

Wiltshire Council  
Children Select Committee  
June 2023

## DfE updates and changes – March to June 2023

### Children's social work workforce 2022 **Official Statistics**

1. Information about children's social workers employed in local authorities and agency social workers [Link](#) published 23/02/23

2. Wiltshire's position: Performance in this area is strong against a national sufficiency crisis. A robust workforce strategy is in place to support recruitment and retention. 84% of our Social Workers are permanent members of staff, with 91% of all posts filled. 68% of the workforce have been qualified for 5 years+.

### Skills and UK productivity **Research and analysis**

3. Report exploring how educational attainment contributes to UK productivity growth [Link](#) published 23/02/23

4. Wiltshire's position: We have shared the research through our Heads Bulletin communications that go out to schools.

### Transformational reform begins for children and young people with SEND **Press Release**

5. Plan for better, fairer access to high quality special educational needs and disabilities support [Link](#) published 02/03/23

Wiltshire's position: The SEND and AP improvement plan sets out a number of intended developments to support the transformation of process to identify and support children and young people with SEND. These include a clear intention to ensure parity across Local Authorities for the funding of support needed for young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan through the development of national funding bands and through the develop of a nationally agreed EHCP template. Additional training for SENCOs is also outlined in the plan. Wiltshire has engaged in the consultation process for this, providing feedback to the proposals outlined in the earlier green paper and by attendance at a series of workshops hosted by the DfE in relation to the area improvement boards and plans which are also proposed in this document. The timeline for implementation of the proposals is currently unclear.

### Access support from school hubs **Guidance**

6. How school leaders can get support from other schools in their area to improve a specific area of teaching or leadership [Link](#) updated 06/03/23

7. Wiltshire's position: As a Local Authority we work closely with our Teaching School Hub, English Hub and Mathematics Hubs and provide half-termly opportunities through our Heads and Governor

briefings to share their latest offers. The Hubs are also represented on the board of the Wiltshire Learning Alliance, and they have an opportunity to contribute to wider Council strategy. They provide strategic updates to the Board on their workflow, uptake and school engagement. In addition, the new School Improvement Framework for maintained schools for 2023-2024 involves an investment in a local hub-based model.

## **School sports given huge boost to level the playing field for next generation of Lionesses** **Press Release**

8. New standard for school sports will see girls and boys offered the same sports [Link](#) published 08/03/23

9. Wiltshire's position: We have shared the press release through our Heads Bulletin communications that go out to all schools.

## **Childcare: regulatory changes** **Consultation outcome**

10. We are gathering a range of views to help us reach well-informed and fair decisions on proposed regulatory changes to childcare in England. Update published; the government's response to the consultation [Link](#) update 15/03/23

11. Wiltshire's position:

The results of the consultation and subsequent budget announcement has stated that the changes to the ratio's for 2-year-olds in early years settings will go ahead. This will change the ratios from 1:4 to 1:5, we are waiting for the statutory guidance to be updated but this is likely to be effective from September 23. We have spoken to many providers in Wiltshire, and most are currently saying that they will not be working to the new ratio except in exceptional circumstances (staff sickness for example). This may change when the extended entitlements are rolled out for two-year-olds of working parents in April 24. We will continue to support settings with working with the additional number of children per adult to ensure the quality of the early education that they are providing.

## **Review of Relationships, sex, and health education to protect children to conclude by end of year** **Press Release**

12. New Relationships, Sex, Health and Education (RSHE) statutory guidance will be completed by the end of the year, in response to disturbing reports that inappropriate material is being taught in some schools published 31/03/23 [Link](#)

13. Wiltshire's position: As a Council we will await the new RSHE statutory guidance and will then provide updates to schools through Heads, Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) briefings. If there is related training, this will be provided to schools in line with the guidance.

## **Outcomes for children in need, including children looked after by local authorities, in England: 2021 to 2022** **National statistics**

14. A range of outcome measures at national and local authority level for children in need, including children looked after by local authorities published 30/03/23 [Link](#)

15. Wiltshire's position: The Virtual School in Wiltshire for children looked after and the extended duties of the virtual school (non-statutory duties to promote education, partnership working and attendance of children at CIN, CP or who have been in the previous 6 years) use this comparative dataset. It is used to understand these cohorts' educational attainment at national and local authority level and other outcome measures such as special educational needs, absence and suspensions. This informs updates, related training and the overall strategic work of the virtual school. Performance data is shared at Corporate Parenting Panel and Performance Outcomes Board.

## **Pupil absence in schools in England: 2021 to 2022 **National statistics****

16. This release reports on pupil absence in primary and secondary schools in the 2021 to 2022 academic year Published 16/03/23 [Link](#)

17. Wiltshire's position: An attendance report is a standing agenda item for Children's Select Committee. In Wiltshire we use the DfE reports for benchmarking of performance against national and regional rates. In May 2023 absence rates for the autumn term 2022/23 were published, showing that Wiltshire had an overall absence rate of 7.2%, which was lower than absence rates nationally of 7.5% and 7.9% for the South West.

## **Overview of local landscape in Swindon and Wiltshire LEP **Data****

18. Local Skills Dashboard displaying published local data to support local planning published 21/03/23 [Link](#)

19. Wiltshire's position: We have shared the link through our Heads Bulletin communications that go out to schools.

## **Special free schools: local authority applications **Transparency data****

20. List of local authorities who applied to open a special free school in the 2022 special free schools wave, and those who were successful updated 02/03/23 [Special free schools: local authority applications - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

21. Wiltshire's position: Wiltshire was successful in its application to open a new special free school. The successful application is for a 130 place school to support children and young people aged 5-19 who have SEND needs associated with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH). The application reflected a need for additional specialist places to support this area of SEND in Wiltshire and will enable a greater number of children and young people with SEMH to receive their education closer to their home. Wiltshire Council will be working closely with the Department for Education (DfE) throughout the process of setting up the new free school provision.

## **Early education entitlement and funding **Policy paper****

22. Information about the 2023 Spring Budget announcement on early years entitlements and associated funding [Link](#) updated 12/04.23

## 23. Wiltshire's position:

The spring budget announcement outlined the expansion of funded education for children of working parents. The entitlements will be rolled out in 3 phases:

- from April 2024, all working parents of 2-year-olds can access 15 hours per week
- from September 2024, all working parents of children aged 9 months up to 3-years-old can access 15 hours per week
- from September 2025, all working parents of children aged 9 months up to 3-years-old can access 30 hours free childcare per week

We are currently awaiting further details and guidance from the DfE on this roll out which will include the funding rates and any delivery funding that may be attached.

We are currently looking at the provision across the county to see how we can meet this roll out and will be supporting providers with their training and support needs. We currently do not know what the uptake of the new entitlements will be and will be monitoring the sufficiency of places across the county.

## **National school breakfast club programme **Guidance****

24. Support for school breakfast club provision [Link](#) updated 23/03/23

## 25. Wiltshire's position:

This information has been sent out in the newsletter and an article on Right Choice. Applications are now open for schools to put forward an expression of interest for the provision.

## **Academies regulatory and commissioning review **Policy paper****

26. The findings of the internal policy review of academy trust oversight and commissioning as we move towards an academy trust-led school system [Link](#) updated 06/04/23

27. Wiltshire's position: We have shared the policy paper through our Heads Bulletin communications that go out to schools. As a Local Authority we continue to work closely with our Academy partners alongside providing a strong offer of School Improvement to our maintained schools through the School Improvement Framework.

## **Schools in England to benefit from funding **Press release****

28. The Department for Education (DfE) announced that every primary and secondary state school in England is to receive additional funding for the next academic year [Link](#) Published 26/04/23

## 29. Wiltshire's position:

This funding was included in the school budget announcements in December 2022, and this is simply a DfE press release to accompany the first cash payment to schools which, will be baselined into schools' budgets in 2024/25 financial year. For Wiltshire, the annual grant is £3.9 million of the £2 billion national allocation.

## Children's social care workforce

30. Alongside national consultations on [Stable Homes Built on Love](#) and on the [Children's Social Care National Framework and Dashboard](#), DfE undertook a consultation on the [Child and Family Social Worker Workforce](#) which ran until 11 May. This included proposals to introduce national rules on the engagement of agency social work resource in local authority children's social care and invited views on a set of national rules on the engagement of agency social work resource covering: price caps on what local authorities may pay for an agency worker; post-qualified experience needed for an agency assignment; references, notice periods, and movement between agency and substantive roles; and collection and sharing of pay and agency data

31. Wiltshire's position: As a proportion of our workforce we have fewer agency workers than most other councils. Nevertheless we are strongly supportive of the proposals and would like to see them in place as soon as possible. We suggested improvements to some of the proposed metrics and additional safeguards when agency workers move between local authorities.