams and the Primary Mental Health Team (PMHT4 Youth) for young people with mild to moderate mental health needs.
 - There are significant numbers of pupils who have struggled to return to school since the Covid-19 lockdowns. 'Emotionally Based School Avoidance' (EBSA) is a priority issue for many schools.
 - Limited access to specialist support from Educational Psychologists, Speech & Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, CAMHS and specialists in Autism and Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) difficulties.
- Limited access to special school places means that mainstream schools are sometimes supporting very complex cases with increased risk of exclusion.
- Importance of consistency and equality between what schools offer – every school needs to play an equal part in meeting local needs.
- Challenges around transition in identifying and supporting needs in children.
- Recruitment and retention of SEND staff is a key challenge - and to accessing training for new staff given the high turnover.

View and analysis from the Health Sector

- There is a continuous exponential increase in the number of children being referred for an Education, Health, and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) who have previously been unknown to any service.
- Demand is exceeding capacity even with a highly developed Universal Offer (i.e. services available to everyone without the need for referral).
- There has been additional investment in local Autism and ADHD diagnostic pathways, but this investment cannot keep pace with the increasing demands.
- The increasing demand for services is contributing towards significant financial pressure across the local health system more broadly.
- Some families and schools believe that to access an EHCP currently requires an assessment – *which is not true*, but this belief is driving increases in referrals that are often to seek a diagnosis only, rather than to seek support. This demand for assessments increases pressure and results in delays in accessing the support needed.
- Despite excellent initiatives children whose needs could be met by universal services are still being referred into targeted services.
- There is a real and obvious opportunity to bring people from health, education, and care together to explore what a joint offer could look like. The advantages of working together in a streamlined, integrated, and intelligent way will bring efficiencies.
- There is a clear opportunity to develop a more preventive model and provide support in a much quicker and more impactful way.

10. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

To achieve our vision, we have identified six strategic priorities. These have been informed by what children and young people with SEND and their families have said needs to improve, the SEND Local Area Partnership Self-Evaluation (SEF), best practice examples from other high performing areas and national policy and guidance.

The information presented below summarise our shared objectives, the activities to deliver these, and the changes we will see as a result over the next five years. Delivery Plans are subject to more frequent changes and will set out the details of the activities being implemented, those who are responsible and the timetables for implementation. These will therefore be published annually separately from the main SEND & Inclusion Strategy Document on the Council's SEND & Inclusion Local Offer⁴.

⁴ [SEND strategies \(wokingham.gov.uk\)](https://www.wokingham.gov.uk)

Wokingham SEND & Inclusion Strategy – Overview of Strategic Priorities

1. Inclusion, access, and early intervention

Ensuring children get the right support in the right place, at the right time, as close to home as possible. Ensuring that every provider plays their part in meeting local SEND needs through proactive inclusion and early intervention.

2. Sufficiency of services and support

Ensuring there is access to sufficient high-quality education, health and care provision to address the special educational needs and disabilities of the local 0-25's population. Ensuring we address any identified gaps

3. Joint commissioning

Maximising the reach and impact of resources across the system through shared decision making; closer collaboration & service integration; effective use of shared data; rigorous contract management

4. Effective transitions

Ensuring children and families are prepared and ready for all transitions. Ensuring the local system plans for the long term and targets resources effectively at key stages

5. Communication and Co-production

Implementing SEND Communications Plan. Refreshing Wokingham's SEND Coproduction Charter, with systematic reviews to ensure this is happening on the ground.

6. Underpinning these are key Systems and Operational Improvement Priorities

Wokingham SEND & Inclusion Strategy – Overview of Strategic Priorities, Aims and Ambitions

STRATEGIC PRIORITY	OUR AIMS & AMBITIONS
<p>Priority 1 – Inclusion, Access and Early Intervention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ All schools and settings in Wokingham are supported to be inclusive and welcome children and young people with SEND to achieve good outcomes. ➤ Develop consistency and strength of local early intervention through a joint review and publication of Wokingham’s Ordinarily Available Provision offer (i.e. what every school offers for pupils with SEND), and development a consistent SEN Register between local schools. ➤ Continue to focus on SEND in the early years to ensure we identify and meet needs at the earliest opportunity and ensure the best start in life. ➤ Ensure we have a shared workforce development plan that provides comprehensive training and support to those working with children and young people with SEND and their families to promote inclusion, support them to achieve their full potential and to co-produce solutions. ➤ Promote Health’s Ordinarily Available Provision to educational settings, parents and carers. ➤ Hold an annual SEND & Inclusion conference as a platform to learn about and share best practice, celebrate local achievement, and progress, and build our local support for inclusion. ➤ Ensure that children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities are visible, valued and included as part of their local communities and that every provider plays their part in meeting these needs through positive and proactive inclusion and early intervention. ➤ Ensure a key focus on strengthening the local area’s approach to emotional health and well-being. ➤ Take steps to reduce suspension and exclusion of children with SEND as well as addressing limited access to education through part-time timetables.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY	OUR AIMS & AMBITIONS
<p>Priority 2 – Sufficiency of SEND Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure there is access to sufficient high-quality education, health, and care provision to address the special educational needs and disabilities of the local 0-25's population. ➤ Ensure that learners with SEND can attend good quality schools as close to home as possible and that measures are taken to improve their attendance at educational settings. ➤ Maintain the pace of development of specialist early years provision, two new special free schools, a range of Resourced Bases and SEND Units attached to mainstream schools, and a wider range of pathways for students with SEND aged 16+. Detailed timescales for each of these projects will be published in our annual SEND Strategy Delivery Plans. Ensure sufficient commissioning of therapies and school nursing arrangements are in place to support these. ➤ Publish a 5-year forward plan for local special education provision, based on predictive analytics, forward planning based on current cohorts, levels, and types of need, and known future developments in the borough to maintain sufficiency of provision and meet local needs. ➤ Sufficiency planning will not only cover educational provision BUT also includes the local social care offer (including respite and Short Breaks provision) and the local health offer (this is addressed under the Joint Commissioning priority below). ➤ Ensure that Home to School Transport arrangements enable learners to access educational provision efficiently and effectively, whilst also equipping them with the skills to undertake independent travel in their transition to adulthood (where appropriate). ➤ Review local model for Alternative Provision (AP), and Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) to strengthen commissioning arrangements with focus on quality assurance and evidencing outcomes. ➤ Conduct Short Breaks Review to understand need, identify any gaps in provision and consider how these can best be addressed.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY	AIMS & AMBITIONS
<p>Priority 3 – Joint Commissioning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To maximise the reach and impact of education, health, and social care resources across the system, at universal, targeted and specialist levels through closer collaboration & integration; effective use of data; and rigorous contract management. ➤ Develop Strategic Joint Commissioning Strategy to create more service integration across education, health, and social care and to minimise identified gaps between services to ensure a truly holistic SEND Local Offer. ➤ Develop a shared Workforce Development Plan that provides comprehensive training and support to those working with children and young people with SEND and their families to promote inclusion, support them to achieve their full potential and to co-produce solutions. ➤ Develop a Wokingham-specific joint response to the Integrated Commissioning Board’s review of Berkshire West Therapies in commissioning a more integrated model. ➤ Develop a Wokingham-specific joint response to the Integrated Commissioning Board’s review of CAMHS across Berkshire West. ➤ Strengthen local Multi-Agency Panel Decision Making and ensure that all agencies are involved in agreeing and resourcing the best outcomes for children and young people. ➤ Develop effective local model for Dynamic Support Register (DSR) and Care (Education) & Treatment Reviews (C(E)TR). ➤ Improve crisis response for C&YP with complex needs / in complex circumstances through improved multi-agency information sharing and decision making to minimise escalation of need.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY	AIMS & AMBITIONS
<p>Priority 4 - Effective Transitions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Co-produce and publish Preparation for Adulthood Strategy ➤ Improve pathway planning for all pupils with SEND (those with EHC Plans and those on SEN support) by strengthening the quality and use of data to enhance evidence-led planning for individual young people's pathways. ➤ Increase system-wide understanding of the transitions process to embed consistency and to ensure timely and proactive forward planning and information sharing across the system to improve outcomes at transition. ➤ Publish a shared transition pathway setting out what transition looks like, the timeline for this and publish guidelines on Wokingham Council's website for parents, professionals, children, and young people setting out the above consistent expectations.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY	AIMS & AMBITIONS
<p>Priority 5 - Communication and Production Co-</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Review and Refresh Wokingham's SEND Coproduction Charter, with systematic reviews to ensure this is happening in practice on the ground. ➤ Continue to embed genuine partnership between professionals, children, young people, parents, and carers in the way services are planned, delivered, and reviewed. ➤ Coproduction will be evident in design, implementation, and review of all SEND services. ➤ Publish SEND Communication Plan with protocols for communication with families & settings. ➤ Consistent easy to understand SEND team processes published via the Local Offer. ➤ Develop a consistent and systematic approach to engaging with young people with SEND.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Continue to develop and refine an annual programme of surveys of stakeholder’s views to gather feedback and benchmark progress. ➤ Embed a ‘You Said ... We Did’ reporting cycle to demonstrate how the views of children, young people and their families shape priority activities and improve practice. ➤ Develop clear information about all panels with feedback mechanism for outcomes to ensure effective communications with families.
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STRATEGIC PRIORITY	AIMS & AMBITIONS
<p>Priority 6 – Systems and Operational Improvement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure that the local SEND System is the best-in-class in terms of quality of outcomes for children and young people with SEND whilst also achieving excellent value for money. ➤ Improve the quality, accessibility, and use of data across the local SEND System and ensure that this informs evidence-led planning and commissioning. ➤ Draw upon expertise within the area and from high performing SEND systems elsewhere to innovate and improve functionality and performance of our local SEND procedures and systems. ➤ Review High Needs Banding Framework to ensure consistency, clarity, and sufficiency of school’s high needs funding to meet needs, whilst also ensuring efficiency and sustainability. ➤ Ensure rigorous commissioning, quality assurance & contract management of the Independent & Non-Maintained Special School (INMSS) sector.

11. SEND & Inclusion Strategy Delivery Plans: *What? When? and Who?*

SEND & Inclusion Strategy Delivery Plans setting out how the Priorities above will be delivered will be published annually through Wokingham Borough Council's SEND Local Offer web pages⁵.

Delivery of the SEND & Inclusion Strategy is programme managed under the SEND & Inclusion Transformation Programme, which in turn reports into the Strategic SEND Partnership Board with established progress reporting and robust risk management. Delivery of the priorities identified in this Strategy builds upon these foundations rather than to replace or duplicate them. There is an established reporting cycle into the SEND Partnership Board and this reporting will continue on a regular basis.

12. Governance: Who will oversee implementation of the Strategy?

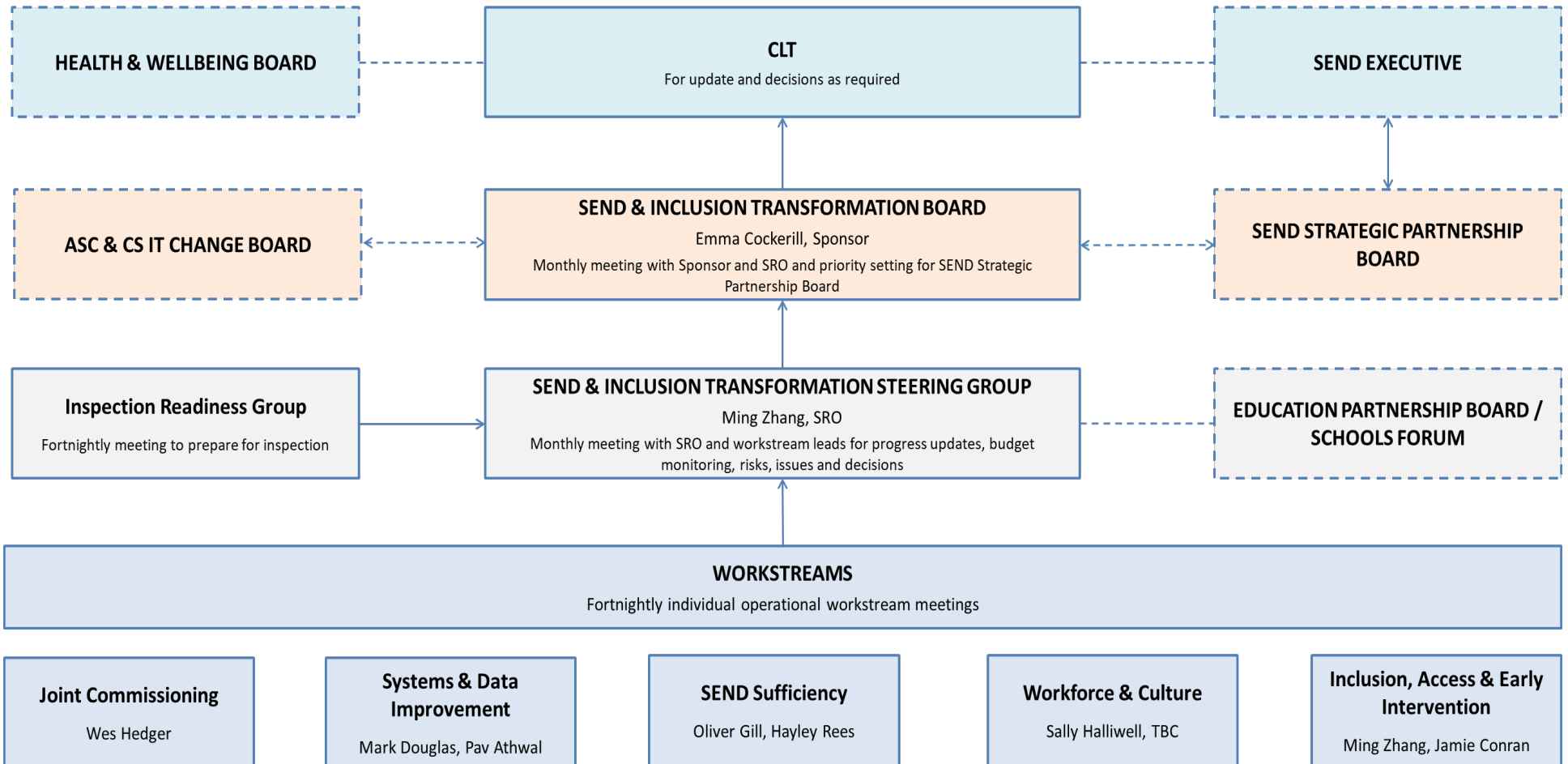
Wokingham's SEND Partnership Board is the strategic body that takes lead responsibility for overseeing delivery of the SEND & Inclusion Strategy as set out in the Terms of Reference (see Appendix 3). The governance framework for Wokingham's SEND & Inclusion Transformation Programme is reflected in the diagram below.

13. Interdependencies and links with other Strategies

- Wokingham Autism Strategy
- Wokingham SEND Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- Wokingham Borough SEND Partnership Self Evaluation SEF
- The Children & Young People's Plan (2024-27)
- NHS England Children & Young People's Transformation Programme

⁵ [SEND strategies \(wokingham.gov.uk\)](https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/SEND-strategies)

SEND & INCLUSION TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME



14. Appendices

The source material and appendices listed below are available here: [SEND strategies \(wokingham.gov.uk\)](https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/children-families-and-young-people/send-local-offer/about-send-local-offer/send-strategies/our-send-strategy)⁶

Appendix 1 - Young People's Views 2023 – Research Report produced by Me2 Club

Appendix 2 – Annual Parent Carer Forum SEND Survey 2024 – produced by SEND Voices Wokingham. Available here:

<https://www.sendvoiceswokingham.org.uk/uploads/Annual%20SEND%20Survey%202024%20FINAL.pdf>

Appendix 3 – Survey Feedback from Schools and Early Years Settings

Appendix 4 – SEND Strategic Partnership Board Terms of Reference

Appendix 5 – Wokingham's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2024

Appendix 6 – Summary of Engagement and Co-production of the Strategy

Appendix 7 – SEND Partnership KPIs

⁶ Available on this web page: <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/children-families-and-young-people/send-local-offer/about-send-local-offer/send-strategies/our-send-strategy>