

To: The Executive
June 2023

**SEND Written Statement of Action implementation update
Executive Director People**

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To update the Executive on progress made on the SEND Written Statement of Action (WSOA) implementation up to the end of January 2023 , for the second review meeting with Department for Education and NHS England and request additional funding to maintain momentum.
- 1.2 To seek approval for the SEND Strategy 2023 to 2025.

2 Recommendation(s)

That the Executive:

- 2.1 **Notes the progress made on implementing the SEND written statement of action to improve services to children and families and the feedback received from the Department for Education and NHS England relating to the end of January 2023;**
- 2.2 **Notes that the Council has secured £1m through the Government's Delivering Better Value in SEND programme and in its bid to build a new specialist Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) special school in the Borough, to improve further inclusive, local services for children and young people with SEND;**
- 2.3 **Approves the release of £350,000 from the Council's corporate contingency included in the 2023/24 budget to fund additional short term staffing capacity within the SEND team, to ensure momentum is maintained to deliver the identified service improvements;**
- 2.4 **Approves the SEND Strategy 2023 – 2025 attached as an appendix to this report, that has been developed through close working with professionals. Parents, carers and young people, to provide a clear direction for the service in the years ahead.**

3 Reasons for recommendation(S)

- 3.1 Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspected the local area's effectiveness of the area in implementing the special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014. In summary, the inspection raised significant concerns about the effectiveness of the area. As a result, Bracknell Forest partners – the council and the then clinical commissioning group (CCPG) were required to produce and submit a written statement of action (WSOA) to Ofsted that explains how it will tackle nine areas of significant weakness (see here for the report)
- 3.2 When the WSOA was produced it was agreed that the Executive would be provided with quarterly updates on progress made towards implementation of the plan, following each of the DfE and NHS England reviews.
- 3.3 Thrive in Learning, our existing Bracknell Forest SEND strategy, concluded in December 2022. Our WSOA included an action to develop a refreshed strategy for SEND in Bracknell Forest. The strategy has been co-produced with a wide range of stakeholders including early years, school, and college leaders; professionals from

education, health, SEND and care; as well as parents, carers, young people, and children. It reflects our collective ambition, priorities, and objectives for SEND so that children and young people achieve well in their early years, at school and in college and lead happy and fulfilled lives.

4 Alternative options considered

4.1 None

5 Supporting information

- 5.1 The Written Statement of Action was accepted as fit for purpose by Ofsted in July 2022.
- 5.2 The second quarterly review meeting with the Department for Education and NHS England took place on 22 February 2023.
- 5.3 Since the first review meeting, significant progress has been made in several areas. Funding was been agreed by the Council's Executive in October 2022 for several fixed term posts to support the delivery of the WSOA and all of these have been appointed to. Challenges remain in securing a permanent leadership team, with some leadership roles currently filled by new interim staff.
- 5.4 Since the second review meeting, the new SEND Strategy 2023 to 2025 has been finalised and is now ready for Executive approval. The design principles for the strategy required that it be a product of co-production, with co-production being defined as working together in an equal or reciprocal partnership. This required that all stakeholders involved in supporting young people with SEND in addition to children and young people be actively involved in the design and delivery of the strategy.
- 5.5 The strategy has been co-produced with a wide range of stakeholders, which has included early years, school, and college leaders; professionals from education, health, SEND, third sector and care; as well as parents, carers, young people, and children. This has been achieved through a series of community events held in person and virtually, online surveys, facilitated group discussions and one-to-one interviews. Tool kits that were created to engage parents, carers, children, and young people were co-produced with the Parent Carer Forum. The tool kits were identified as good practice by the DfE in a monitoring visit and have since been shared with other authorities as an example of good practice.
- 5.6 Findings from the engagement events and surveys were used to develop a draft strategy. The draft strategy was shared with the Send Improvement Partnership Board (SIPB) members, with education leaders and specialists, health and social care leaders and specialists, third sector, SEND specialists, parents, carers, and young people. Electronic feedback, together with discussions with teams, focus groups with parents and carers and one to one conversation were used to refine the strategy, its priorities, and objectives. This co-production approach has ensured that all stakeholders understand the overall ambition and their role in delivery.
- 5.7 Co-production with professionals has ensured that the strategy is aligned to the WSOA and other key strategic plans including those led internally and those led externally by Health. Frimley Integrated Care Board's (ICB) Children and Young People (CYP) strategy has also been published.

- 5.8 The council participated in the first tranche of the government's Delivering Better Value in SEND programme and successfully bid for £1million funding to further improve inclusive services for children and young people with SEND.
- 5.9 In addition to the successful £1million bid for the DBV programme, the council has also been successful in its bid to build a new ASD special school. Work to develop secondary specialist resource provision (SRP) places for September is also progressing.
- 5.10 SRPs are placements that allow children to be educated in a specialist separate classes within a mainstream school some of the time, and access the whole school experience at other times. SRPs are targeted at particular needs often autistic spectrum condition and other neuro atypical conditions. They are a good way of keeping children in the community in borough and avoid taking places in residential or special schools. The table below sets out the places planned for September 2023, and the size of each facility as they fill over year groups over a period of about four years

Setting	Specialism	Nursery	Primary	KS3&4	KS5	Places 9/23	Places when full
Kings Academy	Autism with learning difficulties	No	Yes	Yes	No	10	40
Sandy Lane	Autism and / or L and C	No	Yes	No	No	14	14
Garth Hill College	Autism	No	No	Yes	Yes	50	56
Birch Hill	Autism /learning difficulties	No	Yes	No	No	10	10
Harmans Water	SEMH	No	Yes	No	No	7	14
The Pines	Autism / SLN	No	Yes	No	No	10	20
Owlsmoor	SLD / complex needs	No	Yes	No	No	16	16
total places						117	170
primary places						63	98
secondary places						54	72

Glossary of terms: L and C: language and communication; SEMH: social, emotional and mental health difficulties; SLN: speech and learning needs; SLD: severe learning difficulties

- 5.11 There have been some changes in the leadership of the Parent Carer Forum which led to a period of reduced capacity amongst Forum members to support the delivery of the work. However, the Forum remain fully engaged, with strong, positive relationships being developed to support our ongoing journey of improvement.
- 5.12 Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust has significantly reduced waiting times for Occupational Therapy, and they are on track to achieve the targets in the WSOA for further reducing wait times. Health attendance at DMG panels is consistent and health input into decision making at panels has led to a reduction in children entering CYPIT services via the Education Health Care assessment route who are previously not known to services. A comprehensive mapping exercise of all services that provide emotional health and wellbeing support has been undertaken, to ensure those waiting for CAMHS support are signposted to interim sources of support. A comprehensive review of the BHFT CAMHS service is now underway.

- 5.13 At the time of the review, work was almost complete on a new Approaching Adulthood Policy, which has been led by adult social care and co-produced with key stakeholders, including the Parent Carer Forum. This policy has now been finalised and is published on the Local Offer website. A successful grant application was made to the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) to establish a supported internship forum in Bracknell Forest and awareness of supported internships has been increased through the delivery of a presentation to the local Economic Skills and Development Partnership.
- 5.14 The focus of the first DfE and NHS England review meeting was on getting the building blocks in place to ensure we have a solid foundation on which to build further improvements. The second review meeting had a much stronger focus from the DfE and NHS England on tracking the impact of the work on children, young people, and families. Emerging evidence of the impact of the work was shared in the report, and there was a strong push from the DfE and NHS England to ensure we are securing robust evidence of the impact of our work on the lived experience of children, young people, and families.
- 5.15 The DfE summarised their feedback by recognising that the local area continues to give this work high priority and progress is being made. They acknowledged the detailed action plan is being well managed and that the focus must now be on securing further robust evidence of the impact that work is having.
- 5.16 The DfE recognised the work that has been done with the Parent Carer Forum and their involvement in developing the new SEND Strategy and wider areas of work. Feedback in the meeting from the chair of the PCF was positive, whilst recognising there is still work to be done.
- 5.17 There were four head teachers in attendance at the review meeting, and the DfE commented that it was good to see that level of engagement from schools as this is not often seen in other areas. Head teachers were again supportive of the work that is taking place but did comment on the ongoing challenges with finance and in borough school places.
- 5.18 The first review meeting outlined the robust governance arrangements that are in place, and the focus of the second meeting shifted to look at the impact of those arrangements. Examples of robust challenge and resulting change were provided to demonstrate the impact of the governance arrangements and it was stressed that this approach should continue.
- 5.19 There are some areas of work that have not yet started, and this was highlighted by the DfE, who stressed the importance of not allowing a slackening in the pace of improvement. Whilst some of this activity is not yet due to start, it is recognised that there has been some reduction in the pace of delivery in some areas. This is due to resourcing issues, exacerbated by a significant amount of time for key officers being diverted to participation in the government's Delivering Better Value (DBV) in SEND in the last quarter. Whilst this has resulted in the council successfully bidding for £1million DBV funding, the size of the council means that the same officers have been required to deliver day to day services, the SEND improvement programme and the DBV programme. Limited specialist resourcing, particularly within the SEND team, continues to be the main risk for the programme.
- 5.20 It is now apparent that capacity within the SEND team is currently insufficient to meet the growing demand for services, which has led to a backlog of EHCP assessments

and annual reviews. To clear the backlog, meet current levels of demand, and have capacity to progress the WSOA improvement programme, additional short-term capacity is required within the SEND team.

- 5.21 It is felt that there is a specific requirement for a 6-month period, whilst a business case is developed outlining the longer-term needs for the team. During this 6-month period, an extensive training and development programme will be delivered to the team, processes will be mapped and improved, and a business systems review of the Capita One system will be conducted to maximise use of the system. The total funding to support the level of resources proposed is £350,000, which is available within the corporate contingency approved as part of the 2023/24 budget. The Executive is asked to support release of this funding to cover the costs set out in appendix A.
- 5.22 Some original delivery dates on the published WSOA have been amended because of detailed planning work taking place to assess achievable delivery dates. Where dates have been amended these have been agreed by project team members and members of the SEND Improvement Partnership Board (SIPB). The DfE lead, who is a member of the SIPB, has confirmed they are happy with that approach and for our reporting to be against the re-baselined dates, so long as these have been agreed by the SIPB.
- 5.23 Once discussions on the progress review were complete, the DfE focused on next steps and future monitoring arrangements. The DfE do not have the authority to 'cease' a Written Statement of Action as this was a requirement from Ofsted. However, they can cease monitoring delivery of the WSOA if they feel the local area is making good progress. It was advised that this will be discussed in further detail at the next meeting.
- 5.24 Ofsted launched a new SEND framework in November 2022, with inspections under the new framework beginning in January 2023. The DfE advised that the local area will have an inspection within the first 3 years of the new framework. The new framework has a stronger focus on how improving practice leads to improved experiences for stakeholders and improved outcomes for children and young people.
- 5.25 The next review meeting with DfE and NHS England is due to take place in July 2023. A further update will be provided to the Executive after this review.

6 Consultation and other considerations

Legal advice

- 6.1 The relevant legal issues are addressed within the main body of the report and strategy.

Financial advice

- 6.2 An effective SEND Strategy will aid the council in meeting the needs of the local community, relevant statutory duties and delivering value for money in an area that is presenting many local authorities with significant financial challenges. To support the further improvement of SEND services, a £0.350m funding allocation is proposed from the Corporate Contingency.

Other consultation responses

- 6.3 Co-production and consultation with stakeholders throughout the design processes has been captured, analysed, and used to develop the strategy.

Equalities impact assessment

- 6.4 An equalities impact assessment has been completed and did not establish any significant concerns or implications that have not been picked up by the SEND strategy. This has been attached as a supporting document.

Strategic risk management Issues

- 6.5 There are no specific strategic risk management issues relating to the update on the WSOA as this was considered when the WSOA was produced. Delivery of the strategy will impact positively on current strategic risks around surplus school places and pressures on the high needs block funding, as we increase in borough provision and more resourced school places.

Climate change implications

- 6.6 There are no specific climate change implications relating to the update on the WSOA as this was considered when the WSOA was produced. The recommendations in Section 2 above relating to the new SEND strategy are expected to reduce emissions of CO₂.
- 6.7 The reasons the Council believes that this will reduce emissions are due to reducing the number of children who are travelling long distances to attend out of borough school placements. In borough capacity will increase, thereby reducing the amount of travel required.

Health and wellbeing considerations

- 6.8 There are no specific health and wellbeing considerations relating to the update on the WSOA as this was considered when the WSOA was produced. An equalities impact assessment has been completed for the new SEND strategy which makes specific reference to health and wellbeing.

Background papers

DfE progress review meeting slide deck

Bracknell Forest WSOA Review

SEND Strategy 2023 to 2025 (please note the attached version is for a review of content only. The council's graphic design team are designing the final version, which will meet all accessibility criteria).

SEND Strategy equalities screening record

Contact for further information

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Appendix A

Role	Purpose	Duration	Number	Cost £
SEND Officers [Mix of agency and permanent]	Additional capacity to meet increasing demand and provide backfill to allow learning and development capacity	6 months	5	£164,000*
Senior SEND Officers [Consider permanent]	To lead on complex cases to free up SEND officer time. Focus on backlog, e.g., complex case consultation and engagement	6 months	2	£70,000**
Business Support Officers [Agency/Secondment]	Remove administrative tasks from case officers	6 months	2	£38,000
SEND Business Manager [Additional hours]	Additional day per week for current postholder to focus on embedding new processes	6 months	7 hours per week	£7,000
Total operational costs				£279,000
Business system tech specialist [Interim project resource]	Project resource – understand and maximise use of system	3 months	1	£42,250
Administrator [Interim project resource]	Project resource - data cleansing within Capita	4 months	1	£12,650
Total project costs				£54,900
Contingency				£16,100
TOTAL FUNDING REQUESTED				£350,000

