

Monitoring Template

Q1 2024/25 UPDATE REPORT

Date Submitted:	
Signed off by Chief Executive:	
Signed off by S151 Officer:	
Signed off by Corporate Director for People (DCS):	

Summary:

The Safety Valve agreement with Wiltshire Council is still in the very early stages having been signed and published in March 2024. However, significant progress has been made to ensure the delivery capacity exists within the system, and to begin work on priority projects, especially those where the impact will take time to be felt.

The council does not yet have a confirmed final outturn for 2023/24, and so the financial data reported is based on Q3 2023/24. This data indicates that the authority is on track to remain inside the deficit profile for the coming financial year, and there is nothing in the monitoring which suggests any issue with meeting the commitment to balance the DSG by the end of 2028/29.

Project activity and SEND data can be reported up to the end of April 2024 and so there is a lag between the financial data and the SEND data being reported, however this is recognised and does not present a problem to the monitoring of progress against the Safety Valve agreement.

There have been two priorities for this first period of the plan. Firstly, communication and governance. The council has worked to ensure that stakeholders are aware of the transformation plans that follow this agreement and understand the changes that will be coming. Work has been undertaken to articulate the changes for schools so that colleagues understand the benefits and impacts on them.

Relatedly, governance has been put around this process to ensure that parent carers, schools and settings and children and young people are represented but also have a voice. The Chair and Vice-Chair of School's Forum, and the Strategic Director of Wiltshire Parent Carer Council all sit on our programme board and directly impact the work, and a Stakeholder Reference Group is being established to support the co-production of these projects.

These building blocks will support the success of the programme later and will be key to delivering commitments around culture change.

The second priority for this first period has been work towards condition 3.1 “Provide earlier support for children and young people with SEND, improving inclusion practices.” These measures will not deliver impacts overnight, and so implementing them early was seen as important.

As part of this, the council has been soft launching elements of a package of support and challenge for schools, which will fully rolled out by the start of the new school year in September. This package includes investment in practitioners who will go into mainstream schools to support inclusion and early help, commissioning outreach from special schools, free inclusion training for schools and changes to how the local authority supports schools with specialist advice.

In return, the council is explicit that there are renewed expectations around delivery of Ordinarily Available Provision for all Learners (OAPL), a ‘warm welcome’ for children with SEN and their families, and greater use of peer challenge where appropriate.

The programme team are working to measure and articulate the impact on children and young people in the short and medium term more clearly. The long-term impacts on our system are explained and clearly linked back to project delivery, but now there is a renewed focus on co-designing meaningful impact measures for each intervention so that it ensures better, and more responsive, monitoring of delivery against the agreement.

Overall, the authority has a clear way forward, and despite the early stage of this monitoring report, there are evidenced milestones which demonstrate progress and give confidence that the plan will successfully be delivered.

Agreement Condition	Assurance Level		
Condition 1: The authority undertakes to reach a positive in-year balance on its Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) account by the end of 2028-29 and in each subsequent year.	Update 1 (May)	Update 2 (August)	Update 3 (November)
	RAG	RAG	RAG
Condition 2: The authority undertakes to control and reduce the cumulative deficit, not exceeding £84.5m in financial year 2024/25.	Update 1 (May)	Update 2 (August)	Update 3 (November)
	RAG	RAG	RAG

Progress update:

At this stage in the reporting cycle it is projected that the Council is on track to achieve a zero

DSG deficit at the end of the Safety Valve agreement and to achieve the Safety Valve agreement in the current year.

The financial monitoring report for May 2024 is based on Q3 reporting for 2023/24 and the agreed budget for 2024/25. Outturn and in year forecasts will be updated for the 2nd monitoring report.

The Q3 budget monitoring forecast for 2023/24 is in line with the Safety Valve agreement and the budget set for 2024/25. Further analysis of placement mix, and cost will be carried out as outturn is confirmed and this will inform the impact of the outturn on costs for 2024/25.

The attached financial summary shows projected unit costs for 2023/24 and 2024/25 and the savings targets associated with each of the agreement conditions.

Agreement Condition	Assurance Level		
	Update 1 (May)	Update 2 (August)	Update 3 (November)
Condition 3.1: Provide earlier support for children and young people with SEND, improving inclusion practices and managing pressure points and school transitions.	RAG	RAG	RAG

Progress Update:

Work has commenced to further develop the support network required to enable schools to provide better inclusive practice. This is based on what schools told the Local Authority they needed during the engagement work conducted while writing the plan.

As forecast, the impact of these measures has not yet been seen in the long term KPIs associated with this deal condition. The assumption was that these measures would be an up-front investment that would deliver improvements in years 2-5 of the plan.

Key Measure	Plan Forecast (Apr 24)	Actual (Apr 24)	Compared to same period last year
Number of EHCPs	5580 (<i>pro rata</i>)	5696	4973 (+723)
Number of EHCNA requests	388	398	388 (+10)
% EHCNA referrals "no to assess"	-	15%	7.78% (+7.3%)

That said, the council has noted the growth in the number of EHCPs which is higher than forecast and continuing to grow at a similar rate to last year. Further analysis is underway to assess the reasons for this growth but, at a top level, this adverse movement has occurred for two key

reasons:

1. The data expressed as a pro-rata figure is imperfect, as much of the entry into the system happens in Q1 in preparation for the September school year, while much of the exit from the system happens later in the year. However, the authority is not relying on this natural movement and is monitoring it closely to regularly review if further resource needs to be directed toward activity to meet the forecast figure.
2. There is continued growth in demand, while the impact of our interventions has not been felt yet. It has been noted that, as expected, the number of EHCNA requests has remained high. While, as forecast, it has broadly remained in line with the number of requests last year this is still significant demand being brought into the system.

It is worth noting that the number of EHCNA requests appears to have stabilised, and there has not been a further increase in the rate of demand. There is still a challenge about the demand, and this is something that the authority is looking to tackle through changes to support in schools, and through changes to internal process.

Additionally, the percentage that are turned down for assessment has increased. This rise is in part due to an increased emphasis on what the school should be providing as part of the Ordinarily Available Provision for all Learners (OAPL) which was launched at the start of the school year and continues to be promoted.

The council remains confident that the interventions that are planned for the coming months will be sufficient to manage the demand in our system and keep the plan on track. However, it should be noted that in our original submission it was forecast that the backlog of EHCNA requests would be clearer over two years. Following investment from the council, it is anticipated that this backlog to now be cleared in six months, which could add 350 EHCPs over the coming months.

While this is a better outcome for the children and young people sitting within that backlog, and it increases the visibility and predictability in our system, this will change the profile of the plan. Further analysis is being undertaken, and by the next report, there will be a clearer picture of the educational destinations for those children and young people, and therefore what the financial impact would be.

The interventions that have been prioritised in the first quarter have focussed on those with a long lead time and those which will have the biggest impact on improved inclusive practice and managing pressure points in the system.

Support mechanisms for schools and settings are being soft-launched throughout the year and will be fully operational in the new school year in September. The existing SENCO network is being enhanced to support more peer-to-peer working at a locality level. This, alongside existing CPD opportunities and Wiltshire-wide SENCO events will form part of the SEND good-practice network.

This will be facilitated by a new team of Inclusion Advisors who have been recruited and will go into schools from September to support with the delivery of OAPL and better inclusive practice.

Responding to requests from schools for easier access to specialist advice, these Inclusion Advisors will also support locality based multi-disciplinary teams which will bring together expertise from Educational Psychologists, Advisory Teachers, Behaviour Support, Inclusion Advisors, Early Years Inclusion Advisors, Family Help, Early Support, Family Hubs and community health services. These teams will provide a more holistic approach to supporting schools and will also review locality data to review where resource is best deployed to support good practice.

Whole-school SEND and inclusion training offered by the council, which was previously a chargeable traded service, has been made free. This offer will be advertised and monitored to ensure that it delivers the expected increase in uptake.

The authority is working with existing accreditation and support programmes to enable schools to take up training aimed at improving inclusive practice. A further 15 schools are currently working through their Dyslexia Friendly School accreditation, following 13 schools which were part of the first tranche. Proposals are coming together to review the effectiveness of this programme.

In addition, the council is fully engaged with the NHS PINS programme and has given the Parent Carer Forum additional resource so they can employ a facilitator to accelerate progress. Schools in Wiltshire have been keen to sign up, and it is expected that there will be a full slate of 20 schools participating. This will work effectively alongside the Autism Education Trust (AET), autism accreditation programme, which will be offered in September. These measures should significantly improve practice around autism and neurodiversity, which is the biggest primary need in EHCPs in Wiltshire.

Given the increase in requests that the system has experienced in Early Years, there are also priority workstreams being focussed on this area as well. Work is ongoing to support pathway redesign in Early Years, to ensure that the integrated 2-year check is picking up opportunities for early help and prevention, especially around SEMH.

Alongside this, new posts have been funded to help navigate early years pathways so that help is sought from the most appropriate team. This work will support a move towards a greater use of Early Support Assessments and family help in pre-school children. This shift is reflective of the impact that these interventions could have, especially where this could prevent increased need and families 'defaulting' onto an EHCP path when other support would be more appropriate and more effective.

All of these interventions are supported by the Family Hubs which launched in Wiltshire at the beginning of April. These hubs are providing a focal point for the early support and preventative work that is an important part of this plan.

Agreement Condition	Assurance Level		
Condition 3.2: Prevent the need for escalation by providing the right support, first time, including a more holistic response alongside health and social care, with improved management and communication.	Update 1 (May)	Update 2 (August)	Update 3 (November)
	RAG	RAG	RAG

Progress Update:

Work has begun to join up the work that is ongoing across the system. Some of this is evident in the multi-disciplinary teams referenced above, which include colleagues from health and social care. This is also evident in the centring of Family Hubs and early support into the delivery plans.

Key Measure	Plan Forecast (Apr 24)	Actual (Apr 24)	Compared to same period last year
Number of moves "up" provision		0	-
% Plans issued within 20 weeks	40%	30.23%	36.82% (-6.6%)

Wiltshire Council has a robust plan in place to improve the 20-week performance measure. Leadership around this issue is being taken at a senior level to drive improvement. This includes significantly increasing headcount in statutory SEND, especially in pressured staff groups such as Educational Psychology and the Statutory Assessment Team. The authority expects to meet this challenge over the year.

As already referenced, significant resource has been put into clearing the backlog of ECHNAs. Additional capacity is being sourced through agency EPs and is expected to be completed within 6 months. This 'clearing of the slate' should reduce some of the pressure in the system, allowing better working relationships and more time for reflective, holistic practice.

Resource Bases are a focus for Wiltshire Council in Q1 and significant work is being put into understanding the right support that needs to sit around Resource Bases and what the model of delivery looks like. This is an ongoing piece of work, which is bringing together professional expertise from across the Wiltshire SEND system, including community health, therapies and mental health.

This builds on conversations that are ongoing with colleagues in the ICB and the community health provider to understand opportunities for closer working and better integration. These are ongoing but are already delivering better approaches to the joint-commissioning of SALT and it is hoped that, as a next step, better integration of data will provide even more meaningful

insights to inform planning and delivery of sustainable SEND services.

Agreement Condition	Assurance Level		
Condition 3.3: Increase the number of special school placements, resourced provision, and alternative provision to ensure that children and young people can access the support they need, with proper reintegration support for children who can be appropriately supported in mainstream provision.	Update 1 (May)	Update 2 (August)	Update 3 (November)
	RAG	RAG	RAG

Progress Update:

Work is continuing to bring as many special school places online as quickly as possible. This condition is rated amber for two reasons:

1. Confidence around accessing Safety Valve capital funding required to deliver new special school places in the south of the county. Confirmation of funding is urgently required to allow the provider to proceed with developing this site so that it can still open in line with the plan. Delivery of sufficient specialist places across Wiltshire is key to the successful delivery of the sustainability plan.

The bid for DfE Safety Valve capital is required to develop a full satellite provision for Exeter House Special School in the South/East of the county and this has been identified as a priority in ensuring access to in county specialist provision and reducing reliance on high-cost external placements. Additional information was requested, and has been submitted, but unfortunately there are no timescales for next steps.

2. Weather-related build delays to the expansion of Silverwood School in the north of the county. Due to inclement weather, there have been delays to the delivery of new special school places at Silverwood. These issues severely impacted the delivery timeline as rain rendered the site and some of the building materials unusable. Despite the efforts of the contractor, this delay has not been made up in the subsequent months. This situation is being closely monitored, but there are some doubts about the delivery of the new places in September 2024, however it should only be a delay of 1 term, delivering the places in January 2025.

As would be expected, at this point in the plan, the key measure numbers have not moved much. The % cohort in Independent Non-Maintained Special School (INMSS) has moved up but not in a significant way.

Key Measure	Plan Forecast	Actual	Compared to
-------------	---------------	--------	-------------

	(Apr 24)	(Apr 24)	same period last year
% of EHCP cohort in INMSS	6.03%	6.12%	5.6% (+0.62%)
Number of moves "down" provision	-	30	18 (+12)

In addition, the authority is proceeding with increased AP capacity at The Northwood Centre (formerly Calder House), the tender is due to go live this month, and also SEMH primary and secondary EBSA provision at Melksham House.

Agreement Condition	Assurance Level		
	Update 1 (May)	Update 2 (August)	Update 3 (November)
Condition 3.4: Improve transition pathways to provide a range of opportunities for young people with SEND to prepare for adulthood, including training, further education, and employment.	RAG	RAG	RAG

Progress Update:

Significant preparatory work is underway in the post-16 space, however this condition is currently amber due to plans still being in the development phase. Work is being stood up to urgently address this, and the authority have employed a project manager, starting in August, who has significant experience in the post-16 environment and will own this programme to ensure it moves forward in a timely fashion. It is anticipated this condition may still be amber in August, but should move to green by November.

The authority has recognised that a more strategic approach is required to make the changes required to deliver this agreement condition. Very positive partnership meetings have been held to begin developing this approach and identifying areas for improvement. These conversations have been supported by a close working relationship with the post-16 providers in the county who recognise the role they have in delivering change in this area.

In the interim, the authority has increased headcount in the preparation for adulthood team to ensure that there is capacity to deliver the business-as-usual work, and focused work to deliver the Safety Valve agreement.

Agreement Condition	Assurance Level
---------------------	-----------------

Condition 3.5: Foster a culture of change across the Wiltshire SEND and AP system by engaging with partners and parent carers, improving trust and co-production across the sector.	Update 1 (May)	Update 2 (August)	Update 3 (November)
	RAG	RAG	RAG

Progress Update:

The council is committed to delivering cultural change through this programme. This will only be achieved by continuing the openness and transparency that characterised the approach to creating the plan. To support this, the council is funding a new post for SEND specific communications.

The newly created High Needs Block Sustainability Board is chaired by the Chief Executive of Wiltshire Council and the deputy-chair is the Chief Executive of the ICB. It has a membership that includes the Chair and Vice-Chair of Schools Forum, and the Strategic Director of Wiltshire Parent Carer Council (WPCC). This representation gives stakeholders confidence that decisions are being made in the right way, building trust in this transformation programme.

Supporting this Board, and the project groups, a Stakeholder Reference Group is being established. This group will not replace the wider engagement that will continue to shape the projects, but it provides an opportunity to conduct more detailed co-design conversations and support stakeholders so they do not feel overwhelmed by even more requests to input. The Stakeholder Reference Group will contain parent carers, SENCOs, headteachers, and, supported by Wiltshire Centre for Independent Living (CIL), the voice of children and young people with SEND.

In addition to the engagement opportunities created specifically for this programme, there is continued and regular engagement with School's Forum, Headteacher's briefings, SENCO network and an enhanced role for the System of Excellence.

The System of Excellence Steering Group brings together the Headteachers of the special schools, with representatives from mainstream primary and secondary schools, the local college, and early years settings. This steering group plays a vital role in shaping SEND and inclusion activity in Wiltshire, and a key part of the plan is to raise their profile and ensure that the System of Excellence plays a visible role as advocates for this transformation.

Risk	Assurance Level		
Risk 1: There is a risk that unpredictability in the system	Update 1 (May)	Update 2 (August)	Update 3 (November)

could lead to the authority failing to meet financial targets despite the plan working.	RAG	RAG	RAG
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----	-----	-----

Mitigation:

The authority needs to remove as much unpredictability from the system as possible. This will include:

1. Clearing the backlog of EHC needs assessments to remove the unknown risk around those plans.
2. Map and improve financial decision-making to ensure it is clear and has the right level of scrutiny and rigour.
3. Increase the visibility of financial decision-making in the system to all partners so that they are better able to forecast accordingly.

Progress update:

The EHC needs assessments backlog to be cleared within 6 months, removing that risk from the system. Work is underway to map the financial decision-making and this will be complete by July.

Risk	Assurance Level		
	Update 1 (May)	Update 2 (August)	Update 3 (November)
Risk 2: There is a risk that a failure to maintain trusted relationships could fundamentally erode faith in the inclusive vision for our SEND system	RAG	RAG	RAG

Mitigation:

The authority will continue to hold stakeholders close to this work and co-design the projects with them. The messaging and communication will emphasise the importance of co-design and of improved outcomes from children and young people with SEND. Quick-wins early in the project will deliver tangible improvements for stakeholders and children and young people with SEND.

Progress update:

The Programme Board has been fully established and the Stakeholder Reference Group is being established. The surveys that were undertaken during the development of the plan continue to drive the work and are key to shaping the quick-wins which will build confidence in this transformation programme.

Risk	Assurance Level
------	-----------------

Risk 3: There is a risk that partners struggle to engage at the required pace leading to a slower pace of change than is required to meet the plan.	Update 1 (May)	Update 2 (August)	Update 3 (November)
	RAG	RAG	RAG

Mitigation:

The authority will continue to engage partners and check-in with them about pace of change and progress. Recognising that the financial risk lies with the local authority, the programme team will remain cognisant that other partners will have differing priorities. The authority will ensure that the benefits for other partners are clearly articulated.

Progress update:

The benefits and implications of the plan for schools have been defined and are in the process of being presented and communicated to schools. Further work is in progress to define the implications for other partners so everyone understands their part in the delivery of this programme. This should be completed by July.

Risk	Assurance Level		
Risk 4: There is a risk that failure to access the required capital leaves the system reliant on expensive independent special school places.	Update 1 (May)	Update 2 (August)	Update 3 (November)
	RAG	RAG	RAG

Mitigation:

The authority has put in a request for £5.7m of additional capital through the Safety Valve programme, and this would deliver an extension to a special school in the south of the county. Other projects need to have allocated capital. The authority has considered options to reduce reliance on the capital, essentially derisking the project, but 120 additional places for £5.7m already represents excellent value for money, and Wiltshire has a low number of special school places for a county of its size. It is difficult to imagine an alternative that would reduce reliance on INMSS placements while still meeting the statutory obligations.

Progress update:

Capital has been allocated to the other projects in the programme to deliver the capacity required. 4 months after the initial bid there has been a request for further information about the Safety Valve capital bid, and so it has not been agreed yet. The additional information has been supplied, but the current assumption is that a decision may well be further delayed due to the national General Election. This delay is significant enough that it will compromise delivery of the capital scheme in the agreed timeframe without alternative sources of funding. The authority is

reviewing the portfolio of capital projects to see if this could be prioritised, but this will be at the expense of other schemes.

Risk	Assurance Level		
	Update 1 (May)	Update 2 (August)	Update 3 (November)
Risk 5: There is a risk that system partners struggle to recruit or resource the changes required in our system leading to failed attempts at change.	RAG	RAG	RAG

Mitigation:

The authority must maintain contact with key partners and include them in decision making so that it can take account of the impact of the transformation programme on their services. The authority will also review unintended consequences that might impact partners and will offer support with recruitment where possible.

Progress update:

Partners are fully engaged with the work at a strategic level and so monitoring is underway. Recruitment support for special schools is being delivered to help them get the staff they need to support this transformation.

The Safety Valve programme has SEND advisors with particular specialisms; an early years SEND specialist and an inclusion specialist.

Do you need additional support from either of our specialist SEND advisers to support the effective delivery of your Safety Valve plan?

If yes, please specify which area you would like extra support in, and give a brief overview of how this support would be beneficial.

Not at this time.