

# SEND Voices Annual Survey 2024

Wokingham Borough Area SEND Partnership Joint Response

February 2025



Wokingham  
Education  
Partnership



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# Context (1)



**Purpose:** The annual Wokingham Borough SEND Survey 2024 was produced by SEND Voices Wokingham (Parent Carer Forum) to seek the views and experiences of our SEND system from parents and carers over the course of the previous 12 months



**Scope:** The questionnaire was open to all families with children and young people (aged 0-25) with any additional needs and disabilities, including (but not limited to) those with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or on formal SEN support at school.



**Distribution:** The survey was sent to all families on the SEND Voices Wokingham and CAN Network mailing lists, as well as school SENCOs, other local SEND providers, and social media (estimated to be more than 1500 families).



**Schedule:** The survey ran from 17 June 2024 to 26 July 2024, receiving a total of 294 responses from Wokingham Borough residents.



**Local Cohort:** Wokingham Borough Council currently maintains 2,190 EHCPs and approximately 3,016 children are in receipt of SEN Support (autumn census data 2024).

# Context (2)



**Thank you:** We are grateful for the time taken by families to complete this survey, and to SEND Voices for collating the feedback and sharing the findings with our Area SEND Partnership.



**Our ethos:** We are committed to ensuring our services support all children and young people with additional needs and disabilities, and their families, to have a positive experience and can access the provisions they require, in line with their assessed need.



**Our ambition:** This survey is an invaluable opportunity for our partnership to listen to - and learn from - the views and lived experiences of our SEND community. It enables us to strengthen our partnership working and to develop and further improve our services.



**Initial response:** We are delighted by the positive feedback received regarding a range of services highlighted in the survey. We recognise however that we have more to do to support our children and young people to consistently have positive experiences, develop their independence skills and achieve fantastic outcomes



**Going forward:** SEND Voices have already presented the survey to the Area SEND Strategic Partnership Board. In response, partners have agreed to consider these findings as a collective and provide a joint response, with actions monitored and scrutinised via our Area SEND Assurance Board. This presentation provides an overview of our response so far.

# Positive feedback and good practice

*“So friendly, supportive and no judgement”*

*“The social worker was excellent at listening to our son’s needs, liaising with his school and providing extensive information on eligible services”*

*“ASSIST are amazing”*

*“Despite the very long wait the actual service received was very positive (ADHD)”*

*“Portage- amazing and has made a big difference to our outlook and confidence in helping our child”*

*“SENDIASS are great”*

*“Had a fast process in order to get my child disabled pushchair”*

*“Excellent SENCO”*

*“The driver and assistant are excellent- always on time, supportive and helpful”*

# Theme: Communication across all services

## You said

Many of us are frustrated by inconsistent and unclear information, and we find it difficult to know who to contact and what services are available.

## We did

- Our Service has developed a **Communication Promise** explaining how we will communicate with all stakeholders, particularly families
- We have continued to make improvements to our **SEND Local Offer** to simplify the process of accessing the range of advice and support available
- We launched termly **SEND Drop Ins** (in person) and continued with SEND Voices online evening sessions with multi agency attendance
- We established a **SEND Local Offer Newsletter**, with 5 issued to date and an ever-increasing subscriber list (currently approx. 1000).

## We are planning

- There has been significant Council investment in the **capacity** of the SEND Team with several new permanent Officers starting in January 2025. This will enable the Team to improve response times and build more consistent relationships with families.
- We are focusing on embedding our newly recruited SEND Team, with a **comprehensive induction** and emphasis on proactive communication
- We also will refresh our **Area Partnership Coproduction Charter**.



# Theme: SEND Team

## You said

The team often seems overstretched, leading to delays in responding to inquiries, EHCPs, and adhering to statutory timescales. It can also be difficult to contact or reach specific individuals within the team.

## We did

- We have already made some significant progress in improving our performance in **meeting statutory deadlines**, although this remains a challenge due to the high volumes of demand.
- Following a successful case for investment in the SEND Team, the Council has completed a full **restructure of the team and has undertaken a recruitment drive** – with 90% of vacancies now filled.
- A comprehensive **SEND Induction Programme** is now being delivered to all new starters, including refresher sessions for existing staff.
- New ways of working for the SEND Team have been introduced - supporting **closer partnership working** (particularly with educational settings) and promoting **relational practice with families**.

## We are planning

- The SEND Service is undertaking a comprehensive rewrite of its **standard operating procedures**
- We plan on delivering a **SEND Induction Programme** & will embed revised Casework Procedures for all staff.
- We will deliver in-person '**meet the SEND Service**' events for families.
- We will embed the use of 'Power BI' to support **timely case management** and further improve EHCP and annual review timeliness.





# Theme: Local Offer

## You said

The range of information can sometimes feel overwhelming, and it can be hard to find what you are looking for. There could be more opportunities to speak with professionals directly for advice and help

## We did

- We have rewritten and reorganised our [SEND Local Offer](#) (informed by user-testing) to ensure improved accessibility.
- We have developed a new [SEND Local Offer newsletter](#) to give families updates in a digestible format
- We are working with our Digital Team to improve search functions, to ensure SEND specific results.
- We are working to make our SEND Local Offer webpages and [Local Offer directory](#) feel more joined up.
- We introduced a [Local Offer contact form](#) for families, if they need help to find what they are looking for.
- We put on an in person 'market stall' event for young people to get advice for preparing for adulthood.
- With SEND Voices, we held a focus group with families to get more feedback on what is (and isn't) working.

## We are planning

- We are focussed on developing the Local Offer directory further, by refreshing all of the listings, removing outdated information and ensuring each page is written in a consistent format.
- Across the spring and summer terms, we will be completing more user testing with families and young people
- We are planning a series of SEND drop ins and in-person events throughout 2025, to give children, young people and their families more opportunities to speak to services directly and get the advice they need. We are revisiting how we publish information about educational settings, working with schools and families to ensure they are in a user-friendly format on the main council website.



# Theme: Education and inclusion

## You said

We want to see additional Resource Bases / SEND Unit provisions. Currently early intervention does not feel like it is happening quickly enough, with schools needing more support in this area.

## We did

- **Two new resource bases** were opened in primary settings in September 2024.
- Capital funding has also been approved to develop **two additional primary bases**, and **three additional secondary bases** to meet a range of SEND needs.
- Since the Summer term 2024, schools have been able access advice through our [Multi-Agency Inclusion Clinic](#)
- Our Area SENCO has delivered a range of sessions to new SENCOs as part of a new **SENCO Induction Programme**, as well as refresher training for SENCOs in Wokingham Borough schools.
- A multi-agency partnership is working to refresh and relaunch our **Ordinarily Available Guidance** for schools, to build on and promote greater consistency across settings.
- We have expanded our **outreach offer** through the Foundry College and Addington.

## We are planning

- We have recently drafted Wokingham's **SEND Sufficiency Statement**, which has identified where additional provision is needed for Wokingham children and young people now and in the coming years – this will be published shortly.
- We have a collective ambition to deliver an additional **4 new primary** and **4 new secondary Resource Bases / SEND Units** to significantly increase Wokingham's capacity (details will follow in SEND Sufficiency Statement).
- We will review the impact of our **Outreach offer** and **Alternative Provision** arrangements.



# Theme: Transport and travel assistance

## You said

Drivers are not always punctual, and staff in this area often need more understanding of SEND needs. We also want to see more Independent Travel Training on offer (and in different formats) and a quicker application process.

## We did

- All support staff have undertaken **disability awareness training**, and we are looking to revise and enhance this training going forward.
- We are currently in the process of appointing a **dedicated Independent Travel Trainer**, to provide a consistent and expanded ITT offer.
- We have appointed **two new permanent SEND Transport Officers**, to manage the application / assessment process.
- Turnaround times for **applications** have now reduced to expected levels

## We are planning

- We will continue to request that crew remain consistent for the contract period.
- Pick-up time will be reviewed where families raise this with us. Where picks-ups are consistently late for no good reason then we will be pro-active in revising our offer as necessary.
- We will engage with service users and parents to co-design our ITT offer, and consider different methods of delivery to accommodate the diverse needs of children and young people with SEND.
- We expect this new ITT offer to be designed during the Spring and then fully mobilised by June 2025.



# Theme: Social care

## You said

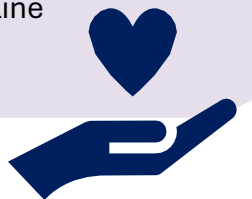
We aren't always aware of the Social Care services on offer – particularly in the Children with Disabilities Team. The Short Breaks Team and services are valued, but there remains a lack of provision on offer. We need more information about what the CAN Network is and what it does.

## We did

- We have ensured that information regarding all Social Care services is up to date and readily available on our **Local Offer**.
- We have continued to maintain and improve our **Children with Disabilities Continuum of Need Document**. Published on the Local Offer, it describes the range of Social Care services available to children with disabilities and their families in Wokingham, including details of how these can be accessed.
- The teams that form our Children with Disabilities Service took part in the annual **Local Offer Live Day** – ensuring practitioners could engage with families and share information regarding their services.
- We have initiated a comprehensive **Short Breaks Review** and have worked alongside key stakeholders to determine how we increase capacity to meet immediate shortfalls in identified need.
- There has been a continued focus on **permanent recruitment** in the Children with Disabilities Team across 2024 – as of January 2025 we have a 100% permanent workforce.
- We have worked with Social Work practitioners to enhance their **communication** with children with complex disabilities – including training in the use of bespoke tools and communication aids.
- We have undertaken work to redefine our CAN Network offer and how this is communicated.

## We are planning

- Phase Two of our Short Breaks review commenced in January 2025 and is exploring a full re-design of the short break offer, coproduced with children and families. A formal proposal will be developed by September 2025.
- The Children with Disabilities Service has developed a **Children with Disabilities Communication Practice Guide**, which will be launched in March 2025.
- Following the arrival of the new CAN Co-Ordinator in January 2025, we are progressing activity to **relaunch the CAN Network**. This will include a new online self-service registration. The launch activity will incorporate online communications and information being sent out via agreed forums



# Theme: Parent and carer wellbeing

## You said

Having to continuously advocate for your child can take a significant emotional toll, which is only compounded by communication and system navigation issues. Many of us have resorted to private assessments, which can place us under additional financial strain.

## We did

- We have taken steps to improve and streamline communications with the co-production of the **SEND Team Communication Promise**, development of our **SEND Local Offer** to improve access to information and support, and **increased capacity** in the SEND Team, Education Psychology and specialist outreach services to support earlier interventions for children and young people.
- We have held **Helping Early Strategy- workshops** with multi-agency and parent/carers representation, identifying themes to improve access to early support, provide earlier support to families where required, and help families to connect with support networks and universal services.

## We are planning

- Further workshops are planned in January and February 2025 to support us to develop our new **Helping Early Strategy**, with the document expected to be finalised by March 2025.



# Theme: Preparing for adulthood (PfA)

## You said

There is increasing discussion of PfA in reviews (particularly housing and education/employment) - however, more could be achieved around travel training and healthcare transitions.

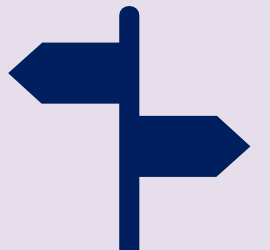
The PfA team is perceived as useful, but most do not know how to access support or information.

## We did

- We launched a multi-agency PfA working group to raise awareness and increase co-production of local pathways
- A multi-agency SEND Post-16 panel was piloted in autumn 2024 to further strengthen planning for those with EHCPs
- We have strengthened relations with local post-16 colleges to increase opportunities for our young people with SEND.
- We organised an in person 'market stall' event for young people to speak directly to services, providers and settings;
- We delivered training to Social Work practitioners in relation to PFA processes.
- Our PFA Policy (which incorporates the Transitions Mapping Process) was reviewed and relaunched in December 2024.
- From the age of 14, the PfA team are now invited to all EHCP reviews for young people with possible care act eligibility
- In 23-24, 87% of all cases referred had an assessment completed by the young persons 18th birthday and an adult service in place. 93% of all reviews were completed within a 12-month period (significantly higher than national average).
- Optalis Supported Employment Service (SES), which is the WBC Local Authority Traded company, is currently ranked 1st in the country for supporting people in receipt of care services with a Learning Disability to gain employment.
- Optalis SES have created numerous business opportunities for young people with disabilities, including a catering business where people can obtain food hygiene qualifications and work and gain skills in the catering and hospitality sector

## We are planning

- The PfA working group will focus on thematic topics such as **phase transfers** and **supported internships**
- Our **Post-16 Hub** is currently being developed to offer local post-16 provision across a broad spectrum of need. This is intended to provide 40x places for young people with SEND, with provision expected to commence in September 2026.
- Our annual in person '**market stall**' event for young people will continue – with our next event in May 2025.
- The PfA and LD team are involved in a '**Simply Readable**' trail - a tool designed to make complex information easier to understand.
- The PfA Team will continue to support open days, market events and local offer days to aid **awareness**



# Theme: Health

## You said

Mental health/ EBSA support.

Waiting times the main concern across the majority of services especially CAMHS, ASD, ADHD, OT and SALT.

Lack of service when provision stated in EHCP. Improve transitions.

Publicise hospital passport.

Parents want more help that webinars and website links.

GP services – hard to get appointments.

## We did

- Parent Carer representatives were part of the Steering Group that oversaw the development of the new CAMHS LD Service , including creating and communicating about the service that was shared with parents and patient carers prior to the service launch in January 2024.
- CAMHS LD service information is available via the local offer page and BHFT website [CAMHS Learning Disability team \(Berkshire\) | Children Young People and Families Online Resource](#)
- Demand for our children's and young people's ADHD and Autism assessment service remains exceptionally high. Despite additional investment and work with third party providers, waiting times are continuing to rise due to increasing demand. We are concerned that children are waiting for a diagnosis before they get support. We are trying to change this.
- Reducing waiting times is the main improvement target across all CAMHS services. All teams are working on projects to address this. Waiting times for specialist services are reducing.
- Information to access the Community Paediatrician is via the GP and is on the RBFT website with clear thresholds and criteria and has been communicated to our partners.
- Families and settings are able to access Sensory Processing resources and workshops via the BHFT [Sensory processing | Children Young People and Families Online Resource](#)
- CAMH Services have increased to reduce “crisis” and presentation in ACE and hospital.

- Young People in our special schools have access to a lesson to write to their GP to request a Learning Disability Annual Health Check.
- It is recognised that there has been a decline in patients being able to be seen within 14-days of booking an appointment. A contributing factor to this decline may be that more appointments are being booked. In October 2024, across BOB 1.1m appointments compared to 867k in September 2024 were booked (28.6% increase). Year on year position also saw an increase in appointments, 10.15% increase compared to October 2023 when 1m appointments were booked.

Improvements in Access continue to be supported through:

- Ensuring telephone call back at all practices and full access to online services.
- National GP patient survey deep dive and work to consider additional factors and red flags for GP practices with low performance and assess stability / resilience so more rounded support can be provided continues.

## We are planning

CAMH services are working on a project to streamline and improve access to services based on feedback from young people, parents and carers. They have met with parent and carer representatives and will be meeting with partners to help shape improvement priorities.

The ICB will continue to work with Special Schools to ensure that parents have timely information about annual health checks and how they can access them.

We will be working within the ICB to introduce this passport into other areas of health care and we are starting a project with Reading Borough Council, which will be rolled out in Wokingham. [Introducing our Neurodiversity Passport | Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust](#)

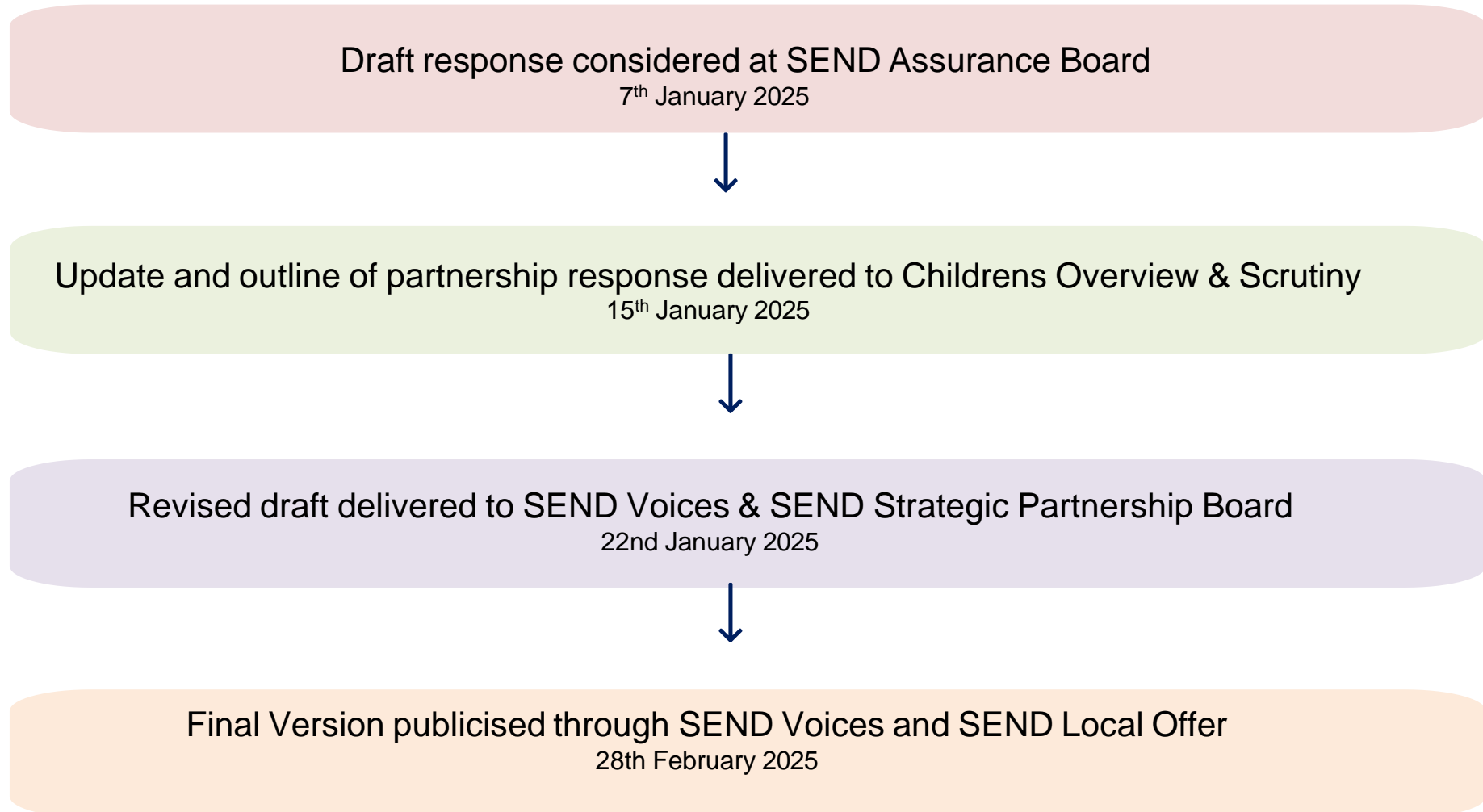
As part of national good practice and our local ambition to become more needs-led, partners across the BHFT, ICB, RBFT, LA and SEND Voices Wokingham are working together to improve the experience of children and young people with neurodiversity. We are embedding a needs-led approach to ensure children have their needs met without the need for a diagnosis and to improve confidence in the SEND system.

Current work is therefore underway to implement an improved approach that we believe will provide better support for children and young people, without needing a diagnosis. It will be aligned to the graduated response, ensuring the right support at the right time in the right place. Following an independent Therapy.





# Oversight and governance



# Acknowledgments

## Contributors to this report:

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