



# Wiltshire SEND Sustainability Plan

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April 2024

Wiltshire Council

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This document sits alongside the Safety Valve agreement for Wiltshire, [which can be accessed here](#). Together, these documents describe how the Council will invest in SEND support, to reduce our historic overspend.

This plan is not a standalone document and focuses on the activity required to improve our financial position. However, it forms part of the context within which our new SEND and AP Strategy will sit. All these strategic documents will be used to develop an improvement plan for our SEND System, the first iteration of which will be published in mid-2024.

## Executive Summary

For the past six years, Wiltshire Council, in common with many other councils in England, has been spending more on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) than it receives from the government to fund these vital services.

We are committed to ensuring that children and young people with additional needs and SEND have the best possible start in life and have access to the support that they need. We must maintain, and improve, the quality of support that children and young people in Wiltshire receive, whilst getting ourselves back to a balanced financial position. This will reflect that we are meeting children's needs at the right time, and in the right way. We know that prevention is more cost effective and produces better outcomes for children.

These aims will only be possible through a fundamental change in approach.

This strategic document sets out the approach we will take over the next five years, and the steps we will take to achieve these joint goals. The approach, and the projects have had significant input from parent carers, schools, colleges, early years settings, health and care staff, SEND professionals, and children and young people.

The priorities contained in this document reflect the priorities that we heard from those stakeholders, which we have applied to the challenge of addressing our overspend.

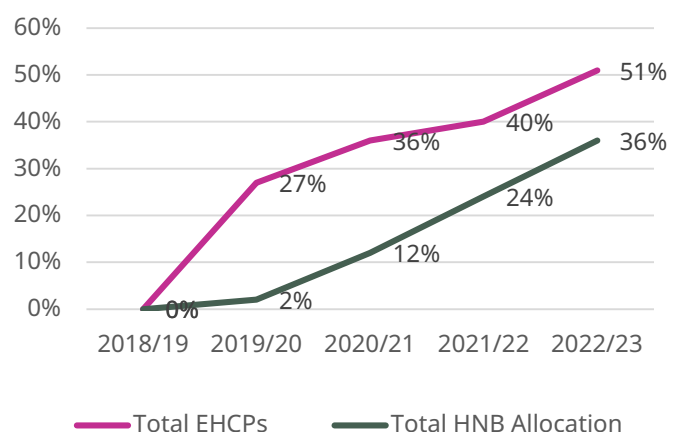
### Background

In 2014, new responsibilities were given to councils, schools and other bodies around the support for children and young people with SEND. These changes encouraged education, health and social care partners to work more closely together to provide better support. These changes were made in government legislation called the Children's and Families Act 2014.

These changes, as well as better identification of needs such as Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC), have led to significant growth in the number of children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).

In Wiltshire, this equates to a 51% growth in children with an EHCP since 2018/19, while the funding from the government has only grown by 36%.

High Needs Block: % increases since 2018/19



This deficit started small but has grown and is growing at a faster rate each year.

If we do nothing, then we expect the number of EHCPs to grow by another 31.5% in the next five years, and our deficit to grow to £222m over the same time.

This is not just a challenge in Wiltshire, it has affected every council in England. While the increases in government funding have not kept pace with demand, there are changes that councils can make to meet the challenge in a financially sustainable way.

### How we intend to resolve the challenge?

This is a joint effort, and we want to achieve this with the support of schools, colleges and early years settings and importantly with the trust and input from parent carers. We want to ensure the right support, at the right time, to children and young people with additional needs and SEND.

We can only solve this by a systemic partnership approach. Better outcomes for children and young people will mean better financial outcomes for the council.

These plans are set out in more detail later in this document. It is important to say that every child will still get the support that they are entitled to.

#### 1. Improving support pre-EHCP to increase parent and professional confidence in mainstream inclusion

By improving the support that all children receive when it comes to SEND needs, we can avoid the costly and often bureaucratic process of an EHCP, getting better outcomes for the child while slowing the growth in the number of EHCPs.

#### 2. Preventing the need for escalation of support by ensuring the right support, first time

If an EHCP is necessary, then we must get the right support quickly to avoid unnecessary Independent Special School placements.

#### 3. Ensuring value for money and the right contributions from partners

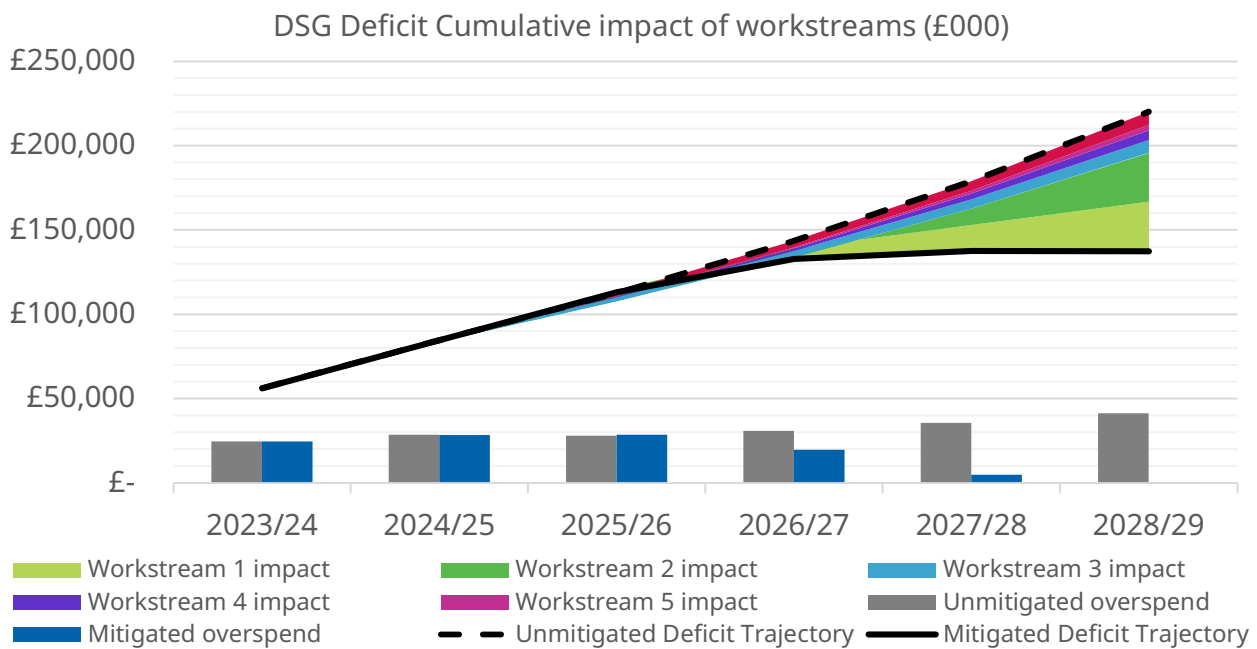
We need to make sure that we are spending money in the right way and buying services in the right way.

#### 4. Enhance transition pathways to provide a range of opportunities to prepare for adulthood

As a young person approaches the end of their EHCP, we need to ensure they feel supported to embrace the employment or education opportunities that are available, with the support they need.

#### 5. Developing better communication and processes to change the culture in our SEND system

The whole plan must be underpinned by improvements to communication and process. This will help build and maintain trusted relationships.



### What we hope to achieve

Over time, if we achieve all five of the workstreams above, we should begin to see an impact on our overspend and the outcomes for children – eliminating it by year five of the plan. This will mean spending more on early intervention and investing in new local special school places to realise those savings in the later years of the plan.

Children and young people with SEND should receive better support outside of an EHCP, require fewer disruptive moves between settings, and support should be more consistent across the county.

For parent carers, we expect them to have increased confidence in the support offer close to home, a greater visibility of decisions being made, and improved communication and support for them directly.

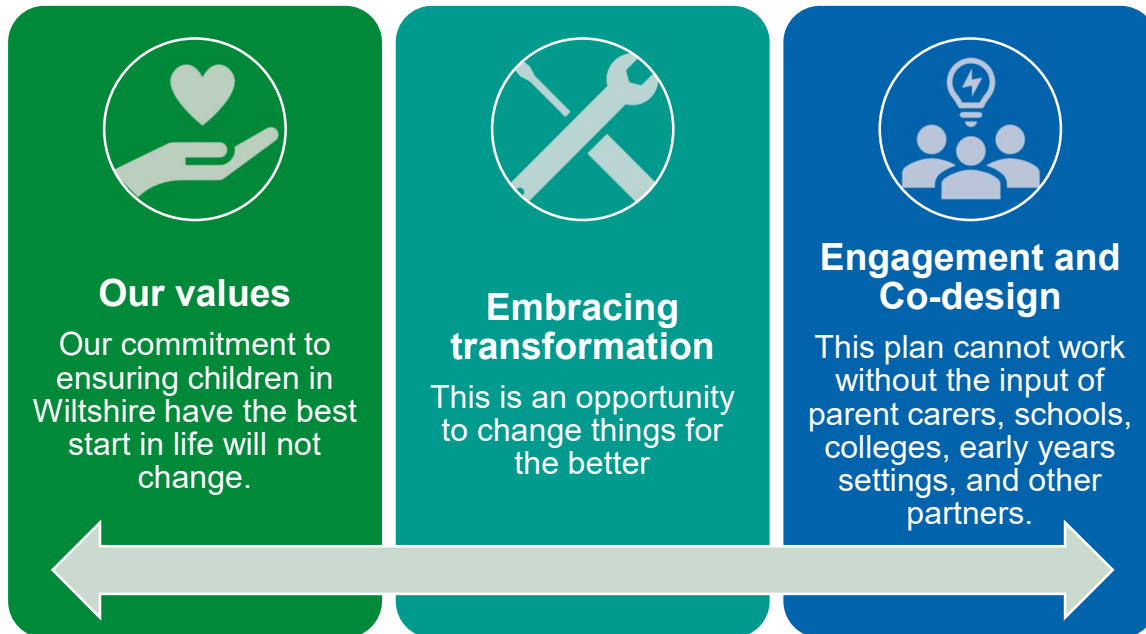
For schools and settings, we want to have a more engaged support and challenge approach to inclusive practice, but we also want to help them in their commissioning decisions and ensure that they feel like they have the resources they need to support children in their setting.

And for our partners in health and care, we expect a greater sense that we are all part of the same system, greater sharing of data and processes, and a better alignment and clarity around decision-.

By working together, as a single Inclusion and SEND system, we can eliminate the overspend – but more importantly, with a renewed energy and urgency, we can tackle some problems that have seemed impossible to solve.

## Our Approach

From the start of this process, we have worked to ensure that this plan aligns with three core components of our approach: we will remain true to our values, we will embrace transformation, and we will work with stakeholders to co-design our plan.



## Our values

Children, their families and carers are at the heart of everything we do here in Wiltshire.

We are ambitious for them, their communities and our staff who work alongside them and we are clear in our vision for all children with special educational needs and disabilities:

*"All children and young people with SEND and their families will have a voice that is heard. They will know how to access, and be able to access the joined-up support they need to thrive in their communities, to enjoy life and reach their full potential"*

*Co-produced SEND Strategy 2020-2024*

Underpinning this, we have a set of key principles that were co-designed as part of our SEND & Inclusion Strategy. These principles remain important to us as we support young people with SEND in Wiltshire.

All children and young people should:



Be safe and feel safe when trying new things



Be able to learn from each other and grow together with all children and young people



Be able to have choice wherever possible



Have access to information and communication for themselves, and the people around them, that helps them along



Experience joined-up help and support because this Strategy is being co-produced



Have additional needs identified early so support can start ASAP



Be educated as close to home as possible

Leaders across the partnership (Integrated Care Board, Wiltshire Council and others) have signed up to these principles as an aligned vision and they impact everything in this plan.

## Embracing transformation

We are committed to delivering positive change and there has been a willingness to embrace the opportunity of transformation through Safety Valve.

Our System of Excellence group brings together special schools in Wiltshire alongside representatives from our mainstream schools and colleges. We shared with them, early on in this process and they understood the need for change here. We have also had positive conversations with the Schools' Forum and headteacher's groups from across the county. Schools' Forum discussed this plan on December 5<sup>th</sup> 2023 and has agreed to support the delivery of it.

Our SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Board is co-chaired by the Wiltshire Council Corporate Director of People, who is the Director of Children’s Services (DCS) Lucy Townsend, and by the Chief Nurse for NHS B&NES, Swindon and Wiltshire (BSW) Integrated Care Board (ICB) add name. This board has been updated on the plan as it has been developed and is committed to the delivery of the Safety Valve Plan.

## Engagement and Co-Design

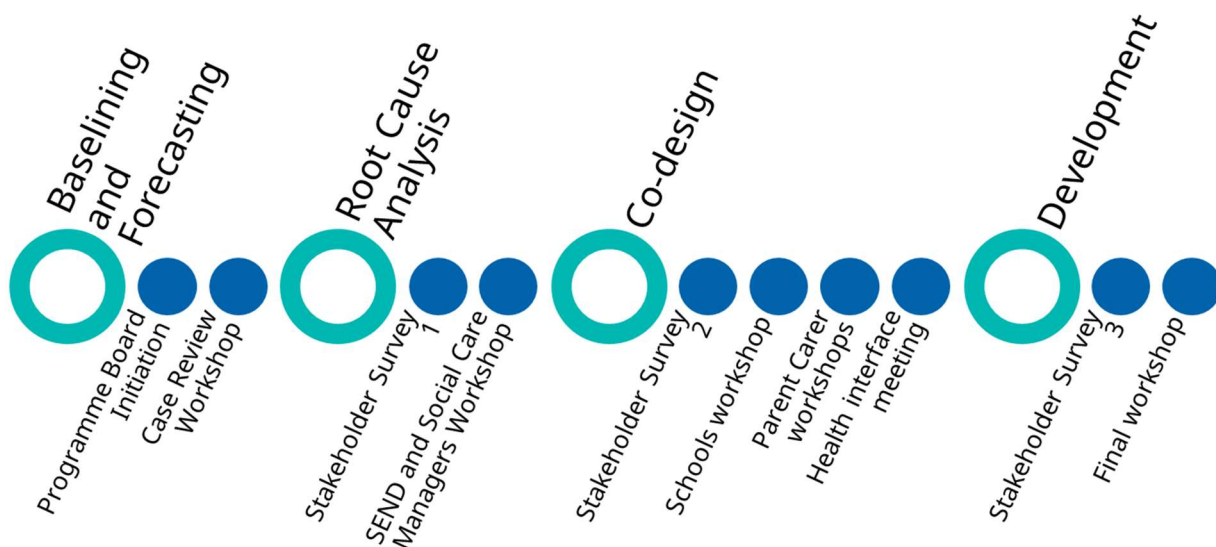
We know that nothing in this plan is deliverable without the support of parent carers, children and young people with SEND, schools, early years settings, colleges, and key partners from social care and health.

Bringing those partners along with us was a key part of why we prioritised engagement and co-design in this plan, but we also know that it generates a better plan at the end of it.

We created a range of co-design opportunities for our stakeholders, using methods that allowed work to take place with each other in the same room, but also approaches that would allow people to participate in their own time.

Given the condensed timeline that the Safety Valve plan needed to be produced in, we had to be conscious of providing the right opportunities in a time efficient way that gave people a genuine and substantive input into the plan. We used data and insights previously collected from other ongoing pieces of engagement, including lots of work undertaken by Wiltshire Centre for Independent Living (CIL) engaging with children and young people on their experience of the SEND system.

We included Wiltshire Parent Carer Council (WPCC), school representation, and health colleagues on the programme board from the start to ensure their input directly impacted the work.





During an early stage of the work, we conducted an initial stakeholder survey which went to parent carers, schools, early years settings, health and care and internal SEND staff. This survey had just under 500 responses which gave us a detailed evidence base to work off.

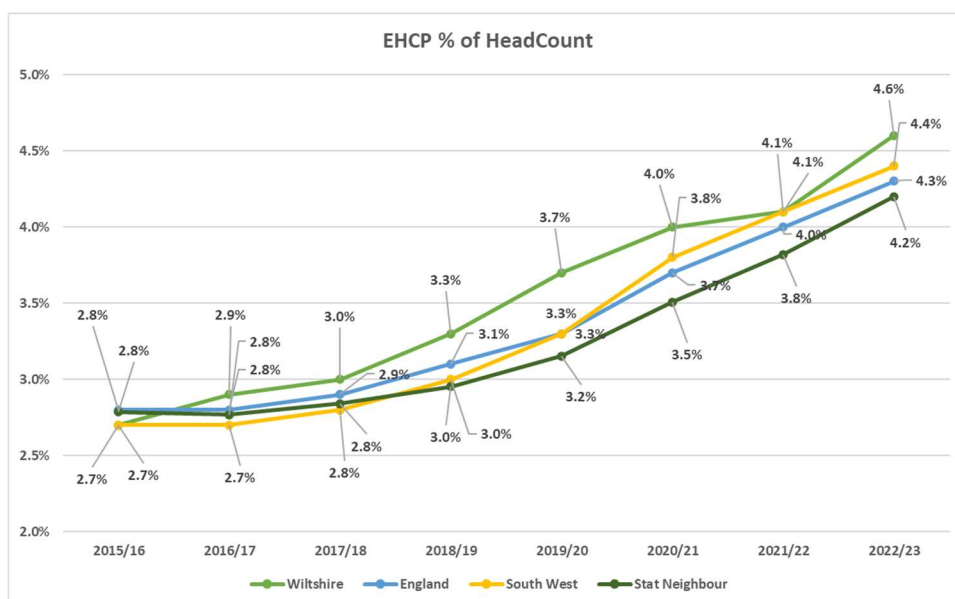
We continued this approach into the co-design phase, during which we conducted a second, much more detailed survey. This had around 50 responses, reflecting the bigger commitment required to complete that survey.

These surveys influenced the emerging plan, and the workshops offered an opportunity to further develop these themes. We held a workshop for schools, early years and colleges which had 30 attendees from across the system. We also held three parent carer workshops, two in person and one online during the evening. These workshops had about 20 attendees who again came from across the system willing to share their varied experiences.

We would have liked to do more engagement and we are committed to doing more when we begin the detailed design work on the solutions. This will include detailed work with children and young people with SEND.



These figures also show that Wiltshire has a higher-than-average rate of pupils with an EHCP. This is with 4.6% of learners here, compared to the 4.3% average in England and 4.4% across our statistical neighbours<sup>7</sup>.



[Special educational needs in England, Academic year 2022/23 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

The latest available local data (October 2023) shows further growth with 5,365 children and young people with an EHCP. This is a rise of 656 net EHCPs from the previous year.

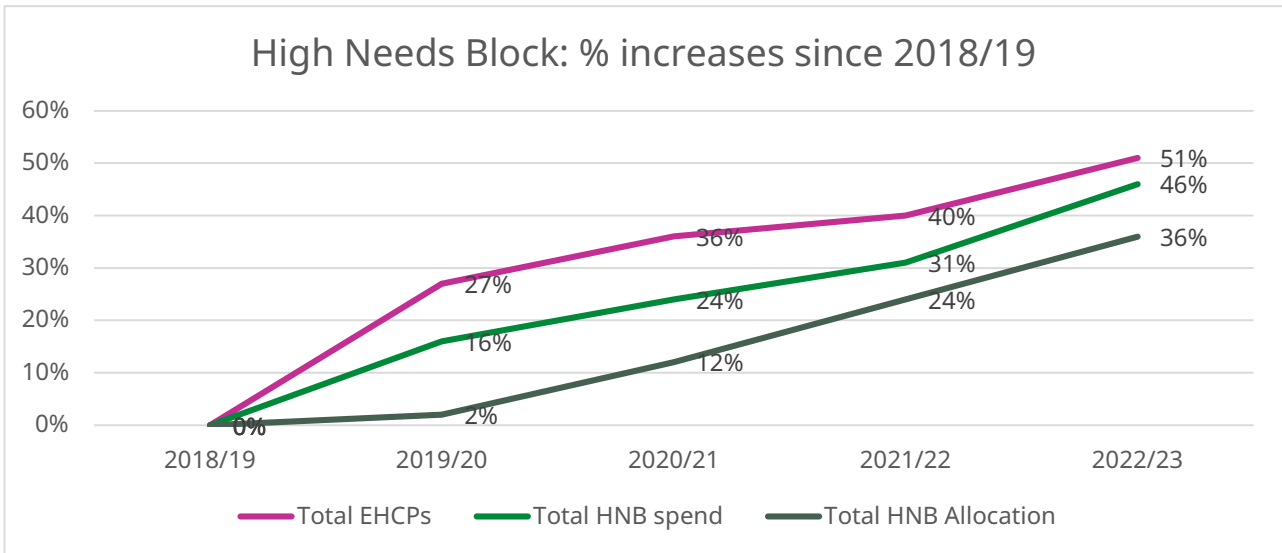
EHCPs are categorised by primary need, indicating what kind of support that child needs. The largest cohort in Wiltshire is Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) which accounts for 30.5% of the EHCPs. This percentage has remained steady since 2018, while there has been significant growth in Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) – 21.7% up 4.04% - and in Social-Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) – 20.5% up 4.12%.

## Financial position

The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is made up of several 'blocks' which are given to local councils to spend on schools and education. The DSG in Wiltshire has been under pressure since 2018/19, and this has been driven by overspends in the High Needs Block (HNB) which is provided to councils to support children with SEND.

Since 2018/19, the number of EHCPs has increased by 51% in Wiltshire and the amount that we are spending on SEND provision has increased by 46%. At the same time, the income into the HNB from the government has only increased by 36%.

<sup>7</sup> Source: LAIT January School Census



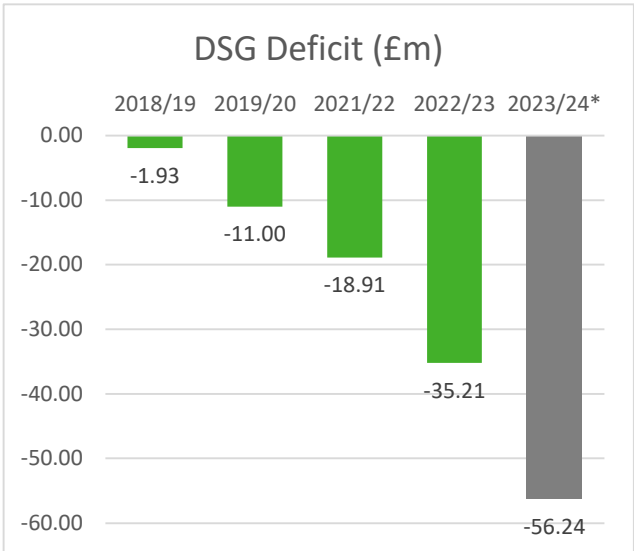
It is worth noting, as well, that there was a lag in the HNB income increases. In 2019/20, the number of EHCPs had grown by 27% but the HNB income had only increased by 2% immediately creating a significant deficit.

This is a national problem, which the Association of Directors of Children’s Services estimates is worth around £2.6bn. However, we need to understand the local impact and what can be done.

For us in Wiltshire, this equates to a cumulative deficit that has grown from just under £2m in 2018/19 to £35.2m in 2022/23. At the moment, we are forecasting that this will grow again to £56.2m by the end of this financial year.

In addition to inflationary pressures, this growth is driven by several factors:

- The growth in the number of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) being issued.
- The growth in the number of Independent Special School placements.
- The growth in the number of Education Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) requests being submitted.
- The growth in the banding at which new EHCPs are being issued.
- The growth in Alternative Provision (AP) placements.



These factors are the ones that we need to understand, and address, for our plan to be credible and deliverable.

## Forecast position

When generating a forecasted position to support the development of the SEND Sustainability Plan there were key statistical trends which we were able to build into the forecast as assumptions

- Population & Student Growth – Our local growth will broadly be in line with national pupil growth, and our percentage of children with EHCPs or SEN support would be a few percentage points above the national average as it is now.
- Banding shift – There have been increases in EHCP banding across the board.
- Cohort Trends – There have been significant growths in certain primary need groups, for example, SEMH and Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC).
- Setting Student Structure – There has been a growth in AP/ELP and we have included the existing plans for Special School growth.
- Education Health and Care Needs Assessments (EHCNA) – There has been a significant growth in EHCNA requests.

Given the growth in EHCP numbers nationally and in Wiltshire, we have built in an assumption that we will see the UK reach 21% of pupils in receipt of SEN support by 2030. This means that the current forecast assumes EHCPs will support 6.22% of Pupils in Wiltshire by 2030. It was felt this was a sensible ceiling to place on the forecast to avoid exponential growth which is unrealistic.

Then to apply an adjustment to settings and cohort we focused on reviewing our held data on pupils with an EHCP, accounting for key factors. Taking the composition of needs, the increased banding, and the earlier implementation of EHCPs, this all culminated in a forecast decline in mainstream placement due to an inability to accommodate the complexity of needs in this cohort. This accounts for a growth in Independent Non-Maintained Special Schools (INMSS) & resourced provision.

This forecast also assumes that we will clear the backlog of children awaiting assessment in the next two years. At the moment the backlog is around 320 children and young people, and we expect to clear 60% of that in 2024, and the final 40% in 2025. Despite requiring additional resources to meet this challenging target, we have included this in the unmitigated forecast to ensure that the figures give as much of a complete picture as possible.

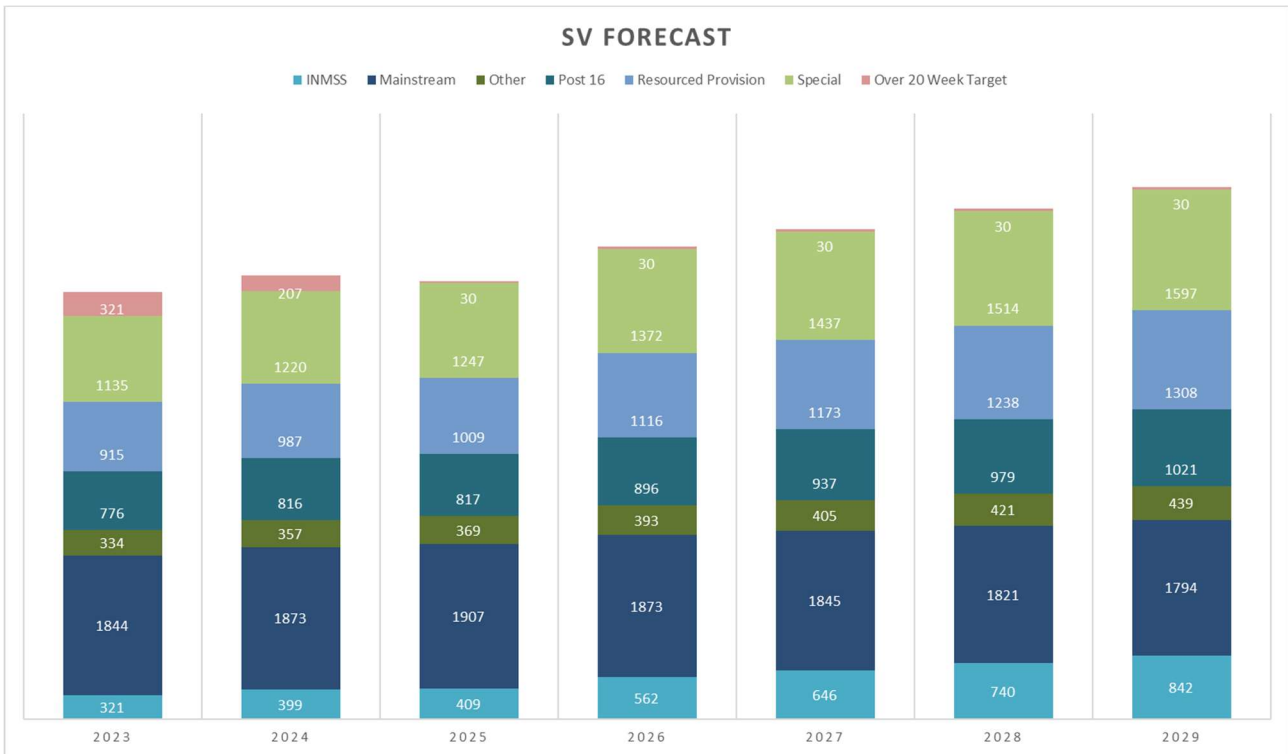


Figure 1 Updated EHCP Pupil Forecast 20/11/23 - Internal Tool

In December, the forecast position, accounting for the current EHCP distribution, has the forecast generated in July coming in within -0.1% of expected growth, which gives confidence in the overall figures. The variance occurs in distribution to settings which has been seen in a shift of students into Mainstream from “Other”, and an increase in INMSS.

### Financial Forecast

Given the forecast above and the financial assumption of continued increases in High Needs Block funding, an estimate of the unmitigated financial position by 2028-29 is shown below.

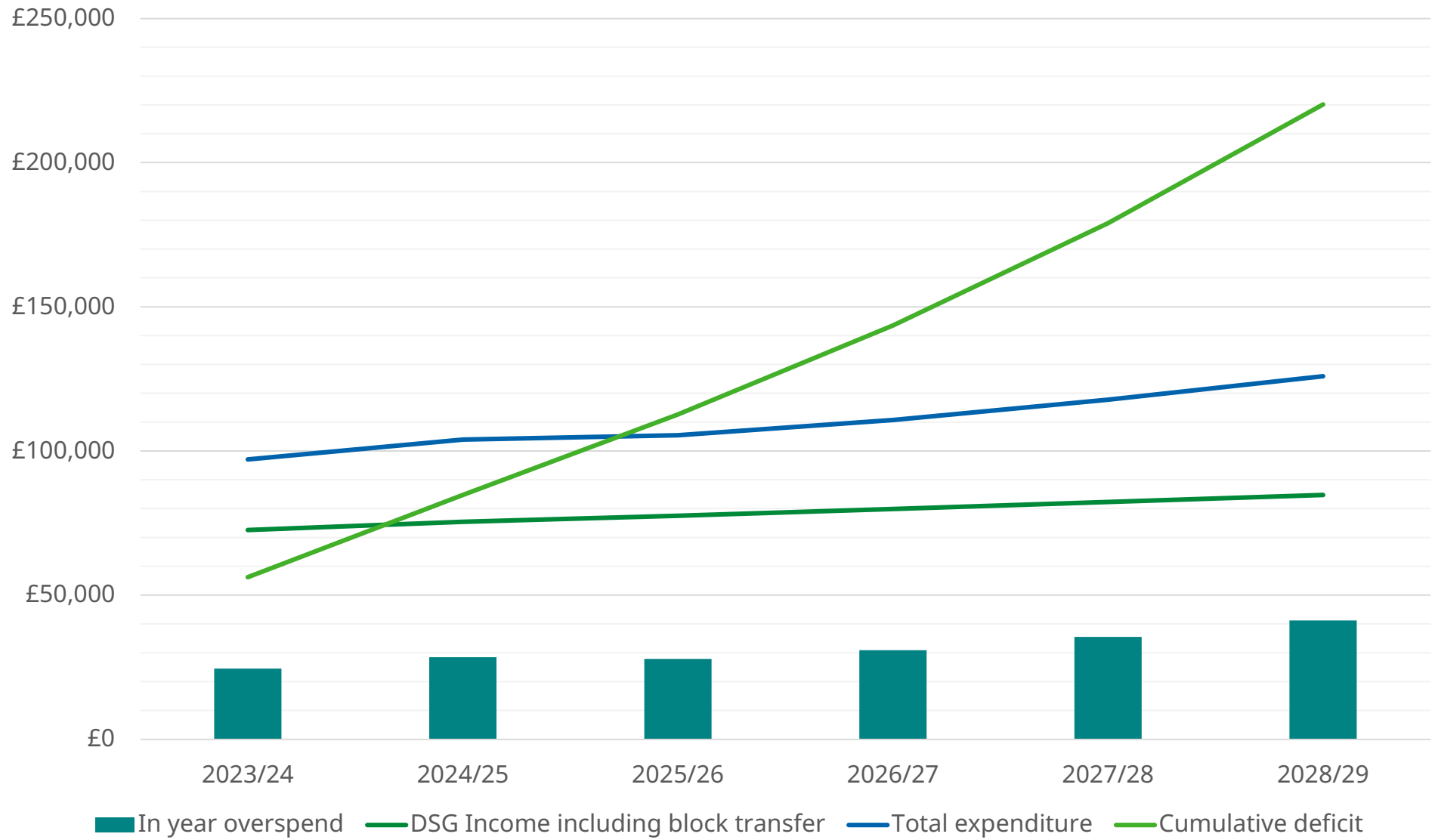
This is based on our current commitment and historic trends as well as projected activity. It does not include any of the interventions, plans or projects that are in the SEND Sustainability Plan.

This indicates that our total cumulative deficit will grow from £35.2m at the end of the last financial year to £220.2m by April 2029.

Our in-year overspend will increase from £28.9m to £41.2m. This is the challenge that the SEND Sustainability Plan is trying to address.

	Unmitigated Forecast					
Provision Type	2023-24 £'000	2024-25 £'000	2025-26 £'000	2026-27 £'000	2027-28 £'000	2028-29 £'000
Plan Year		1	2	3	4	5
Mainstream Provision	22,875	24,093	24,981	24,487	25,059	26,045
Resourced Provision (places)	4,249	5,059	5,408	5,408	5,408	5,408
Special Schools	27,026	29,799	26,071	26,989	27,922	28,918
Independent and Non-maintained Special School Provision	20,207	22,312	25,323	29,228	33,734	38,936
Post 16 Provision	10,881	11,491	12,494	13,180	13,902	14,651
Alternative Provision	10,198	9,831	9,796	10,022	10,240	10,449
Therapies	560	560	569	578	588	597
Other High Needs Block expenditure	1,103	786	826	867	910	956
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>97,098</b>	<b>103,932</b>	<b>105,468</b>	<b>110,759</b>	<b>117,763</b>	<b>125,960</b>
High Needs Block	-70,798	-73,465	-75,669	-77,939	-80,277	-82,685
Block Transfer	-1,797	-2,000	-1,877	-1,933	-1,991	-2,051
<b>In Year Surplus (-)/Deficit (+)</b>	<b>24,504</b>	<b>28,468</b>	<b>27,923</b>	<b>30,887</b>	<b>35,495</b>	<b>41,224</b>
Surplus/Deficit from other DSG Blocks	-3,470	0				
Surplus/Deficit Brought Forward from Previous Years	35,214	56,247	84,715	112,638	143,524	179,020
<b>Total Deficit Balance</b>	<b>56,247</b>	<b>84,715</b>	<b>112,638</b>	<b>143,524</b>	<b>179,020</b>	<b>220,244</b>

### DSG Unmitigated Forecast (£000)





## Workstream Summary

Our plan centres on 5 workstreams where we think there is an opportunity to both improve outcomes and create a more financially sustainable position.

**1. *Improving support pre-EHCP to increase parental and professional confidence in mainstream inclusion.***

This will help manage the demand for EHCPs by ensuring that the support provided in our system is excellent without the need for a plan. At the same time, it will also seek to proactively manage potentially stressful points, such as school transition. This will have a significant budgetary impact but importantly will improve the outcomes and experience for children and young people with SEND by providing support earlier.

*Workstream code: DMI (Demand Management through Inclusion)*

*Forecast financial impact by year 5: £14.1m*

**2. *Preventing the need for escalation of support by ensuring the right support, the first time.***

This will help manage the growth in unwarranted Independent Special School placements and other high-cost interventions that could otherwise be avoided. This should also improve outcomes for young people by offering clearer pathways to step up and down support while remaining closer to home.

*Workstream code: SPE (Support to Prevent Escalation)*

*Forecast financial impact by year 5: £19.4m*

**3. *Ensuring value for money and the right contributions from partners.***

This will provide reassurance that the council is paying what it should be for the placements it commissions directly and will provide clarity around decision-making. It will also seek to make changes to the top up system to reduce the number of ad hoc funding decisions that are made, creating more predictability in the system.

*Workstream Code: VFM (Value For Money)*

*Forecast financial impact by year 5: £2.2m*

**4. *Enhance transition pathways to provide a range of opportunities to prepare for adulthood.***

This will reduce the number of costly Independent Specialist Provision placements in our post-16 cohort and create more opportunities to proactively support young people to step away from their EHCP into employment, education or training. This will significantly improve the outcomes for young people with

SEND, supporting their independence and helping them more readily embrace adulthood.

*Workstream code: PFA (Preparing For Adulthood)*

*Forecast financial impact by year 5: £2.1m*

**5. *Developing better communication and processes to change the culture in our send system.***

This is primarily an enabling workstream that will ensure the deliverability of the other four, but we also expect that there will be a saving from eliminating the need for temporary support payments. By having efficient and effective processes alongside improved approaches to communication, we can drive system change more effectively and mitigate the risks associated with large-scale change programmes.

*Workstream code: CPC (Communication, Process, Culture)*

*Forecast financial impact by year 5: £1.7m*

In addition, we have assumed that the Schools Forum, and the Secretary of State, will approve a 1% block transfer from the Schools Block into the High Needs Block.

In the following pages, we will articulate how we will approach these workstreams, to deliver both better outcomes and a more financially sustainable position.

It is clear from the headline financial figures that something has changed since 2018/19. Each section will have a Case for Change which aims to bring together the evidence and insights we have gathered and articulate what is different.

It also sets out some measures, against which we will assess our progress.

These measures are not targets, and we will not allow the 'numbers' to drive our behaviours. The measures will tell us where we need to work harder to support children in Wiltshire and, through that turn the system around.

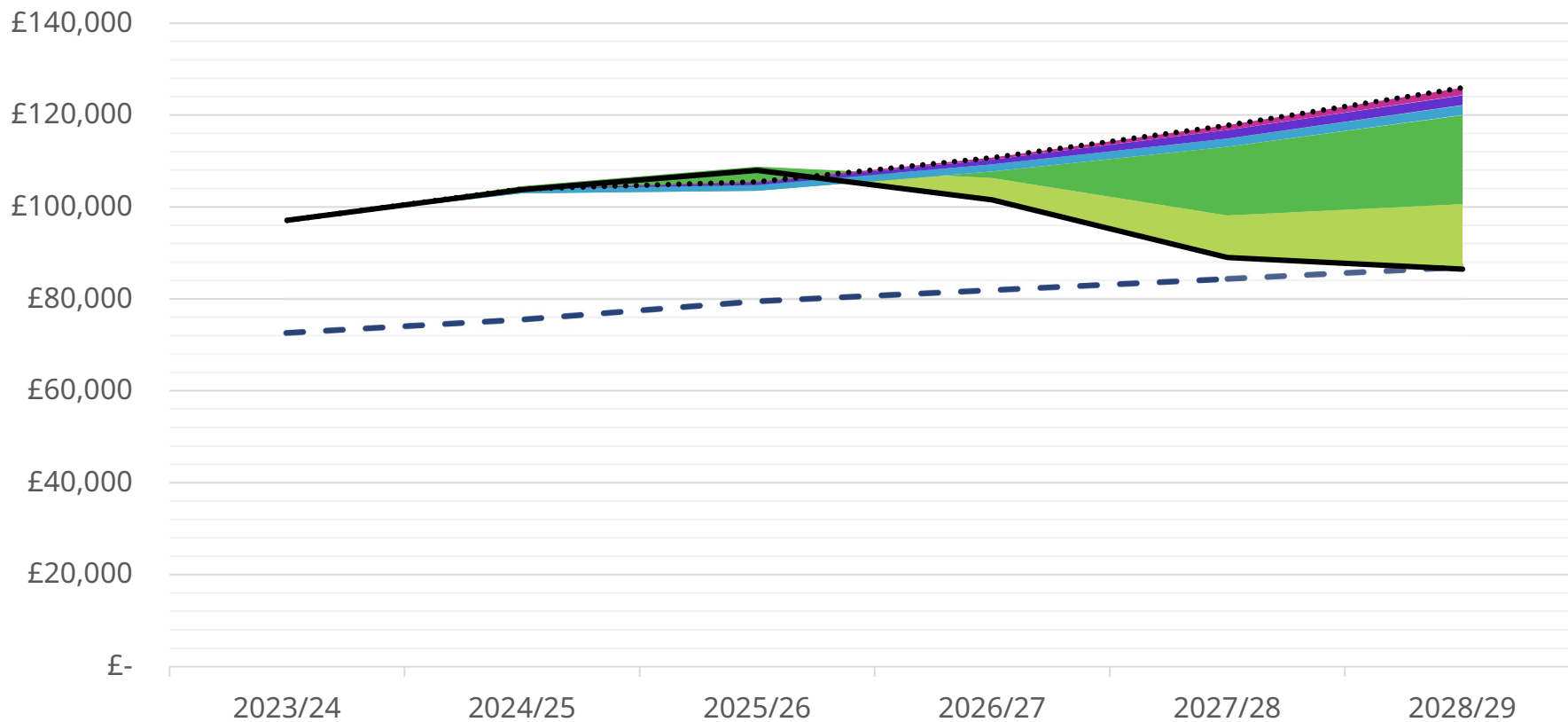
## **DSG spend profile**

By taking this strategic approach to High Needs Block sustainability we are confident that, not only will we improve outcomes for our young people with SEND but, we will deliver a financially sustainable system.

Factoring in the budgetary impact of the workstreams articulated above, the new DSG profile demonstrates that a balanced in-year position is achievable in 5 years.

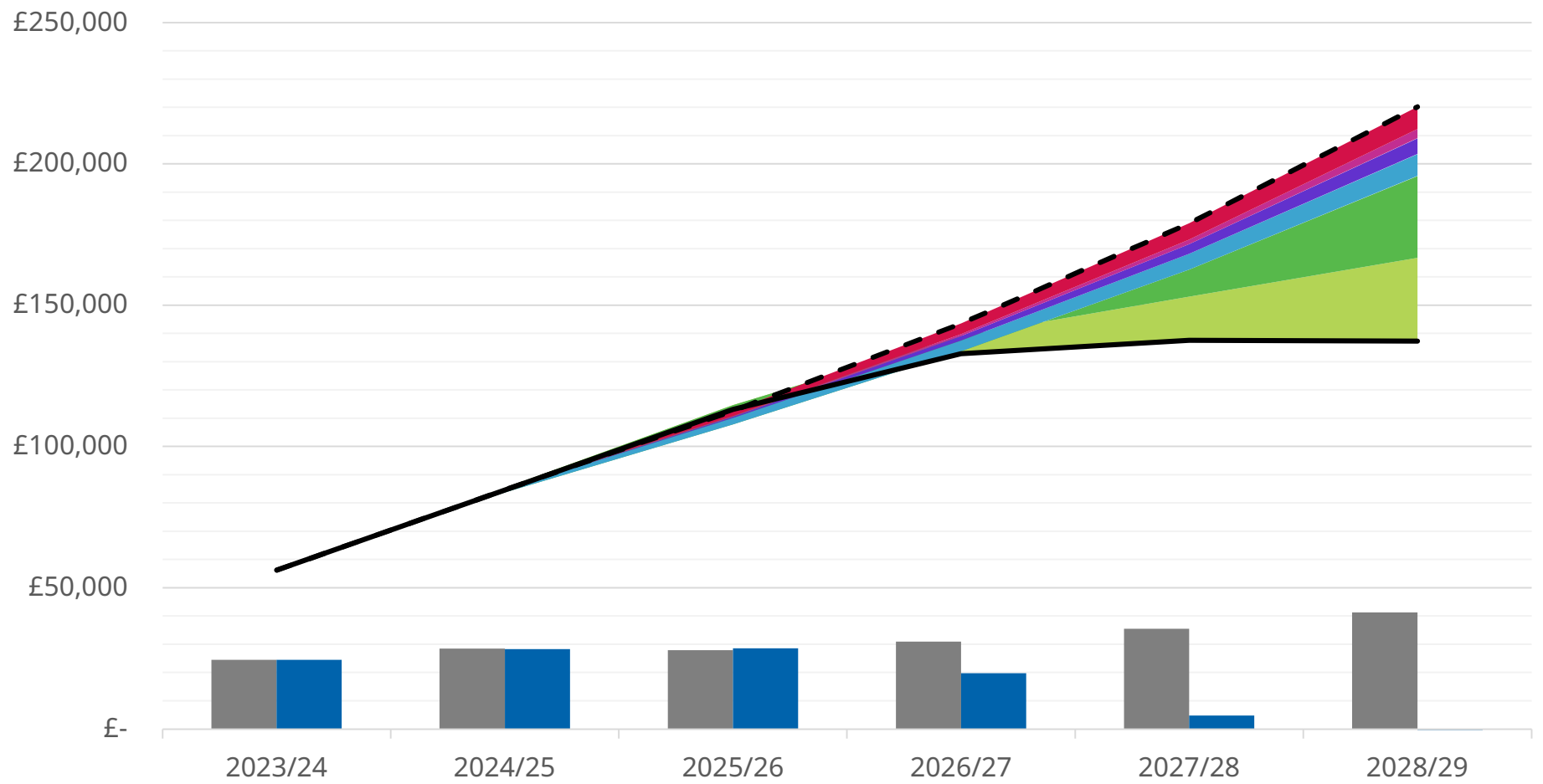
The anticipated spend profile is mapped below, showing the cumulative impact of the workstreams against the forecast.

Mitigated DSG Expenditure broken down by workstream impact (£000)



- Workstream 1 impact
- Workstream 2 impact
- Workstream 3 impact
- Workstream 4 impact
- Workstream 5 impact
- HNB income incl. Block Transfer
- Unmitigated HNB spend
- Mitigated HNB Expenditure

DSG Deficit Cumulative impact of workstreams (£000)



- Workstream 1 impact
- Workstream 2 impact
- Workstream 3 impact
- Workstream 4 impact
- Workstream 5 impact
- Additional Block Transfer
- Unmitigated overspend
- Mitigated overspend
- - Unmitigated Deficit Trajectory

## DMI – Improving support pre-EHCP to increase parental and professional confidence in mainstream inclusion

### Case for change

Wiltshire has seen a significant increase in the number of children with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in recent years. There has also been an increase in the number of Education Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) requests that have been submitted. This went up 43% between 2021 and 2022, compared to a 23% increase nationally.

The number of children who have an EHCP, and those receiving SEN support, already track above the national average, indicating that it is more than simply reflective of national trends.

The Case Review Workshops that were undertaken as part of the development of this SEND Sustainability plan have shown a lack of confidence in the support available from across our system before an EHCP is issued. This was echoed in the survey responses which suggested that there is more to be done to support children with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

Parent Carers, in our Stakeholder Survey, supported the idea that more support early on would have been beneficial and understood the link between this and a potential reduction in the growth of EHCPs.

By focussing on improving the support offered in these initial stages, we believe that we will see fewer EHCNA requests as parent carers and teachers feel equipped to support children more readily. We also think that fewer ECHPs will end up being required, as the council will be able to demonstrate that more children are being supported through Ordinarily available Provision for All Learners (OPAL).

#### ***Problem Statement:***

*Despite the best efforts of the council, schools, partners and parent carers, there are too many children who could thrive in a mainstream school instead of being pushed into the EHCP process due to their needs not being met well enough at an earlier stage.*

*This has many impacts, one of which is that the system is struggling to manage the volume of referrals, leaving limited capacity to provide preventative support, such as early intervention and training and development for schools and early years settings. This creates a chain*

*of circumstances that generates more referrals, leaving even less time for preventative support, and so on.*

## Headline measures

- **DMI.a – The number of EHCNA requests that are submitted.**

If we are successful in improving inclusive practice across our system, we should see the number of EHCNA requests fall over time. This will free up capacity in our Statutory SEND team, allowing them to do more preventative, early support work.

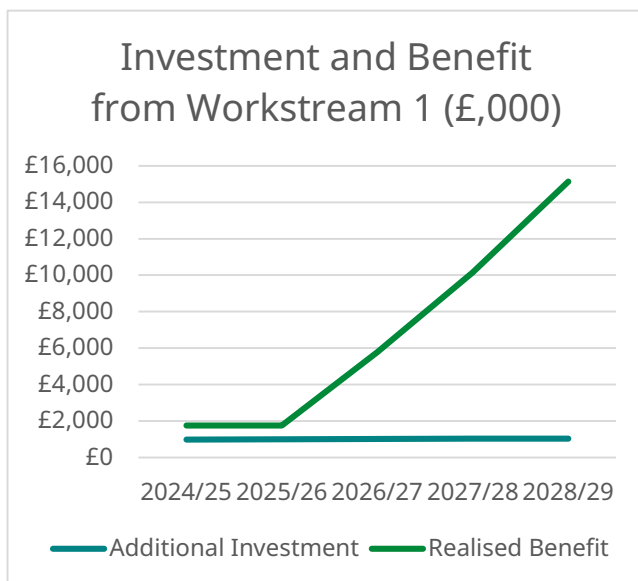
- **DMI.b – The percentage of our school population who have an EHCP**

If we are successful in improving SEN support in our system, we would expect fewer children to need an EHCP because they are enabled to thrive without the need for one.

## Financial impact

This workstream is vital to delivering a significant part of the improved financial position, however, it is likely to take time as we build up support and improve practice in our system.

The impact ramps up from year 1 of our plan, where it is expected to be limited but by year 5, this workstream is expected to contribute £14.1m to the mitigated position. This will be achieved by ensuring that children with SEND receive such good support without an EHCP that fewer children end up in the system.



To realise this level of financial benefit, will require significant additional investment, which will need to be front-loaded to deliver the impact in the period of the plan.

This will include:

- Increased number of inclusion advisors
- An inclusion support team to focus on Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) learners
- Transition support team and fund

We will also need to remove the income associated with SEND and inclusion training to enable more teaching staff to attend.

## DMI.1 - Improve inclusion practice through training and support

### Overview

We anticipate that supporting schools directly and through training will ensure that more children will remain in mainstream schooling. This should contribute to our headline measures because if children already have their needs met in schools then an EHCP will not be required.

More than a third of survey responses from schools, early years and colleges highlighted this as the key thing that would unlock improved inclusion rates in schools.

We need to ensure that the training and support offered enables schools to be confident in their abilities and to ensure that the local council can be confident in the decisions we make to place children.

Schools are real partners in this, which means that they also have obligations. We need to offer constructive challenge to schools that are not delivering on the inclusive vision we have here. This challenge is not just for Wilshire Council to provide, but also peer-to-peer.

### Success Measures

- *DMI.c – Number of ‘outlier’ schools that have significantly more or fewer EHCNAs being submitted*

If we are successful in getting the support and training for schools right, we should see fewer schools that have rates which are significantly outside of the average.

- *DMI.d – Percentage of schools who have sent staff on SEND-specific training*

If we are successful in getting the training offer right, we should see an increase in schools sending staff to take part. This will lead to an even better-trained workforce.

### Benefits and Milestones

Over the period of the plan, we will aim to deliver:

1. The creation of a SEND Good Practice Network to develop the training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities, especially focussed on peer support and early career teachers
  - May 24 – Network scoped
  - Sept 24 – Network launched
  - Apr 26 - Complete benefit realised
2. Increased Behavioural Support offer available to schools, including scoping and development of a secondary school offer and expansion into Early Years.

- June 24 – Offer scoped and developed, including funding mechanism for early years
  - Dec 24 – De-delegation decision for secondary school offer
  - Apr 25 – New offer introduced in Early Years
  - May 25 – New offer fully scoped (and recruited)
  - Sept 25 – New offer introduced in Secondary Schools
3. **The creation of an SEMH-specific graduated response pathway to reflect the increasing challenge in this area.**
    - Aug 24 – Scoping of the challenge
    - Sept 24 – Co-design of new pathways
    - Jan 25 – Introduction of new pathways
  4. **A new team of Inclusion Advisors working in schools to provide support and challenge around inclusive practice.**
    - Nov 23 – Job descriptions written up
    - Jan 24 – Recruitment of the new team
    - Feb 24 – Development of KPIs and targets
    - Apr 24 – New team begins working in school
  5. **Continuation of the dyslexia-friendly schools programme in Wiltshire to give confidence in the offer for dyslexic children.**
    - July 23 – 12 dyslexia friendly schools established
    - Mar 24 – dyslexia friendly training delivered to tranche 2 schools
    - Sept 24 – Further rollout
  6. **Co-production of an inclusion charter in Wiltshire that builds on the work around OPAL to deliver enhanced guidance and tools for inclusive practice.**
    - Feb 24 – Scoping of the work
    - Apr 24 – Begin the co-design process
    - Jun 24 – Agreement of the new charter with Schools Forum
    - Sept 24 – Launch new Inclusion Charter
  7. **The scoping and delivery of a resource library that would allow schools and early years settings to borrow resources that they need to support inclusion.**
    - Jan 24 – Scope the work
    - Apr 24 – Assess viability
    - June 24 – Launch the library
  8. **The right incentives to drive inclusion in schools and, where appropriate, offer supportive challenge to bring schools back to quality inclusive practice.**
    - Aug 24 – Review school data
    - Sept 24 – Discussion with schools
    - Oct 24 – Begin targeted interventions
    - Aug 25 – Review progress and tranche 2



## Expected Impact

### *Workforce impact*

- **Job roles:** It is anticipated that there will need to be several new job roles created to support this workstream. This will include new inclusion advisors, expansion of the behavioural support team and specific support for learners with Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC).
- **Skill requirements:** The focus of this workstream is on upskilling everyone across our system. We will want to develop the inclusion skills of our colleagues in schools and settings, and this will need to be supported by an upskilled workforce in the council.
- **Structures:** Some new teams may be required. These will sit in the SEND team or in School Effectiveness.

### *Impact on children and young people*

Children and young people will have an improved experience of schooling with better-trained staff.

Children and young people will be supported in an appropriate way within their mainstream school, meaning less disruption to their school progress and a reduced chance of needing to change setting.

### *Impact on parent carers*

Parent carers will know what to expect from the school, early years setting or college and will be empowered to advocate on behalf of their child.

Parent carers will find there is a local school ready and excited to support their child's education.

## Risks and assumptions

- There is a risk that the additional support for schools will not deliver increased confidence and a reduction in the number of EHCNAs, resulting in increased rather than decreased spend.  
Mitigation: Ongoing monitoring to review the position and an escalating process of intervention that will be developed over time. Changes to processes that will support behaviour change.
- There is a risk that the removal of costs associated with SEND training will not result in greater uptake of the SEND training, leading to better practice and delivery of savings.  
Mitigation: Further work to communicate and promote the training will be undertaken, as well as monitoring of practice.
- There is a risk that secondary school behavioural support offer will not be taken up and de-delegated by schools.

Mitigation: Offer will be designed with schools and with a clear understanding of what a minimum viable product looks like for the service.

## DMI.2 – Further development of Early Years inclusion to increase preventative impact

### Overview

We anticipate that developing our early years inclusion support offer will reduce the number of children under 5 who need an EHCP over time and help ensure that children are ready for school.

Our data analysis has highlighted a significant growth in the percentage of EHCPs being issued to children under the age of five. This has grown from just under 10% in 2017 to 36.1% in 2022.

While it is encouraging that needs are being identified early, there does not appear to be an expected impact on the number of EHCPs. Everyone in our system needs to be careful not to push children down the path towards an EHCP before that is right for that child. There may be other support that would better serve that child without an EHCP.

This was supported by parent carers during our stakeholder engagement with one parent saying that they were encouraged that this kind of support would be “in place ASAP without the bureaucracy and expense of undergoing an EHCNA.”

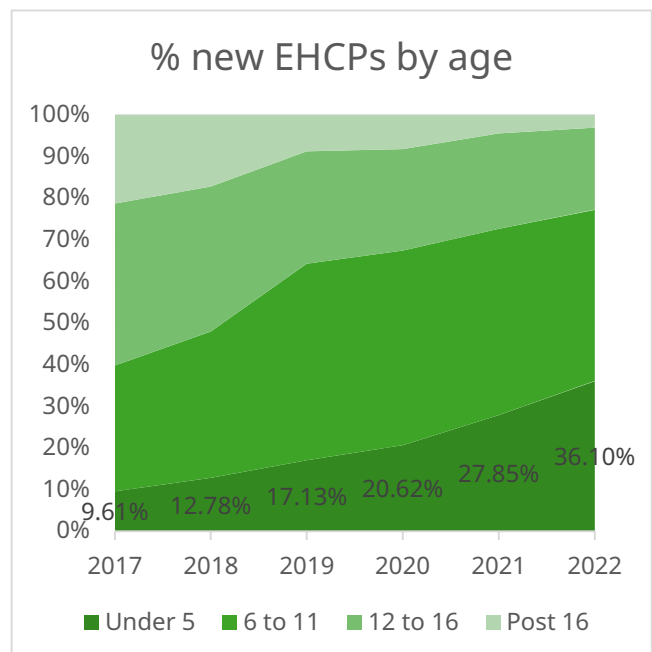
There are already support mechanisms in place, through District Specialist Centres (DSCs) and Portage, which we need to ensure are being effective. Wiltshire Council also has Early Years Inclusion Advisors, who support children’s transition into Primary Schools and help primary teachers with strategies for each child.

### Success Measures

- **DMI.e – Percentage of EHCPs issued at ages 4 and 5**

If we are successful in getting early years support right, we would expect more children to have their needs met effectively without the need for an EHCP. This should result in fewer EHCPs issued to children aged 4 and 5.

- **DMI.f – Percentage of children who access DSC or Portage and end up in a**



### *destination other than a mainstream primary*

If we are successful in getting early years support right, we would expect to be able to evidence the preventative impact that District Specialist Centres and Portage are having in preparing children for mainstream primary education.

## Benefits and Milestones

Over the period of the plan, we will aim to deliver:

1. A strengthened integrated 2-year-old pathway to support early identification and assessment.
  - Jan 25 – Scope the additional work required
  - Apr 25 – Implementation of the new pathway
2. Specialist support offer in Early Years settings to ensure that preventative measures are more effective, this must include SALT and other therapies.
  - For review as part of the commissioning cycle
3. Further improvements to the Early Years Inclusion Advisor model to ensure transitions into primary schools are prioritised and well managed.
  - Apr 24 – Work to understand best practice
  - June 24 – Implementation of new processes around the transition into primary
  - Oct 24 – Review of new processes and further changes
  - Apr 25 – Improvements fully implemented

## Expected Impact

### *Workforce impact*

- Skill requirements: We will need to work with Early Years settings to help upskill them, and we will want to work alongside the Early Years Inclusion Advisors to help them understand the vital role they will play in this plan.
- Structures: We must understand what the best model is to provide the specialist support that early years need, and then it may require changes to our structures to deliver it.
- Culture: We will want to make our early years team feel empowered to deliver high-quality inclusive practice and use their professionalism to make the right judgements about SEND support.

### *Impact on children and young people*

Children in Early Years will benefit from an enhanced focus on their SEND, and an upskilled workforce with access to specialist support and guidance.

Children who have identified SEND will benefit from earlier support that helps ensure the child and their parent carer are better equipped to manage their specific needs.

### *Impact on parent carers*

Parent carers will receive support earlier in their child's development, giving them more time to adapt and utilise age-appropriate support strategies.

### **Risks and assumptions**

- There is a risk that the specialist support and advice that Early Years settings need are not provided.

Mitigation: We continue to work with colleagues in the ICB to ensure that our joint commissioning arrangements are strong enough to deliver the services that are required. We will also consider what options there may be to deliver advice and training, in lieu of professionals delivering the therapies themselves.

- There is a risk that early identification of need does not lead to fewer EHCPs being required.

Mitigation: Monitoring of data and good practice to deliver this. Evidence would suggest that it can be delivered so we will need to make sure there is a plan in place to ensure that we see the benefit of this increased investment.

## **DMI.3 – Proactive support at school transition points**

### **Overview**

We anticipate that, by targeting support at school transition points, we can ensure support is in place at the points of most pressure. There are consistent spikes in the number of new EHCPs issued at key transition points, moving from early years to primary, primary to secondary, and secondary into post-16.

These transition points can be a daunting prospect for all children. We need to ensure the support that is on offer to children with SEND is sufficient to mitigate the stress, and hopefully to avoid the need for an EHCP.

During our case-reviews, we discussed children who had been fine in their primary school, in one case displaying some very low-level anxiety, but the transfer into Secondary School left them unable to cope and led to an EHCP. If the transition had been handled better, with good support in place to help them acclimatise, the EHCP may have been avoided.

### **Success Measures**

- *DMI.g – Percentage of EHCPs issued in school year 6 and 7*

If we are successful in providing effective support at transition points, we should see increased confidence about moving from primary to secondary school and a resulting reduction in the percentage of EHCPs issued in school years 6 and 7.

## Benefits and Milestones

Over the period of the plan, we will aim to deliver:

1. Improved transition planning for children with SEN that brings schools, colleges and early years settings together, with support from professionals.
  - Apr 25 – Recruitment of new staff to support transition
  - May 25 – Creation of 'at risk' lists
  - Jun 25 – New model of support begins
2. A model of short-term transition funding which provides support to the child without the need for an EHCP.
  - Sept 24 – Deep-dive review of new EHCPs during transition
  - Oct 24 – Co-design new support model

## Expected Impact

### *Workforce impact*

- **Job roles:** We anticipate needing a transition support team to offer short-term targeted support for children who need it.
- **Skill requirements:** We will want to ensure our school training and support offer includes guidance on identifying the children who are likely to need transition support.

### *Impact on children and young people*

Children and young people will be better supported through transitions, with funded support where necessary, to ensure a smooth move.

Children and young people will settle into their new school more easily, and this should lead to fewer unnecessary moves to another setting.

## Risks and assumptions

- There is a risk that new transitional funding becomes a crutch which just generates more expense in the system.  
Mitigation: We will mitigate the risk through the design of the model and by drawing on best practices from other systems that have done this well.

## DMI.4 – Integrated system of early support and intervention

### Overview

We believe that by ensuring there is a network of early support and intervention in place, that looks beyond educational attainment to understand the help that a child and their family might need, we can reduce the number of people who reach for an EHCP as a solution.

Our workshops and case-reviews have revealed a widespread perception that the only way to get support for a child is through an EHCP. This is not true, but we need to ensure that it is widely understood and that it is “felt” in the support offer.

Wiltshire Council is introducing new models of early support through Family Hubs in the Children’s Services Team. We need to ensure that the learnings from these pilot projects are influencing our approach and that, as far as possible, these new models of support are delivered in a way that positively impacts the SEND system.

The insights we gained from the case-reviews also point to a need to be more proactive in our support for children and young people with emerging issues. Evidencing the effectiveness of prevention is challenging, especially in SEND. However, teachers and SENCOs (Special Education Needs Coordinator) certainly believe that, if proactive support for social, emotional, and behavioural concerns was provided, this could reduce the chances of a problem getting worse and avoid the need for an EHCP altogether.

This kind of support requires an integrated approach with contributions from health and social care as well as the education or SEND teams.

### Success Measures

- *DMI.h – Percentage of children who receive early support or family support who go on to receive an EHCP within 6 months.*

If we are successful in delivering high quality early support then we would expect to be able to evidence that children who receive this support are less likely to go on to need an EHCP within 6 months of that support ceasing.

- *DMI.i – Differential EHCP rates between population groups*

There is no statistically significant difference between population groups in Wiltshire now and, if we are successful in our approach to early support and intervention, this will continue.

### Benefits and milestones

Over the period of the plan, we will aim to deliver:

1. A trauma-informed, co-designed, early intervention model for children with mental health or emotional wellbeing concerns.
  - Jan 25 – Scoping
  - Mar 25 – Co-design of the offer
  - Sept 25 – Implementation of the new model
2. A multi-agency approach to supporting families before an EHCP is issued, including outreach and the expertise of the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector.
  - To be reviewed as part of the regular commissioning cycle

3. Improved early support offer, building on the Warminster/Westbury Pilot, to provide an agile, effective, model of care.
  - Nov 23 – The All Together website is in place and well-publicised
  - Jan 24 – Enhanced workforce development offer in place
  - Sept 24 – Evaluation complete
  - Oct 24 – Review of outcomes and understanding of best practice
4. Clear and sustained monitoring to assure ourselves that we are not creating inequality, and to inform any targeted outreach required to address unwarranted variation.
  - Feb 24 – Delivery focussed HNB Sustainability Board established
  - Mar 24 – Monitoring in place with clear dashboards

### Expected Impact

#### *Workforce impact*

- Skill requirements: We will need to develop and deliver Wiltshire-specific training around identifying needs and distinguishing between SEND and another educational disadvantage which might require a different approach.

#### *Impact on children and young people*

Fewer children and young people will develop needs that require an EHCP by ensuring that issues are proactively managed.

#### *Impact on parent carers*

Parent carers will notice a more integrated approach to managing SEND needs alongside other needs in the system.

### Risks and assumptions

- There is a risk that early support and intervention might not deliver the desired outcomes.  
Mitigation: We will mitigate the risk by monitoring the impact and changing course if required.
- There is a risk that diverting resources 'upstream' to prevent emergent problems, the problems that are already present get neglected.  
Mitigation: We will mitigate the risk by adding resources wherever possible and where that is not possible (e.g. due to a national shortage of Educational Psychologists) we will review what can be done to free up time for non-statutory work, such as prevention, without impacting the day-to-day.

## SPE – Preventing the need for escalation of support by ensuring the right support, first time

### Case for change

The model of support for children with EHCPs in Wiltshire is, rightly, focussed on inclusion. The more opportunities that children with SEND must build peer relationships and be a part of their local community, the better.

This means that, when a purely mainstream placement is not right for a child, our model prioritises approaches that do not separate the child from their mainstream setting. These approaches, including Resource Bases and Enhanced Learning Provision (ELP), are an important intermediary step between mainstream schooling and Special Schools.

However, we are discovering through this process that there is more work to do to improve those provisions. Our case reviews highlighted a few cases where a child with an EHCP was placed in a Resource Base but then very quickly required another move, and this ended up being an Independent Non-Maintained Special School (INMSS) place.

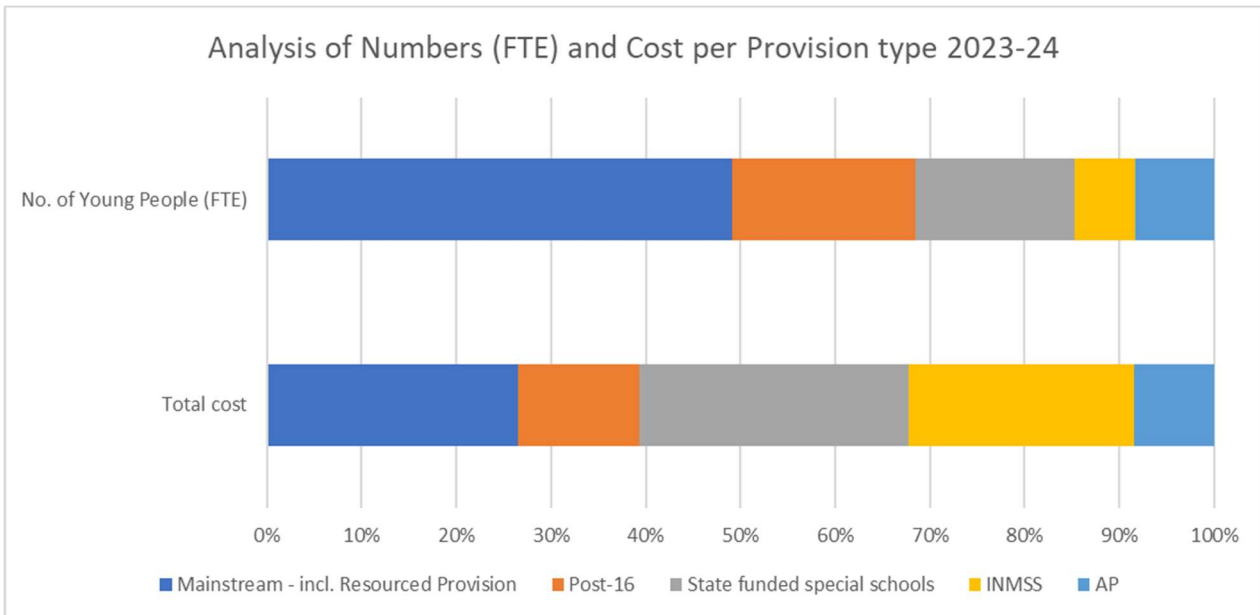
It is thought that this rapid escalation in need, necessitating multiple changes of setting for the child, could have been avoided if there had been sufficient support on offer in the Resource Base, or if that placement had not been made in the first place.

It is also clear from the data that we have a historic shortage of Special School places across the county. This means that if a child requires more support that can be provided in a mainstream setting, or with extra resources, and there are no available Special School places, that child is likely to end up in an INMSS place.

Analysis of our local data undertaken on behalf of the Department for Education also suggests that the growth in the number of EHCPs in our system has not been evenly spread across settings. This analysis of the period 2018 - 2022 points to a 13% growth in mainstream (including resourced provisions), a 15% growth in maintained special schools (MSS) and a 19% growth in Independent Special Schools (ISS). This shift up and into ISS suggests a lack of capacity in MSS, and capacity in mainstream schools.

For some children who have very specialist or complex needs, an Independent Special School placement is the right decision for that child. However, for children who would otherwise be in a resourced provision or maintained special school, these placements often do not provide the best support and do not represent value for money.





We can see that, while less than 10% of pupils are in an INMSS placement, those placements account for around 25% of the spend. This is a similar proportion of the expenditure that also goes to Mainstream settings, where just under 50% of pupils are placed.

The belief is that these very high-cost placements could be avoided with sufficient provision of our own in Wiltshire. A key part of this plan is placement sufficiency. However, simply building new places is not enough, we also need to make sure we are using our current capacity in the best possible way, and this becomes even more important because more places cannot be delivered overnight.

***Problem Statement:***

*Despite the best efforts of the council, schools, partners and parent carers, there are too many children who, due to a lack of the right provision locally, end up in less appropriate settings which often end up being more expensive.*

*This issue causes a knock-on impact for other children with needs that require the specialist provision who then cannot be placed appropriately, leading to a worsening of the problem.*

## Financial impact

This workstream will deliver the biggest savings in-year by the end of our plan. In year 5, the realised benefit will be £34.4m requiring an additional investment of £14.9m, creating a net saving of £19.5m.

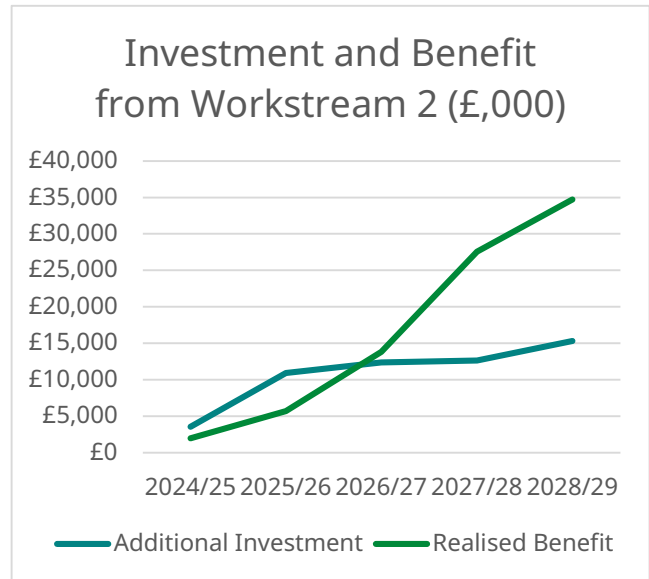
This saving primarily comes from delivering our sufficiency strategy, resulting in a reduction in ISS spend.

This requires significant investment up front to deliver the savings towards the end of the plan. This financial profile is also impacted by the children we believe are currently in our system and waiting for a special school place. These factors mean that for the first two years, this workstream does not deliver a net saving. This changes in year 3 when a modest net benefit is achieved before it ramps up quickly in years 4 and 5.

This up-front investment includes:

- New special school places in the north and south of the county.
- New resource base places in primary and secondary schools.

There are also increases in the Statutory SEND team which are not costed against the Designated Schools Grant and School Effectiveness Team which are already included in the additional posts in workstream 1.



## Headline measures

- ***SPE.a – Percentage of children with EHCPs who are in Independent Special Schools***

If we are successful in delivering the right support, first time, for our children with EHCPs, we should see the percentage of children placed in Independent Special Schools coming down as we meet needs in maintained schools which are closer to home.

- ***SPE.b – Percentage of children with EHCPs who move up provision within 1 year***

If we are successful in delivering the right support, first time, for children with EHCPs, we should see fewer children who, once placed, require a further move within a year of placement. This will indicate the packages of support are the right ones for these children.

## SPE.1 – Strategic approach to delivering sufficiency

### Overview

Sufficiency is the process of understanding need and demographic growth, and then looking at how we make sure we have the right placements in the right places.

Capacity in our system was a key concern highlighted by parent carers in our recent stakeholder surveys. This particularly related to special school capacity and wanting to make sure that there was sufficient provision close to home.

Wiltshire has had historically small numbers of special school places, which has now led to an overreliance on the independent sector. This has left children having to travel long distances from their home and their community to attend school.

Wiltshire Council is already working to address this, through investments in additional Special School places and Resource Bases. We will continue to deliver these places, but through our SEND Sustainability Plan, we are making the case for increased investment in our system to deliver the scale of change we need.

There will inevitably be some children who have such specific needs that an Independent Non-Maintained Special School (INMSS) is the right place for them, and we will continue to place those children in INMSS settings.

However, if we get our sufficiency strategy right, and bring forward investment in our system, we will see a reduction in the number of children in unnecessary Independent Special School placements. This will have a significant impact on our system sustainability.

### Success Measures

- *SPE.c – Percentage variance in demand from forecasted model*

If we are successful in our strategic approach to place planning and delivering sufficiency then we should see that our demand forecast is broadly accurate, and if it is not then monitoring this will allow us to adapt where necessary.

- *SPE.d – Percentage of EHCP pupils placed out of county in INMSS*

If we are successful in our approach to delivering capacity in the county, we should see a reduction in the number of children with EHCPs who are placed out of county.

### Benefits and milestones

Over the period of the plan, we will aim to deliver:

1. A clear strategic understanding of the forecast needs and a model that meets that need with the right support.
  - Dec 23 – Specialist Placements Strategy agreed

- Mar 24 – Review of the strategy
  - Apr 24 – Review of the model in Wiltshire and any changes
  - Dec 24 – Updated Specialist Placements Strategy agreed
2. **The building and staffing for the new special schools in the north and south of the county.**
- Sept 23 – Temporary accommodation at Silverwood Rowde
  - Jan 24 – SAIL academy opens
  - Sept 24 – New building open at Silverwood Rowde
  - Sept 24 – Expansion of places at Exeter House
  - Sept 25 – Refurbishment of buildings at Silverwood Rowde
  - Sept 26 – Further places come online
  - Sept 27 – Further places come online
  - Sept 28 – Further places come online
3. **Additional resource bases in both primary and secondary schools.**
- Sept 23 – New and expanded provisions in Primary and Secondary settings
  - Jan 24 – Further expansion in Primary settings
  - Sept 24 – New and expanded provisions in Primary and Secondary settings
  - Sept 25 – New and expanded provisions in Primary and Secondary settings
  - Sept 26 – New and expanded provisions in Primary settings

## Expected Impact

### *Workforce impact*

- **Job roles:** we are anticipating the need for new roles to manage placements effectively and, alongside the requirements for SPE.3 manage step-downs so we can ensure we are using our capacity as effectively as possible.
- **Job roles:** we will need to support our special schools to recruit staff to support the growth in their provision.

### *Impact on children and young people*

Fewer children and young people will need to travel out of county to a placement improving their quality of life and ability to engage with their local community.

### *Climate and environmental impact*

Fewer children will need to travel for their education reducing the climate impact of travel.

Newly created school placements will be built to the latest codes and standards which are more environmentally friendly than predecessor buildings and include climate mitigation.

## Risks and assumptions

- There is a risk that, if we do not get the capital investment into our system, we will not have enough places to reduce our INMSS spend.

Mitigation: we are exploring what options may be available to the council should the capital not become available through any of the channels we are expecting, but this risk cannot be fully mitigated and will compromise the delivery of the plan should capital not become available.

- There is a risk that, due to our historic shortage of places, the benefits may not be realised as quickly as we have anticipated.

Mitigation: we have profiled the benefits cautiously to account for this and have included investment in staff to help manage this specific risk, but we will monitor the situation.

- There is a risk that, if we do not use the places in the best way, we may not see the benefits realised.

Mitigation: we have included investment in staff to manage the placement process more effectively and to step down support where appropriate, to free up places that are not currently being utilised properly.

## SPE.2 – Refine and implement the right model for resourced provision and alternative provision

### Overview

In recent years, we have introduced models like Resource Bases and Enhanced Learning Provision (ELP) into the mix in Wiltshire. This provides an important step between fully mainstream and fully special school provisions.

Because these are new, it is right that we review how they are working and if improvements can be made. The work we have done to support this plan suggests that there are children for whom a resource base provides a good option – but only if the support that sits around them is right. In one case we reviewed, a child who was doing well in a resource base had to be moved on because of a lack of therapeutic support.

Alongside this, we need to consider our Alternative Provision offer in Wiltshire and how that provides the right support for children alongside their placements. The SEND and AP Improvement Plan suggests a three-tier model:

1. Targeted support in mainstream schools to help at-risk pupils stay in school.
2. Time-limited placements that help assess a pupil's needs with the intent of moving them back into a mainstream school.
3. Transitional placements for pupils who need support to move on to a new mainstream school or sustained post-16 destination.

We want to make sure our AP offer in Wiltshire is spread across the county and addresses these three elements. We also know that Wiltshire has a lack of Department

for Education (DfE) registered AP provision. While the quality of an AP placement is not reliant on the DfE registration, we want to increase the number of registered providers in Wiltshire.

### Success Measures

- *SPE.e – Number of children accessing AP for longer than a term*

If we are successful in delivering the right model for alternative provision in Wiltshire, we will see fewer children in long-term placements – as defined by the SEND and AP Improvement Plan 2023<sup>8</sup>

### Benefits and milestones

Over the period of the plan, we will aim to deliver:

1. An improved alternative provision offer that includes more quality, registered providers spread more evenly across the county providing the three-tiered AP model in line with the SEND and AP Improvement Plan.
  - Dec 23 – Purchase of Melksham House as an AP site
  - Apr 24 – AP at Calder House begins
  - Sept 24 – AP at Melksham House begins
  - Further milestones to be added as part of commissioning cycles for AP
2. Further improvements to our Resource Base model to ensure they have the skills and support they need to deliver on our vision for inclusive education.
  - Sept 23 – Deep dive into Resource Base places and impact
  - Jan 24 – Clarity over the expectations and model for Resource Bases
  - Apr 24 – Review of support on offer and changes

### Expected Impact

#### *Workforce impact*

- Skill requirements: We will want to ensure that schools with Resource Bases feel supported to deliver that service and this will include upskilling and training school staff where required.

#### *Impact on children and young people*

Children and young people should have their needs met closer to home and with better support that keeps them in touch with their mainstream school.

### Risks and assumptions

None identified that are not covered elsewhere.

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<sup>8</sup> [Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\) and Alternative Provision \(AP\) Improvement Plan \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk), page 24.

## SPE.3 – Enable a clear pathway to step-down support as appropriate

### Overview

We believe that by ensuring there are proactive approaches to stepping down support we can bring children back into mainstream schooling and the benefits that it brings. In this context, stepping down support is any child with an EHCP who moves from INMSS to a maintained special school, from maintained special school to resourced provision, and from resourced provision into mainstream schooling.

This would happen through open dialogue and the existing annual review process to ensure it becomes part of the culture and the expectations around an EHCP.

This comes back to our belief that, where possible, mainstream schooling is the best place for children, it allows them to access education close to home and in their communities. All these things must mean that, with the right support, the quality of life of children with SEND can be improved.

This approach will also ensure that we are using our special schools, Enhanced Learning Provision (ELP) and Resource Bases appropriately for the children who would most benefit from those placements. This will support our sufficiency strategy but will also allow us to benefit from reductions in Independent Non-Maintained Special School places more quickly.

### Success Measures

- *SPE.f – Number of children with EHCPs who step down their provision*

If we are successful in delivering a clear pathway to step down support, we should begin to see the number of children who step-down their support increase.

- *SPE.g – Number of children who, having stepped down, are still in that reduced support 12 months later*

If we are successful in delivering this pathway, we need to monitor whether this is having a lasting impact or if there are changes that need to be made to make this approach more effective.

### Benefits and milestones

Over the period of the plan, we will aim to deliver:

1. A proactive approach to bringing children back into a mainstream setting where appropriate through their Annual Review.
  - Sept 24 – Co-design approach to step-down
  - Nov 24 – Training and guidance provided

- Jan 25 – New approach implemented
2. Explore and develop a model of Special School satellite provision that provides a stepping stone from Special School back into a mainstream setting.
    - June 26 – Scope out new potential model
    - July 26 – Co-design a new model
    - Sept 26 – Go/no go decision on a new model

## Expected Impact

### *Workforce impact*

- **Job roles:** We are anticipating a requirement for additional roles in the Stat SEND team to manage step-downs and support those children.
- **Skill requirements:** We will need to support SEND Lead Workers to have these conversations.
- **Culture:** Step down will become part of our everyday work, as common as increasing levels of support.

### *Impact on children and young people*

Children will be given more opportunities and more support to return to mainstream schooling. This is likely to be in a local school, closer to home and in the local community.

### *Impact on parent carers*

From the start of an EHCP, parent carers will be involved in conversations about stepping down support, when that might be right for their child and what support plans need to be in place.

## Risks and assumptions

- There is a risk that step-down support may not be seen as a positive step leading to further dispute and tribunal.  
Mitigation: We will integrate this into the Annual Review process so it is understood to be a natural part of having an EHCP. Conversations with parent carers will start early and support will be put around the young person as they step down.

## SPE.4 – Ensure holistic support that manages needs at the appropriate level

### Overview

We believe that an integrated system of support for children and young people with SEND is vital to managing their needs and removing the risk of escalating to another setting.



Once an EHCP has been issued, the need for holistic support does not reduce. We need to ensure that children and young people with SEND are seen as the whole humans that they are and that their needs are being met by health and social care as much as education.

This particularly applies to mental health and emotional wellbeing which schools and parent carers consistently raised in our survey and workshop as being something that particularly impacts children with SEND and could be managed more effectively.

As well as providing better care for the children, this would also mean that schools and settings would be better able to support the children in their care reducing another potential avenue for escalation.

### Success Measures

None currently identified – this will be revisited after further scoping

### Benefits and milestones

Over the period of the plan, we will aim to deliver:

1. A focus within our SEND system on supporting children and young people at risk of escalating needs.
  - Apr 24 – Scoping of what this means in practice
  - June 24 – Co-design of the offer and support that will help
  - Further milestones to be developed
2. Proactive management of health concerns, supporting schools and settings to feel confident in managing those needs without seeking specialist placements.
  - Jan 24 – Scoping of what support is needed
  - Reviewed as part of ongoing commissioning cycles
3. A holistic approach to support outside an education setting to manage any risk of escalation.
  - Jan 24 – Scoping of what support is needed
  - Apr 24 – Development of risk register
  - Sept 24 - Implementation of the novel approach

### Expected Impact

#### *Workforce impact*

- Skill requirements: We will need to ensure that all teams know what support is out there so that they can provide advice in an integrated way.
- Culture: Multi-disciplinary, solutions-focused working will become the culture in our organisation.

#### *Impact on children and young people*

Children and young people will have a better experience with their health and wellbeing needs being met.

Children and young people will find their schools are better able to manage their specific health needs which will result in fewer transfers.

*Impact on parent carers*

Parent carers will feel that there is an integrated support structure for their child and that SEND needs are managed alongside other needs.

**Risks and assumptions**

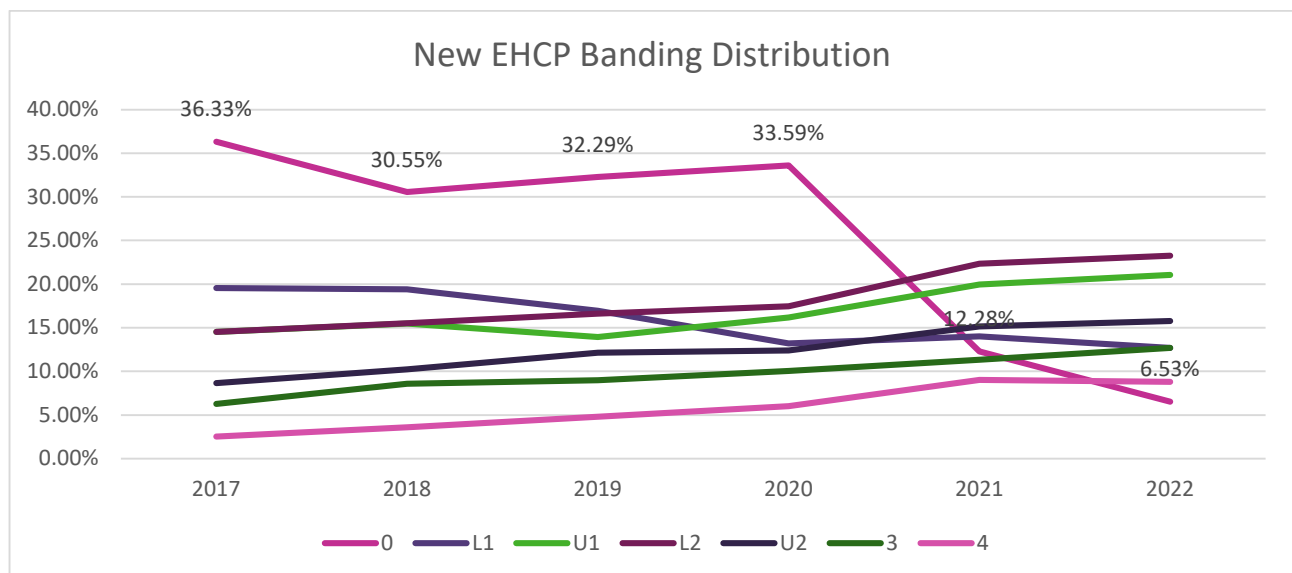
None identified that are not covered elsewhere.

## VFM – Ensuring value for money and the right contributions from partners

### Case for change

Over the past 5 years, there has been a steady but sustained shift in the level of support that children in Wiltshire receive.

Banding is an assessment made about the level of support a child with an EHCP might need and indicates the funding that is attached to an EHCP. These run from Band 0, which has no additional funding attached, to Band 4, which has the most funding attached. It is notable that since 2017, the proportion of new EHCPs being issued at Band 0 has dropped from 36.3% down to 6.5%. At the same time, Band 3 and 4 have steadily risen.



There is no evidence, at this point, to suggest that there has been significant growth in 'need' over that period. We are not seeing large numbers of children who have significantly higher needs, and yet these trends are happening.

Some of this is likely to be 'unwarranted variation', where practice is not consistent across the system and so we need to be conscious of what steps can be taken to improve that consistency. The solutions to this problem are covered more fully under Workstream 5.

Part of this, however, is down to schools feeling that the funding they already receive to support children with SEN is insufficient, meaning that they feel they need more money to deliver the same level of support, hence the higher band. This assessment of the problem is supported by the survey responses where schools were telling us that

money or financial issues were the number one thing that would allow them to deliver more inclusive education practices.

We also heard from the surveys and from focus groups with SENCOs and Headteachers, concerns about Alternative Provision (AP) and the benefits that brings as compared to the rising cost of AP packages. It is not always immediately clear that the increased costs necessarily bring improved outcomes, but this may be because AP is not the right setting for these children who should be placed elsewhere, as addressed under Workstream 2.

It is also clear that partners in our system would like better clarity and improved processes around our financial decision-making. This would ensure that everyone knows who is contributing to the Education, Health and Care Plans, and the process for agreeing those contributions. It should be as efficient as possible to make these decisions, while rigorous enough to satisfy our legal obligations.

As part of this clarity, we are having conversations with our partners about thresholds, contributions, and how we can leverage the funds that we should be contributing to these plans to generate improved outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

***Problem Statement:***

*Despite the best efforts of the council, schools, and partners, we need to do more to make sure we are achieving value for money from our commissioned contracts and ensure that we have the right balance of funding contributions from the three key partners (education, health and social care) to ensure support is closely linked to local needs and delivers value for money.*

## Headline measures

- ***VFM.a – Average cost per EHCP***

If we are successful in providing value for money and spending money wisely, we would expect the average cost per EHCP to come down. This measure is a slightly blunt tool and will not be used on its own to measure progress, however, it is a helpful indicator when taken alongside other measures.

- ***VFM.b – Number of ad hoc funding decisions made***

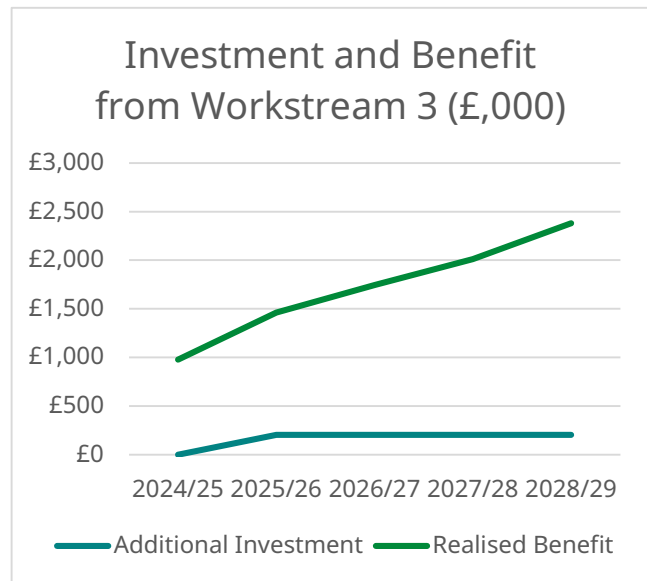
If we are successful in delivering the right funding structure with the intended clarity and assurance, we would expect that fewer decisions will need to be made outside of the normal processes that we have established. This will give everyone more certainty and predictability.

## Financial impact

This workstream is about securing a sound financial basis for our system and so it has a limited direct impact.

There are significant, challenging conversations that will need to take place as part of this workstream, but these conversations will need to take place before we can accurately forecast the change to income that might come from it.

The values in the paper reflect savings from recommissioning Alternative Provision (AP) packages and increased costs in the therapies contract. The figures also assume that the inflation in Independent Non-Maintained Special Schools will be managed.



## VFM.1 – Greater financial assurance for commissioning decisions

### Overview

As part of ensuring we have a financially sustainable system, we need to explore our current contracts and ensure that we are deriving value for money and negotiating hard enough that we do not overpay for goods and services.

This is in part about what the council itself commissions. We need to ensure we are confident that we get what we pay for, and that we are not paying for things that we do not go on and use.

This is also about supporting schools to make better commissioning decisions when they buy services directly. A good example of this is alternative provision (AP) which schools negotiate and buy themselves. However, we heard repeatedly at our workshops and through our surveys that schools would like to be confident that they are not paying over the odds, especially as prices continue to rise.

One of the challenges will be defining what we mean by value for money in this context. At its simplest, value for money is cost divided by outcomes providing a basic calculation of how much each benefit costs. However, this is more complicated in SEND. How do we define positive outcomes? Can we define them in a way that still accounts for each individual's unique needs? We need to co-design an approach, and then we need to help others to understand how to use it.

This novel approach will include a Quality Assurance (QA) approach to review and challenge.

### Success Measures

- *VFM.c – Percentage of commissioned services that deliver “value for money”*

Value for money does not mean cheapest, it is an assessment of outcomes divided by cost. Once we have defined what value for money means in our system, we should begin measuring our contracts against it and offer challenge where value for money is not being delivered.

### Benefits and milestones

Over the period of the plan, we will aim to deliver:

1. A clear articulation of what “value for money” means in the Wiltshire SEND system.
  - Dec 23 – Outcomes framework for commissioning drafted
  - Apr 24 – Co-design process around what value for money means in SEND
  - Jun 24 – Published articulation of what value for money means and how it will be applied.
2. Greater commissioning support within the Council and for schools around their decisions, such as Alternative Provision packages, to ensure better value for money.
  - Apr 25 – Guidance published to support better commissioning
  - Sept 25 – Guidance published to support commissioning by schools
3. Processes that are focussed on delivering value for money and improved outcomes from contracts and independent special school placements.
  - To be developed as part of ongoing commissioning cycles
4. A review of existing commissioned services to consider if there are delivery models that might provide better value for money.
  - To be undertaken as part of ongoing commissioning cycles
5. Improved financial confidence around personal budgets.
  - Dec 24 – Guidance published on personal budgets

### Expected Impact

#### *Workforce impact*

- Skill requirement: We may need to review and upskill staff who commission services to enable and empower them to get the best result. We will also need to support schools with any upskilling they require to better commission.
- Culture: We will need to embed our articulation of what value for money means throughout the SEND system so that there is a shared understanding.

### *Impact on children and young people*

Children and young people will receive better support through better-commissioned services.

### **Risks and assumptions**

- There is a risk that, because the rate of EHCPs has risen during the contract, the new contract value may be higher than it was.

Mitigation: We will monitor this and using our new value-for-money assessment we will be able to ensure any cost increases are part of an improved package of support.

## **VFM.2 – Improve clarity around financial decision making**

### **Overview**

At the moment, we do not have sufficient visibility of the financial decision-making in our system to say with confidence that everything is happening as it should be.

Significant improvements have been made over recent years with the introduction of the Discussion and Delivery (DaD) panels which make decisions in our SEND system. These panels have membership from across our SEND system and Wiltshire Parent Carer Council have observer status on those panels as well. However, these panels could work more effectively if they had better guidance and the right information in front of them.

A review of these panels is already underway and will make recommendations.

Additionally, we have heard concerns from schools about their funding and what they feel they can provide with what they are given. We need to have an open, transparent conversation about those processes so we can assess if they are fit for purpose or if they need to be changed. This will not be a quick process, but if we get it right, we think we can have a system that works for schools and the council, to ensure that children with SEND are well supported but we meet our deficit reduction plan.

Part of this will be a reduction in 'ad hoc' payments that happen outside the normal process. We need to get the process and the funding right, but then we need to stop extra agreements being made.

The final part of this workstream is about joint-funded placements. The ICB has identified that this needs to happen more uniformly and has begun developing a set of principles that will drive joint-funding decisions. Through this process, we want to ensure we end up in a place where there is a shared understanding of who is paying for what, where that decision is made, and how we can make the process as easy as possible.

## Success Measures

No specific measure beyond headline measure VFM.b

## Benefits and Milestones

Over the period of the plan, we will aim to deliver:

1. Further development of our decision-making panels and review related processes.
  - Dec 23 – Completed review of the decision-making panels
  - Jan 24 – Begin delivery of improvement plan
  - Sept 24 – Begin review again
2. A review of school SEND funding including special schools and the top up system.
  - Jan 24 – Begin review of requirements
  - Feb 24 – Discussion about Special School funding
  - April 24 – New banding proposal
  - June 24 – Consultation on new banding
  - Sept 24 – New banding system in place
3. A more open, transparent financial process to give all partners confidence in the decisions being made.
  - Jan 25 – Scoping
4. Clarity over the process for agreeing on joint-funded packages to ensure that they are as efficient as possible while delivering the right support at the right thresholds.
  - Jan 23 – Principles of Joint-Funding decisions drafted
  - Mar 24 - Principles agreed
  - Apr 24 – Review of best practice
  - Jun 24 – Draft proposals around any changes
  - Apr 25 – Implementation of novel approaches

## Expected Impact

### *Workforce impact*

- Structures: We will need to implement the changes suggested as part of the review of the decision-making processes. This may require changes to, structures.
- Culture: There will need to be significant changes in culture to facilitate the openness and transparency we aspire to – this openness and transparency applies to our partnership internally and how we communicate externally.

### *Impact on children and young people*

Children and young people will get better support through improved decision-making and more consistency across the county.



### *Impact on parent carers*

Parent carers will be more confident in the decisions that are being made and will have a better understanding of why decisions are made.

### **Risks and assumptions**

- There is a risk that, because schools already feel under financial pressure around SEND support, the costs will go up.

Mitigation: We are entering into this discussion with an open mind and a determination to find a win-win where schools feel they have a better deal, and the council can continue to meet its financial plan.

- There is a risk that partners will act defensively if there is a perception that the plan requires them to give more than they owe.

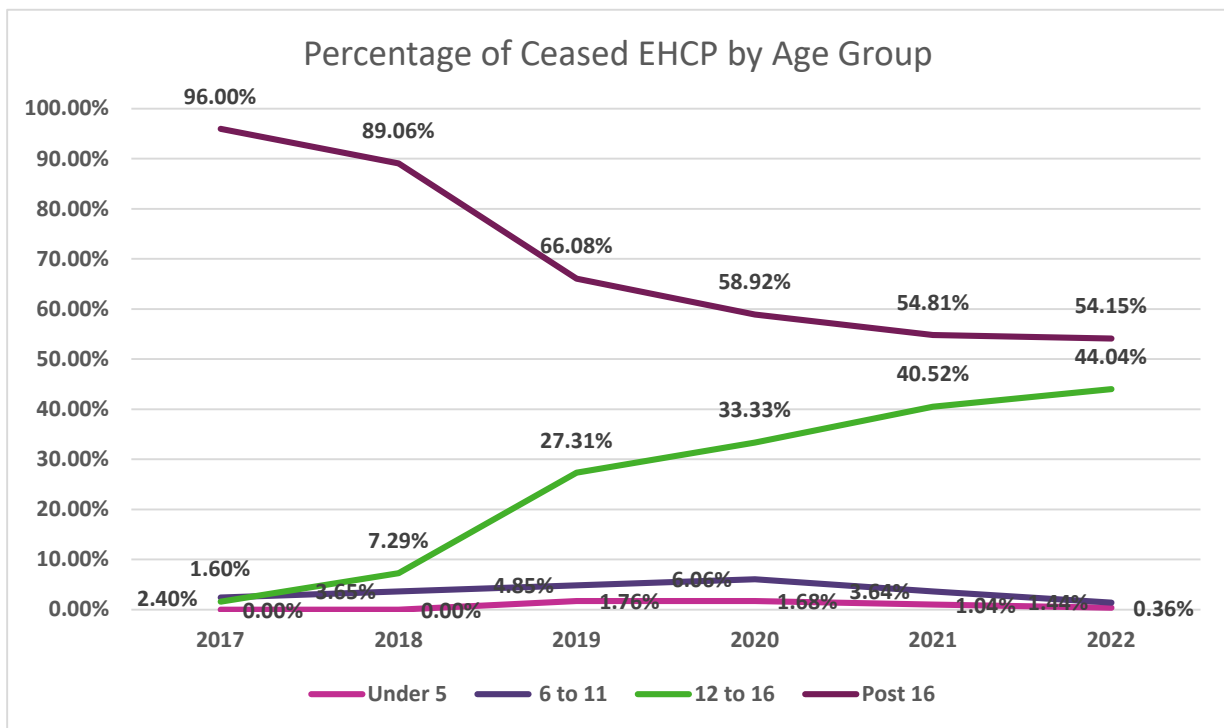
Mitigation: We recognise that all public sector bodies are under pressure, and it does not help to simply 'move' this deficit around the system. Consequently, we have not included assumptions in the plan around any increased partner contributions. We will have these discussions in an open and transparent way. The aim of all partners is that Education, Social Care and Health contribute what they are supposed to for each plan, so we can ensure we have a well-funded system of support.

# PFA – Enhance transition pathways to provide a range of opportunities to prepare for adulthood

## Case for change

We want our young people who have been supported in education with an EHCP to feel supported and ready to move into adulthood. For this to happen, the young people, their parent carers, and professionals must all feel confident in the opportunities and support open to that young person. In those circumstances, an EHCP can be ceased as that young person goes on into employment, apprenticeship or education that does not require an EHCP (such as university).

Over the past five years, the data has shown a shift in the age that EHCPs are being ceased. In 2017 96% of EHCPs that were ceased were ceased in post-16, this dropped to 54% in 2022. The number of EHCPs being ceased has broadly risen, due to the increasing number of EHCPs, so while this does not represent a drop in post-16 EHCPs being ceased it is a striking shift. This could indicate a lack of confidence in the post-16 offer because young people are not continuing into post-16.



	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>277</b>

Includes only the following entries only: 1 – Reached maximum age (this is the end of the academic year during which the young person turned 25), 2 – Ongoing educational or training needs that are being met without an EHC plan, 3 – Moved on to higher education, 4 – Moved on to paid employment, excluding apprenticeships, 6 – Young person no longer wishes to engage in education or training, 9 – Other

*Data Source DBV Curated Data from EYES's System 2016 -2022*

This points to a lack of confidence in the readiness of our young people to embrace the opportunities of adulthood. Some of these concerns may be founded, but some of them are because better information needs to be shared.

At the same time, costs per young person have risen in post-16 provision. The analysis done for Wiltshire Council as part of the Delivering Better Value suggested that the unit cost per Post-16 EHCP rose by 16.9% between 2018 and 2022. This is reflected in a rise in Independent Specialist Provider (ISP) placements, which is also a sign that the local provision does not meet need yet.

Our survey responses, and attendees at our co-design workshops, also reflected a lack of confidence. Parent Carers expressed concerns about the options for young people with an EHCP, and a general concern that the end of an EHCP would represent an end of the care and support their child receives. This perception of a 'cliff edge' should an EHCP cease is a significant barrier to moving into adulthood.

***Problem Statement:***

*Despite the best efforts of the council, schools, partners and parent carers, costs are increasing in post-16 without evidence of how this benefits some people.*

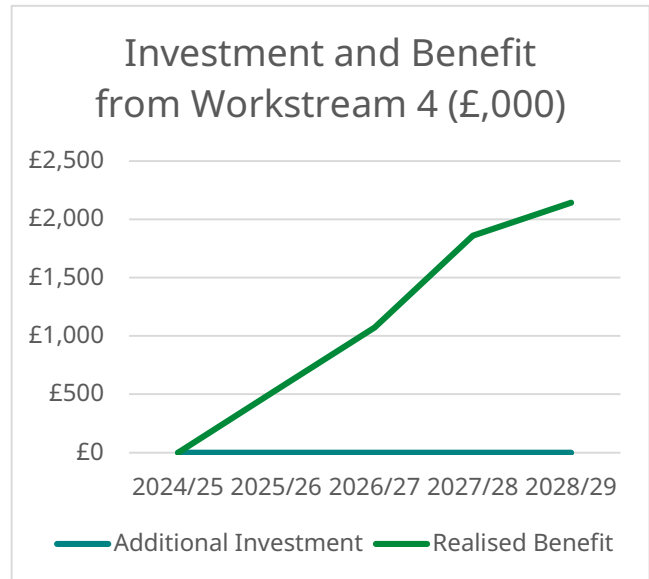
*Young people are repeating education levels because they do not feel prepared to take the next step, and their parent carers do not feel ready for the EHCP to end.*

## Financial impact

This workstream will contribute more to the financial challenge than the figures appear to show, but we were cautious about double counting Workstream 1 and did not want to overstate the impact.

The figures associated with Workstream 4 represent a shift of young people away from expensive Independent Specialist Placements (ISPs) and into mainstream college, university or employment.

The figures also include a stretch target around the increased involvement of adult social care and associated health services.



## Headline measures

- **PFA.a – Number of post-16 EHCPs ceased that do not result in NEET**

If we are successful in our approach to the post-16 transition, we should see more young people ready to cease their EHCP and step confidently into employment or a form of education or training that does not require an EHCP. We must monitor this and ensure that we do not increase the number who end up Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) within six months.

- **PFA.b – Percentage of post-16 pupils in an ISP placement**

If we are successful in our post-16 education offer, we should see a reduction in the percentage of young people who are in an Independent Specialist Provider (ISP) placement. These placements are often extremely expensive and should only be sought when there are no appropriate options in a mainstream provider. By ensuring our local offer is right, we should avoid these placements.

## PFA.1 – Give young people and parents confidence in the employability and education offer

### Overview

We will not cease EHCPs before the young person is ready for it to end. However, there is more we could be doing to help that young person be ready.

Through our workshops and surveys, we heard consistent doubt about the post-16 offer from parent carers. While some of this is likely to be because of a lack of

communication about the post-16 offer rather than the offer itself, we do need to constantly check that we have the right options for our young people to progress into.

Anecdotally, we know that there are young people in Wiltshire who are repeating the same level of education over and over. This is not what an EHCP is for, the guidance is clear that there must be 'progression' to qualify for continued support. But more importantly, being stuck in this situation is not the best thing for that young person's aspirations and quality of life.

Something is not right in situations like that, and we need to be more proactive in supporting young people to meet their aims and then supporting them to part with their EHCP.

### Success Measures

- *PFA.c – Number of young people with EHCP who are placed in apprenticeship/traineeship/internship*

If we are successful in developing the post-16 offer in Wiltshire, we would expect to see more young people with EHCPs placed in an apprenticeship/traineeship/internship.

- *PFA.d - % of 14- and 15-year-olds with an EHCP who have begun discussions about their post-16 options as part of their Annual Review*

If we are to be successful in delivering clearer pathways in a post-16 offer, we need to begin conversations about transition when the young person is 14/15 so that they are prepared, and their families are prepared as well. This should lead to better-planned transitions and better outcomes for the young person.

### Benefits and Milestones

Over the period of this plan, we will aim to deliver:

1. A clear set of options for young people with SEND, developed with employers and colleges.
  - Jan 24 – Scope new communications documents for post-16 options
  - Feb 24 – Review quick wins in this space
  - Mar 24 – Co-design new communications documents
  - Jan 25 – Scope work required for new pathways
  - Apr 25 – Begin work with local employers
2. Better support into apprenticeships and self-employment, where that is the right approach.
  - Feb 24 – Review quick wins in this space
  - Jan 25 – Engage partners who can support with apprenticeship and self-employment

3. A shared understanding between learners, parent carers and education providers of the post-16 landscape, what it is, and what is required for post-16 study.
  - Apr 24 – Co-design new guidance for learners going into post-16 study
  - Jun 24 – Implement our innovative approach to transition into post-16 study
  - Jan 25 – Review and refine approaches to deliver better results
4. A strategic approach to post-16 employability and support that provides pathways that support and are aligned to broader economic development in Wiltshire.
  - Oct 24 – Begin work with the Economic Development team to understand gaps
  - Jan 25 – Develop a joint “One Council” approach
  - Apr 25 – Begin work with local employers

### Expected Impact

#### *Workforce impact*

- Culture: Minor cultural changes will be required to achieve this aim, we will need to ensure that staff across our system are solution focussed, and united in their aims.

#### *Impact on children and young people*

Young people approaching post-16 options will be clear about what they can do and will have considered what they will do. Young people will be supported to achieve their aspirations.

#### *Impact on parent carers*

Parent carers will understand the options available to their child and will be confident in the range of options.

### Risks and assumptions

- There is a risk that if we do not get the range of options right then young people and parent carers will not have the right confidence.  
Mitigation: We will work with young people and parent carers to cater for as many needs as possible, providing a wide range of education and training, apprenticeships and supported internships, and employment.

## PFA.2 – Young people who are ready to embrace adulthood

### Overview

Approaching the end of an EHCP can feel like a cliff edge for young people and their families. Multiple times in our surveys and workshops, parent carers expressed real concerns about what might happen after the EHCP is ceased.

We know, for example, that different services have different thresholds and approaches. The thresholds in Adult Social Care are different from Children's Social Care, and Adult Mental Health is different from Children's Mental Health. One parent in a workshop said, "It feels like you're just starting to be an expert on all the services you need for your child, and then it all changes again and you're left like a newbie."

This anxiety can lead to people holding onto EHCPs for longer than they need out of worry that they will not have any support on the other side.

We believe that by becoming more joined up in our working as a System, and then being more proactive about planning and supporting through the transitions, we could alleviate a lot of that anxiety.

### Success Measures

- *PFA.e – Percentage of post-16 EHCPs which have a clear transition plan attached that includes input from Health and Social Care*

If we are to be successful in ensuring our young people with EHCPs are ready to embrace adulthood, we need to ensure that there is a plan in place for their health and care needs beyond an EHCP. We would expect to see more young people with a clear plan for their life after an EHCP that will contain input from health and social care.

- *PFA.f – Percentage of SEND leavers self-reporting positive outcomes*

If we are successful in delivering young people with EHCPs who are ready to embrace adulthood, we would expect to see positive outcomes reported in the SEND Leavers survey. These self-reported measures will give a good impression of how well prepared they were for adulthood and how well they are doing.

### Benefits and Milestones

Over the period of the plan, we will aim to deliver:

1. Development of our post-16 model, building on the successes of preparing for adulthood, so that young people, parent carers and professionals have confidence about the transition to adulthood.
  - Jan 24 – Review of quick wins in this space
  - Jan 25 – Implementation of new models
2. Better link-up between health, social care and education to ensure young people and parent carers feel supported and ready to leave their EHCP behind.
  - Jan 25 – Scope work

## Expected Impact

### *Workforce impact*

- Job roles: There may be some additional roles required to deliver this workstream, but we think they will be covered under Workstream 1.
- Culture: We will need to make sure that our teams are ready to work more collaboratively to support these young people.

### *Impact on children and young people*

Children and young people will know what support is available to them after their EHCP and will have a clear transition plan that gives them confidence that they are ready to cease their EHCP.

### *Impact on parent carers*

Parent carers will feel more confident in the support on offer for their child and will be equipped to support their child to embrace adulthood.

## Risks and assumptions

None identified that are not covered elsewhere.



# CPC – Developing better communication and processes to change the culture in our SEND system

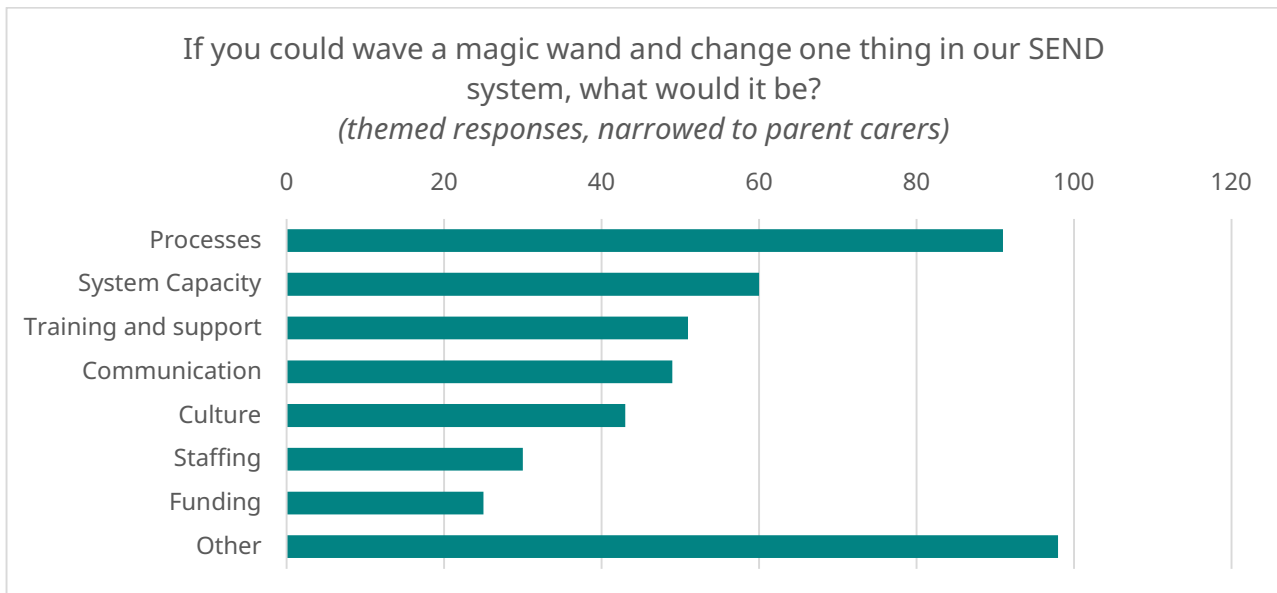
## Case for change

If we are going to deliver this plan, improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND and bringing the system into balance, then everyone has a role to play. It becomes increasingly important that we all feel part of the Wiltshire SEND system, pulling in the same direction.

However, through our data and insight gathering it has become clear that this is not currently the case. Through co-design workshops and case studies, we have consistently heard anecdotes that display a lack of shared culture or inconsistent practice that reflects poorly on the system.

Of course, there have also been examples of exceptional individuals who have gone beyond to support children and their families in the right way. The aim must be to spread this good practice across our entire system and put the right processes in place that steer people towards that good practice.

Changing a system culture is not easy or quick, it takes time and consistency.



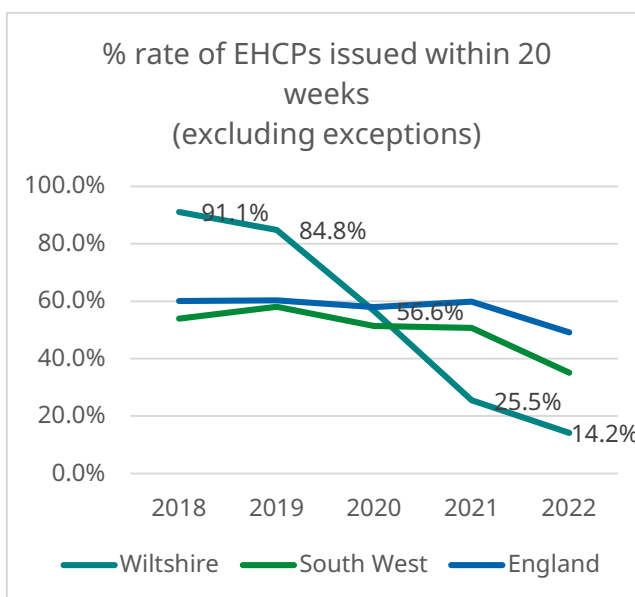
Part of this comes down to communication. Improved communication was the fourth most important thing to parent carers in our stakeholder survey with 15% of parent carers saying if they could just change one thing in our system it would be communication.

This partly explains why there is such a disconnect between parent carers and the SEND system. If we are going to deliver the other workstreams, particularly 1 and 4, then we need to have an improved approach to communicating with parents.

In that same survey, the most important thing that parent carers said they would change in our system was the process. 1 in 5 of the parent carers responding to our survey said that if they could only change one thing in our system it would be the processes. Of those responses, the majority primarily focussed on making processes faster and simpler.

The data does show that Wiltshire has a problem with the timeliness of plans issued. While we know that the unverified data for this year looks much more

positive, the latest SEN2 data release, which goes up to 2022, shows that Wiltshire's timeliness has dropped again. Up until the pandemic, Wiltshire outperformed the national and regional average, but this dropped in 2020 and 2021 and has not recovered. Improving this is already a priority in the system but would also give confidence in the system.



**Problem Statement:**

*Despite the best efforts of the council, schools, partners and parent carers, we have work to do to build a sense that everyone in our SEND system is always working together towards a single offer, with a shared culture.*

*Parent carers, schools, colleges, early years settings, and internal staff feel that we need to communicate better and that more information and support is needed.*

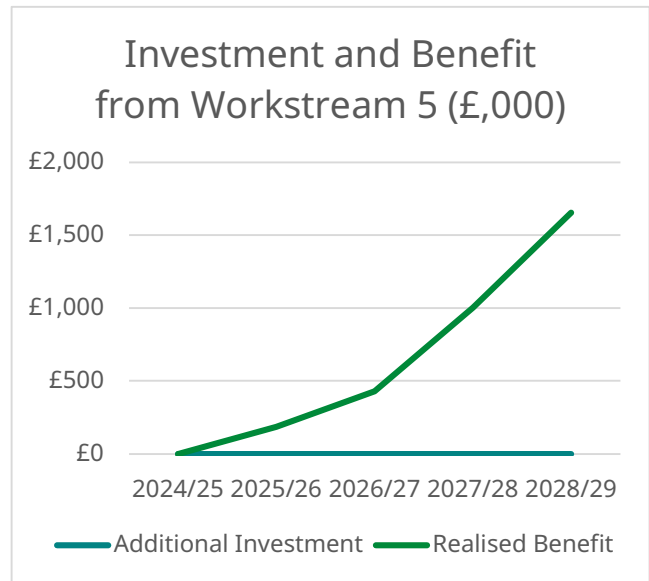
## Financial impact

This workstream is vital to delivering the plan but it only has a small direct impact on the Dedicated Schools Grant.

The financial contribution of this workstream represents a reduction in transition support fund payments, which are attached to children with SEND while they await the issuing of a plan.

There is also a budgetary impact attached to better communication and culture, which we anticipate will lead to fewer complaints or ombudsman fines. Wiltshire Council already has relatively few ombudsman fines, so there is not a significant impact from this, but we would aim to completely avoid these fines.

The final financial impact directly attributable to Workstream 5 is the reduction in children out of school in AP. This will be achieved through better processes, meaning plans are processed more quickly and the children can get back into school with the right support around them.



## Headline measures

- *CPC.a – Compliance with Statutory SEND timeliness measures*

If we are successful in delivering improved communication and processes, we would expect to see our statutory compliance rates improve. This would indicate we have a well-performing system and would begin to take some of the pressure off the Statutory SEND team so that they can do more non-statutory, preventative work.

- *CPC.b – Percentage of POET survey returns expressing positive experiences*

If we are successful in delivering better communication and processes, we should see that reflected in the positive experiences that parent carers, young people and professionals have in our system.

## CPC.1 – Strategic approach to communication between partners and with parent carers

### Overview

Our system can only develop a successful culture if we have the right communications set up. We will fail to deliver the financial improvements that are expected from this plan if we do not make sure everyone feels part of the team.

Our survey data demonstrated a feeling of disconnect that parent carers feel towards the SEND system, and throughout our case reviews and workshops, we encountered people who had been told the wrong thing by a partner in our system. In addition to

the impact this will have on our system sustainability, we must try to avoid the confusion and added stress it causes if people receive mixed messages.

This is important both internally and externally. We need to reset our approach to providing information to parent carers, SENCOs and other interested parties. One part of this will be a SEND hotline for first contact about SEND concerns. This could be folded into the existing Children's Services Integrated Front Door which already works effectively. This service would give advice and guidance effectively triaging SEND requests so that the right advice is sought from the right place.

We also need a shift in our strategic approach to communicating with parent carers so we can be confident that they are hearing the important messages that we need them to hear. We cannot be surprised the parent carers do not know about key events, services and opportunities if we cannot be confident that they are hearing from us.

All of this is supported by closer working between partners in the system, so we speak with one voice on SEND. Through this, we can ensure that the right messages are being communicated to everyone in the system and that everyone understands the role they play in creating a better, more sustainable SEND system.

### Success Measures

- *CPC.c – Local Offer website meta-data*

If we are successful in improving our strategic approach to communication, we would expect to see evidence in the way parent carers use the Local Offer website. Parent carers will spend time reading the material and will navigate through the site predictably.

- *CPC.d – Percentage of parents filling in the POET survey*

If we are successful in generating a stronger sense of community with our parent carers, we would expect to see more parent carers filling in the POET survey, as well as those responses being positive.

### Benefits and milestones

During the period of our plan, we will aim to deliver:

1. Improved communication channels between partners to develop our shared culture and ensure everyone understands their role in system sustainability.
  - Jan 24 – Role out of comms about the Sustainability Plan
  - Apr 24 – Launch of the Safety Valve Agreement with the DfE
  - Sept 24 – Refreshed partnership for SEND
2. A communications strategy for how the SEND system communicates with parent carers.
  - Apr 24 – Recruit SEND dedicated Communication Officer

- June 24 – Development of Communication Strategy
  - Aug 24 – New review of Local Offer
  - Sept 24 – Implementation of Communication Strategy
3. A SEND hotline, based on best practice models to receive initial queries.
- Jan 24 – Scoping
  - Mar 24 – SEND hotline online

## Expected Impact

### *Workforce impact*

- **Job roles:** may require a dedicated post to support external SEND communication.
- **Skill requirements:** Integrated Front Door staff will require help to become integrated with SEND. All staff will be supported to understand the new approach to communication.
- **Culture:** All staff in the SEND system will need to get used to communicating as a system, with one voice.

### *Impact on children and young people*

Children and young people in Wiltshire will receive clearer messages from the system.

### *Impact on parent carers*

Parent carers will receive clearer information from the system that, as far as possible, reaches them where they are.

## Risks and assumptions

- There is a risk that changes to communications mean that less digitally confident people might get excluded.

Mitigation: We will co-design our approaches to this and consider the needs of all. We will ensure that support is still accessible offline.

## CPC.2 – More effective processes and an improved experience of the process

### Overview

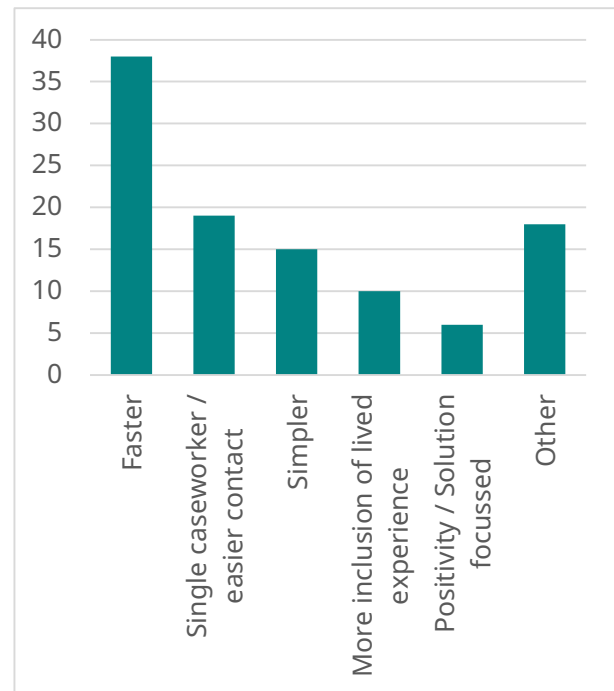
Parent carers, schools, colleges, early years settings, and SEND staff within the council all want improvements to the SEND processes.

Statutory SEND timeliness in our system has not recovered from the pandemic shock. Quick progress is being made in reducing that backlog of applications, but we need to stay on top of that. This also applies to colleagues in other parts of the system, progress is being made in addressing backlog waiting lists, but the waits in health, for example, are still too long.

Processes were the main thing that parent carers wanted to change in our SEND system. When these are sub-themed, faster processes are the main comments that come up, followed by easier contact with caseworkers, and then simpler processes.

We should do everything we can to make the processes more efficient and effective. However, we also need to reflect that, some SEND processes are, by their nature, complex and long, but we can look at what improvements can be made to the experience of the process.

By delivering these improvements, our SEND system will be more efficient and able to manage changing needs, which will make it easier to address the financial challenge.



### Success Measures

No specific measure beyond headline measure CPC.a

### Benefits and Milestones

During the period of the plan, we will aim to deliver:

1. Further integrated processes and paperwork in our system to drive efficiencies and reduce the need for people to tell their story multiple times.
  - Feb 24 – Review quick wins in this area
  - July 24 – Alignment of internal paperwork
  - July 25 – Alignment of external paperwork
2. Improvements to the process that exploit the opportunities of technology to make things more efficient.
  - Dec 24 – Scoping the opportunities and review of best practice
3. A better ‘customer relationship manager’ interface for schools and parent carers that keeps them up to date without the need for multiple emails.
  - May 24 – Implementation of the new portal
4. Improvements to the integration of data flows between organisations to allow better monitoring and a more sophisticated approach to modelling demand.
  - Feb 24 – Review of what data-sharing opportunities there are
  - Jul 24 – Signing of new data-sharing agreement
  - Apr 25 – Completion of integrated data flows
5. More multi-disciplinary working to bring skills and experience together, focussed on generating solutions.

- Apr 25 – Scoping of further opportunities

## Expected Impact

### *Workforce impact*

- Job roles: may require additional admin support in the Statutory SEND team to facilitate more effective processes. May require a new post to manage the customer relationship manager but could be folded into communications support as referenced above.
- Skill requirements: The Statutory SEND team will need upskilling on the new technological approaches and how to respond to parent carers, schools and colleges effectively.
- Culture: Further need to embrace multi-disciplinary approaches across our system and bring teams together to understand each other more fully.

### *Impact on children and young people*

Children and young people in Wiltshire will receive support more quickly.

### *Impact on parent carers*

Parent carers will notice a more efficient system and a reduction in duplicative paperwork.

Parent carers will benefit from a new customer relationship manager so they can see progress through the process and request updates directly without email.

## Risks and assumptions

- There is a risk that by seeking technological solutions to process efficiency, some less digitally confident parent carers or young people might get excluded.  
Mitigation: We will co-design our approaches to this and consider the needs of all parent carers. We will ensure that support is still accessible through offline means.

## CPC.3 – Better support and training for parent carers

### Overview

Everything in this plan needs to sit alongside an improved package of support for parent carers.

One of the main reasons that parent carers contact Wiltshire Parent Carer Council (WPCC) is because they are feeling overwhelmed and like their mental health and emotional wellbeing are being impacted. We should aspire to be a system where that does not happen, but we should not ignore the fact that this will also help deliver financial sustainability for our system.

If parent carers know where to go for information, then the decisions that they make are better informed and everyone has a better understanding of what to expect from the system. Equally, in some cases, if parent carers do not get to the point of feeling completely overwhelmed then they are less likely to seek more intensive intervention for their child.

This was supported at the co-design workshops with parent carers, in particular thinking about the opportunities for peer support among parent carers which is so much more meaningful than someone without that lived experience trying to connect with a parent carer. The point was also made about the need to ensure that some of this provision happens outside the working day so that working parents can engage more readily.

### Success Measures

- *CPC.f – Number of parent carers accessing training through the Council*

If we are successful in delivering better information, advice, guidance and training for parent carers, we would expect to see more training being accessed through the council. This would indicate that we have the offer right, and we are providing something of value.

- *CPC.g – Number of parent carers asking for help with their personal mental health or emotional wellbeing*

If we are successful in delivering better support for parent carers, we would expect fewer parent carers to have to contact WPC or SENDIASS or the Council with concerns about their mental health or emotional wellbeing. This would indicate that the support on offer is helping reduce the 'overwhelm' that parent carers sometimes experience.

### Benefits and Milestones

During the period of the plan, we will aim to deliver:

1. Further development and embedding of the culture of co-design as standard across the SEND system.
  - Jun 25 – Co-design guidance and templates rolled out across the system
2. Awareness of the range of parental support and training that is on offer.
  - Dec 23 – Initial conversations about mapping the offer
  - June 24 – Fold into the communication strategy approach
  - Sept 24 – Consistent promotion of support and training
3. Tailored training offers that cater to specific needs.
  - Sept 24 – Improved signposting
4. Further development of the information available through the SEND Independent Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS).



- To be reviewed as part of the commissioning cycle

## Expected Impact

### *Workforce impact*

None identified

### *Impact on children and young people*

Children and young people in Wiltshire will receive better support in their family home from parent carers who feel more equipped to support.

Children and young people will find more opportunities to co-design services and approaches in Wiltshire, always having a voice in decisions that affect them.

### *Impact on parent carers*

Parent carers will feel better equipped with information, training and effective strategies.

## Risks and assumptions

- There is a risk that we do not get the offer right and so waste time and effort without seeing the benefit.

Mitigation: We will mitigate the risk by co-designing the offer with parent carers and by working alongside existing providers of this support. We will also ensure we are using the expertise in our system, for example in our Special Schools, so that parent carers can benefit from that.

## Implementation

As has become even clearer in the development of this plan, the SEND system is a large, complex organism with multiple factors influencing the eventual outcomes.

The development of this plan has required thought to be given to how we create a credible, responsive delivery plan.

## Project Management Methodology

To effectively manage the delivery of this ambitious plan, we are adopting an agile approach to project management.

First utilised in software development, agile focuses a small team on delivering specific, measurable tasks at pace. We will adapt this methodology, breaking the projects down into manageable 'products' that will still have a tangible impact on the data. This iterative approach will allow us to run multiple projects simultaneously, see them completed and then review the data to assess which project to move on to next.

These project periods, or Sprints as they are called in agile, will be supported by a project team that pulls specifically from expertise in the system to develop the ideas.

By monitoring the measures suggested in this document, we can see the direction of travel in the data and flexibly respond to an emergent situation. This will be more effective in a complex system than a rigid "waterfall" approach common in traditional project management.

We also want to ensure ongoing dialogue with stakeholders and those impacted by the plan. This 'stakeholder reference group' will include schools, colleges and early years settings, parent carers, children and young people with SEND. That group will meet regularly with the project teams. This will allow effective and efficient use of engagement time with key stakeholders while giving the project team sufficient steer from stakeholders. This would be delivered alongside other co-design activities.

## Integration into the new Strategy

We are in the process of developing a new SEND, AP and Inclusion strategy. This is due to be written in the first half of 2024.

The SEND Sustainability Plan, and any associated Safety Valve agreement with the DfE, will form a key part of the strategic context for that new strategy and so it will be a foundational plank to that piece of work.

The commitments in this plan will be reflected in the new strategy and all these plans will be brought together and delivered in a single SEND and AP Improvement Plan for Wiltshire.

## Monitoring and review

The SEND Sustainability Plan is an ambitious plan which the Council is committed to delivering. To ensure we are successful in both improving outcomes and financial sustainability, we need to have robust processes for monitoring and review in place.

### Live Data Analytics

Education systems are continuously improving to expand for the needs of legislation and performance reporting. Current planned improvements align with this plan; however, some specifics will need to be picked up as part of the implementation plan.

Reporting and dashboard support will be expanded to create high-level summaries that give a clear indication of how we are performing against our key measures. Wherever possible, this will be supported by the introduction of interactive tools to allow the utilisation of live data for performance and solutions monitoring.

There will be a period of transition from reactive reporting to the development of robust performance and solutions measures. This transition will be supported by Performance, Outcomes & Quality Assurance & wider services.

### Data Modelling

Current reports and operations work on a reactive model with simple forecasting approaches. To enhance and evolve the service, an expanded selection of data will be collected. In conjunction with review and improvement of data quality to build a more sophisticated forecasting model that can be adopted across the service.

Initial forecasts will focus on understanding demand and capacity management and likely budgetary impact based on student pathways.

### Governance

We have established a High Needs Block Sustainability Board. This board is chaired by the Chief Executive of Wiltshire Council and has senior representation from both the council and the Integrated Care Board (ICB).

To enable clarity around the solutions, dashboards with supporting measures and delivery timelines will be developed and utilised. This will allow the impact to be monitored and for the Board to act as a 'problem-solving' group that removes barriers to success. This approach should support an agile approach to successful implementation of the strategy while maintaining accountability to our stakeholders.

### Surveys and Stakeholder Engagement

There will be further co-design and stakeholder engagement throughout this period of transformation and improvement.

The development of this plan is not the end of the process, it is the start of it. We will need further input from schools, early years settings, colleges, parent carers and of course, children and young people with SEND as we design the next phases.

The co-design workshops have been an effective, if time-consuming, way to engage with stakeholders so far. We will develop this approach further, creating a series of 'co-design and reference groups' which will bring together our key stakeholders to develop plans in one room.

Surveys have also been effective, and we will continue to utilise these as an effective way to get co-design input asynchronously. These surveys and stakeholder consultation findings will be pooled for increased transparency and utilisation within services.

**Wiltshire Council**

The logo for Wiltshire Council, featuring a white, stylized, curved line that resembles a wave or a bridge, positioned directly beneath the text.

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